

Riva Smerkovicene And Her Husband Gutman Smerkovicus



This is my husband, Gutman Smerkovicus, and I, Riva Smerkovicene. The picture was taken in Kaunas on our golden wedding anniversary in 1990. The official ceremonious celebration was held in the marriage registry office.

My husband and I took the events related with the separation of Lithuania from the USSR very hard. Lithuania gained its independence in 1991. The ideals we had devoted our youth and lives to were crushed. Since 1991 Gutman has been in a deep depression and it was aggravated by another sorrow: his son's death. Gutman was getting sick and four years after our son Ilia's death he passed away – on the same day his son had died.

I have been on my own since that time. My sisters' husbands, Fyodor Filimonov and Alter Kannenman, died a long time ago. In 1995 my sister Rochl, being of a senile age, finally agreed to her daughter Zelda's constant invitations and left for Israel. She died there in 2000. My sister Hanna was very ill. She was afflicted with Alzheimer disease. When Gutman died, I took her to my place and looked after her until she died in 2002. Thanks to my sister, I found out about the Kaunas Jewish community. It was the only positive consequence of the independence of Lithuania that Jews obtained their own community and reestablished Jewish community life.

I, who had never celebrated Jewish holidays and had never observed traditions, felt joy when the traditions were revived. I celebrate Sabbath and go to the community when I physically can. Recently the Jewish fall holidays were celebrated in the community, and I participated in celebrations along with other Jews in the Kaunas synagogue. I involuntarily recalled a prayer, taught by my father, the rites, the Hebrew words I hadn't used for years. I get assistance from the community, and I'm grateful to those who are providing it for me.