

Elena Drapkina



This photograph was taken in 1946 in Leningrad. It was taken by a friend of mine. At that time I was a student of the stomatological school.

My mother's sister (even more than sister: my mum's twin) aunt Manya and her family lived in Leningrad and survived the blockade. So I arrived in Leningrad and entered a stomatological school. It happened in 1945. And in 1946 I got married.

My husband Drapkin Wolf Yakovlevich was born in 1921 in Gorodok (now Belarus). At the age of 2 months his parents brought him to Leningrad, there he finished school.

His mother was a housewife and did not work; his father was director of a big shop in Ligovsky prospect. During the siege he stayed in Leningrad, and his family lived in evacuation.

My husband had a brother and 2 sisters. Before the war he finished military school of communications, got appointment to the Far East and was moving by train to the destination point when the war burst out.

During the war he served in Iran, in Central Asia. There he got ill with enteric fever and malaria and undermined his health. In 1945 he arrived in Leningrad and entered the Military Academy of Radio Electronics named after Budyonny.

In 1946 we got acquainted in the house of my aunt, where my future husband came on business. We both finished the first courses and got married in summer.

It happened on August 9, 1946. My mother-in-law was a devotee and said that she would consider valid only chuppah wedding. You know, at that time making chuppah was equivalent to committing a suicide, because my husband was a Party member.

We were scared, but nevertheless he took the risk. I did not object, because my mother-in-law wanted us to do it. It was the day off, relatives went somewhere to Sestroretsk or Zelenogorsk and brought rabbi.

They opened the small synagogue, and we had there our chuppah wedding. So our wedding was arranged according to both Jewish Tradition and Soviet rules (of course we registered our marriage at the civilian registry office).

On May 9 (the Victory Day), 1947 I gave birth to my son. My son Alexander Drapkin was born strong and good. By the way, we arranged bar mitzvah for my son at the urgent request of my mother-in-law.

On June 27, 1949 my husband died suddenly. It happened in a tram. He told passengers that he felt bad and that was all.

We lived together with his parents 3 years more. His parents lost 2 sons (Boris was killed during the war, and my husband died after it).

In 1948 I finished my studies.

For 11 months I stayed at home with my child, and then went to work in a children's polyclinic. During my life they moved me from one polyclinic to another, but I never left my service and worked 35 years until I was 60 years old (in 1985), when I retired.

I remember central newspaper articles concerning Doctors' Plot. It happened in 1952. Those articles created a great impression on me: I was brought up by the Soviet propagation and considered everything published in the central press to be true.

In my polyclinic I shared my ideas with its manager (she was Jewish too) Anshelis. That wise woman looked at me attentively and said 'Elena Askaryevna, do not trust these newspapers, you will see them rehabilitated one day.'

At the age of 25 I became a widow. I lived with my son and did not want to marry for the second time.