

Frieda Shteinene



This is my passport picture. Siauliai, early 1953.

In 1952 I successfully finished school and entered the philological department of Vilnius university. There were Jews among the freshers. Some of our teachers were also Jews. I was the first year student in full swing of state anti-Semitism, doctors' plot. My room mate of the hostel Lida was a daughter of a military man. Every time when she entered the room, she took the paper and read out loud about the Jewish doctors, who poisoned people. I could not stand it any more and told her that she did not stop, I would not control myself. I do not know what I would do, but still she left me in peace. There was a large comsomol meeting, attended by the representatives of the course. the delegates for that meeting were elected. My relative Rochel, the daughter of Sheina Basya, was one of the delegates. The Jews from our course Lazar Greyer, Mikhail Levin, Sergey Rapoport and I talked to Rochel for her to stand up for the Jews and protect them against fabricated charges. She must have been afraid to do that and her speech was not material. Father did not discuss the events of that time, though he knew and he understood what was going on. We were mourning, when Stalin died in March 1953. the whole university was up for a meeting, people were crying, it seemed to us that the whole world was upturned and the sun was hidden from us. It was the time, when the propaganda was very strong and we believed in bright communistic future.

I graduated from the university in 1956. I got a mandatory job assignment in town nearby Kaunas. I changed it for a backwater village not far from home to be closer to my parents. I taught at junior classes there. I lived in a rustic house without electricity and any conveniences, but I could go home every week. Despite father being a communist, they tried observing Jewish traditions mostly likely to pay a tribute to grandmother Chaya. Of course, it was impossible to observe Sabbath at that time as Saturday was a working day, but big holidays like Rosh Hashanah and Pesach were

marked at home. We always had matzah, even if we did not know where to buy it, we always made it ourselves. We had hamantahsen on Purim, and fasted on Yom Kippur. I was pleased to come home once a week and feel the spirit of Jewish home, known to me since childhood. I lived among Lithuanians in a village. Students loved me and their parents treated me dearly and tried to help me. I still keep in touch with my first students. They still call me minder.

Having worked for two years under assignment, I came back in Zagare, where I started teaching Russian. I did it for several years. Father often told me that he saw my former classmate at work and found him very pleasant. Once he invited him for a holiday.. it was Boris Steinas, a guy from our prewar class. I did not pay attention to him at school as he was lean and tall, with protruding Adam's apple. He behaved improperly and cut classes. I did not like guys like that. Now I saw a good-looking, confident young man. We had lunch and then we started looking at school pictures. In couple of days Boris came to us once again. We had similar fates, families, we enjoyed spending time together and then we fell in love with each other. On 31 December 1959 Boris and I registered our marriage. We had wedding rings. Mother made a fashionable navy blue dress. We had a festive dinner at home, attended by our relatives throughout Lithuania. After wedding I went to Boris in Siauliai.