

Laszlo Ringel's Wife Lea Ringel



My wife Lea Ringel photographed for the prom album on the day of obtaining a diploma of the Medical School in Uzhorod. This photo was taken in Uzhorod in 1950.

After WWII I went to work in the furniture shop in Uzhgorod. I learned to work on the wood treatment lathe. I lived in a room in the shop. I had meals in the town. There was a Red Cross 'Social care' organization in Russkaya Street where they had a canteen to provide meals to those who returned from concentration camps. I met girls and courted many of them there. It was there that I met my future wife Lea Helman, a young girl with big back eyes. We began to meet.

Lea came from Bogdan village [175 km from Uzhgorod, 560 km from Kiev] Rakhov district in Subcarpathia. She was born in 1927. Her Jewish name was Laya. My wife was born Lea, later the Ukrainians made Helena of her. Although in the town some called her Helen at home she was always called Lea. There were 11 children in the family. All of them were taken to the ghetto in April 1944 and from there they were taken to Auschwitz. Lea's mother and father were exterminated in Auschwitz immediately, and Lea and her brothers and sisters were sent to different concentration camps. They were young and managed to survive and returned to Subcarpathia. Lea came to Uzhgorod where she entered a medical school for medical nurses. In Uzhgorod she met with her brothers and sisters who returned from concentration camps.

Shortly after establishment of the Soviet power in Subcarpathia, before Soviet passports were issued and before registration of the population, my wife's brothers and sisters moved to Israel. Lea didn't go with them. She wanted to obtain a diploma of the medical nurse and then follow them to Israel. I also thought it was right to move to Israel having a profession. It never occurred to us

that we would live behind the 'iron curtain' for so many decades.

I married Lea in 1946. There were no relatives of ours left in Subcarpathia by that time. My wife's cousin, a tailor, who lived in Uzhgorod in a cottage, made a real Jewish wedding for us. There was a chuppah in the yard of his house, and a rabbi from the only synagogue in Uzhgorod conducted the wedding ceremony. After the wedding we settled down with my wife's cousin. She studied at school and I worked in the furniture shop that belonged to the state already. We obtained Soviet passports. My wife was written down as Helena. Was told in the passport office that the Russian equivalent of Laszlo was Vasiliy and issued my passport with the name of Vasiliy Ringel.

My wife and I were not strongly religious, but we always remembered that we were Jews and tried to observe Jewish traditions as much as we could considering the Soviet restrictions. We celebrated major Jewish holidays at home. On Friday evening Lea lit candles and prayed.

In 1947 our daughter Vera, Dveira in Jewish was born. In 1947 our son Mihaly, Moishe in Jewish, after his grandfathers, Lea's father and mine, and Mikhail in his Soviet passport was born. After our son was born, there was too little space for all of us to continue to live with my wife's cousin. We decided to move to Onokovtse. I managed to get back our little house. To my surprise, it took little time. I repaired the house as much as I could and we moved in there. I was surprised and moved, when local farmers began to bring the things that they had taken from our abandoned house. They returned pictures, portraits of my father and grandfather and some pieces of furniture.

Lea finished her school and went to work as a medical nurse in the children's tuberculosis health center in Onokovtse. I went to work as an accountant in the kolkhoz, organized in Onokovtse.