

Sarra Nikiforenko With Her Husband Vitaliy Nikiforenko



I, Sarra Nikiforenko and my husband Vitaliy Nikiforenko. The photo was taken at our silver wedding in 1955 - 25 years of living together. Vitaliy is wearing a Soviet uniform in the picture.

During World War II Vitaliy was a major in logistics services - he was responsible for soldiers' meals. Although he was not at the frontline he was shell-shocked twice and rescued from a pile that fell on him. He had an injury of his back, but he remained in service.

In 1945 Vitaliy got a job assignment to Prikarpatye regiment. He was a colonel. In Lvov he received a big apartment in the house for high-rank officers. His messenger arrived to pick me and our daughters from evacuation up in Saratov region. We didn't even have clothes to put on. I made a pinafore dress from a rucksack for me and wore it over my husband's shirt. We didn't have any luggage with us and traveled light. I was very excited about seeing my husband: we hadn't seen each other for four years. Vitaliy didn't change: he was handsome and kind and loved me much. He would have done anything for me. He was very jealous; God forbid if somebody dared to talk with me. He continued his service in logistics units. He was responsible for keeping food stocks in the army.

We settled down in a 3-room apartment with high ceilings. My husband got a good salary and big food packages and we had plenty of everything we needed. I was a housewife raising my daughters. I got along well with our neighbors. My husband was never ashamed of having a Jewish wife. It never even occurred to me to change my Jewish name of Sarra to a different one. I celebrated only the biggest Jewish holidays, even though my husband or children never joined me, but I didn't insist on that. I didn't go to synagogue, but I fasted on Judgment Day [editor's note: this is how Sarra calls Yom Kippur] so far and Vitaliy and the girls knew that I was not to be disturbed on that day. We had matzah at Pesach and my husband went to buy the best wine kosher at Pesach.

I was a housewife and dedicated my life to my family. I didn't join the Party. I wasn't interested in it.

Vitaliy got the rank of colonel, but his illnesses aggravated: he had injured his back and had to wear a special corset, but the disease was progressing regardless. He was offered to be promoted to a higher rank, but I said to him 'God damn this general's rank. You are ill and this will be too much for you'. In 1954 he was demobilized. I had to look after him helping him to dress and undress. His back didn't move and he couldn't turn his head. He was such a beautiful man - and an invalid. Vitaliy had to get busy, though, and he worked as freelance member of the public control committee at the town council. He also took part in other activities. He had a vehicle to take him to work and when he couldn't go there even in a car he managed work by the phone staying at home. In 1955 we celebrated our silver wedding - 25 years together. There were many guests: high officials. I made traditional Jewish food, as usual: Gefilte fish and other traditional dishes. My husband was very proud of me. He was never ashamed of my Jewish name.

My husband was a very ill man and in all those years the family adjusted to his schedule of life. He had to go to hospitals and recreation centers and I always accompanied him. Due to his illness we never traveled or went to theaters. We only communicated with our neighbors and my husband's former colleagues. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home. My husband's condition didn't allow us to have guests. At leisure time my husband and I read Soviet magazines. My husband had a big pension of a retired military. We could afford good food, clothes and had enough to pay our monthly bills for the apartment.