

Jakov Zak And His Brother Gerts Zak



These are my sons Jakov and Gerts in the yard of our house, where we had lived in late 1960s. The picture was made 1960 in Kaunas.

In 1947 I gave birth to an elder son, whom I named Jakov. In 1952 our second son was born. We named him Gerts after my father. We had a very good living. My husband and I managed to preserve a true Jewish spirit, which was raised in us. Yiddish was spoken at home and our boys got to know their mother tongue since childhood. We also tried to keep Jewish traditions the best way we could, though it was very hard in soviet times. I tried observing kashrut- at any rate I never mixed milk and meat food, never had pork at home. I failed to observe Sabbath, as Saturday was a working day- Kalmin had to work, boys had to go to school. I tried not to do anything on Saturday though- no laundry, cleaning. We marked holidays- Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Shaveot, Simchat Torah the way it was done in grandmother's house. Husband and I obligatorily attended synagogue on holidays. We were the members of Kaunas Jewish religious community. We raised our children Jewish- both of them went through britmilah, bar mitzvah at the age of 13. They identified themselves as Jews since childhood. We told our children how their ancestors died, and Jewish tragedy at Great Patriotic War, we always took them to the place where their relatives were executed.

Our family was not interested in politics. Neither I, nor Kalmin, were the members of communist party, or komsomol. Our children Jakov and Gerts did not want to join pioneer organization, or komsomol. Of course, all of us were aware of the things going on in the country Stalin's death in 1953 was like the death of the tyrant. Kalmin must have understood it and I was influenced by his opinion. We also knew about doctor's plot, and persecution of the Jews. We personally were not affected by that, but still we were worried for our tribesmen.

Yakov finished school with straight excellent marks. Then he served in the army in Riga. That period of his life was hard, but not only because of the anti-Semitism and imparity for the juniors, he was simply not very used to the strict discipline. Then he finished Kaunas economic institute and became an economist. Jakov married Jewish girl Rita. In 1971 he and his wife left for Israe. He

found a job of the economist. He is working at the military plant from dawn till night, but he feels happy. My grandson Arnold was born in Israel in 1980. Rena became a writer in Israel. I have not read her works, but I know that she is rather famous. I do not know what Arnold does for a living. In Jakov's words he is fond of music. They live in Tel Aviv. Jakov and his family observe Jewish traditions, go to the synagogue.

Gerts is truly Jewish. He married a Jewish lady Eugenia. She is a music critic. She loves her job. She goes to the theatres, concerts. Recently Gerts exchanged his apartment to live in one building with me. Gerts has a sport education. He graduated from Kaunas sport institute. He is a football referee now. His children- 19-year old Ari, and 13-old Dova, Gerts raises Jewish. Both of them were circumcised on the 8th day. The also went through bar mitzvah. Now Gerts is the chairman of the Jewish community in Kaunas and the chairman of Jewish charity organization, which helps elderly and feeble Jews in those hard times. Gerts is trying to observe kashrut., to mark all Jewish holidays in accordance with the tradition.