

Elena Drapkina Among Students



This photograph shows a group of students of the Leningrad Stomatological School.

It was taken in 1948. You can see me among the students in the first row (second from left).

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.

Yakov Meltserzon was our from-master and taught us physics very well. All pupils knew physics perfectly: it was impossible not to know it. If it was necessary, Meltserzon gave supportive lessons to pupils who were below their schoolfellows in class.

When after the end of the war I arrived in Leningrad, I had to pass only 2 examinations to enter a stomatological school (I was hors concours as a war participant): Russian language and physics.

In spite of 4 years of war, I went through the exams successfully (having only 1 month for preparation). I think it happened due to Meltserzon's contribution.

Recently I read biography of the latter Nobel prize winner (Vitaly Ginzburg, a physicist), where he wrote that before the war he was a pupil of a Minsk school, and it was Meltserzon who planted his love for physics. So I was very proud of the fact that I and the Nobel winner were taught physics by the same teacher.

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.