

# Elena Orlikova

[\*My family background\*](#)

[\*Growing up\*](#)

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## **My family background**

I was born in Kiev on 12 March 1926.

My father Zinovi Lvovich Orlikov was a merchant. Later he worked as a clerk, but one way or another he was always involved in commercial activities. My father was born in 1896 in Elisavetgrad (today called Kirovograd) to a very big and harmonious Jewish family. His father Leib Orlikov was a very intelligent and educated man. He was a teacher of literature in a grammar school. This was a Russian grammar school. Jewish grammar schools did not exist at that time. My grandfather was born in 1868 somewhere in the south of Russia. We don't have any information about his place of birth. All we know is that he had moved to Elisavetgrad. At least, he was the only Orlikov in this town and there were no relatives of his around. The young teacher rented an apartment in a respectable Jewish house that belonged to Yankel Faivish. I don't know what business my grandfather's landlord had. All I know is that he was a highly respectable man in the town. He had a seat of his own in the synagogue. He always wore a silk skullcap and a long coat. He was very neatly dressed. His wife always wore a black shawl. She was the hostess of a very big house and the mother of a big family. She was always busy with her housekeeping chores.

They spoke Yiddish in the house, of course. They knew Russian, but it was poor Russian, because my grandfather Orlikov had to communicate with them in Yiddish. He knew Yiddish. On Friday evening they all got together at the big table in a big room. They called it a hall. Madam Faivish lit the candles and the host of the house said prayers. After this ceremony they all could start eating. They also invited their tenant – my grandfather. He met his future wife in this household.

Unfortunately, we don't know her name. But I know the names of her sisters and brothers. My grandmother was the oldest daughter and the next girl was Malka – she never got married. The next was Minikha. She had 4 children: Ionia and Izia – the boys – perished in Elisavetgrad in 1941, and Rosa and Sarrah – the girls. The next daughter was Haya (Anna). She had a daughter – Lyolia. Haya died in Baku in the 1960s. The youngest sister was Perl, Aunt Polia, our favorite. There were two brothers: Solomon, a musician, he had a daughter Emma. She lived in Leningrad and then immigrated to Israel. I have no information about her present whereabouts. There was another brother – Iosif. Regretfully, that is all I can tell about my grandmother's sisters and brothers. The daughters and sons were married but they all kept the tradition for a long time to get together at



the big festive table to celebrate all Jewish holidays and on Friday. Theirs was a very harmonious family. I have no more information about the girls or their husbands.

My grandfather and grandmother got married in 1894 when my grandmother reached 18. They lived with the Faivish family at first, but later my grandfather received an apartment from the grammar school where he was working. It must have been a two-room apartment as far as I can guess. Their older son and my father Zalman Orlikov was born in this apartment in 1896. They called him Zinoviyy in the family. The boy was circumcised. They followed all traditions as was customary in the Jewish families at that time: they went to the synagogue and prayed regularly, lit candles on Sabbath and did no work on this day, they fasted on Yom Kippur, celebrated Purim, Pesach, Hanukkah and the other holidays. Their second son was born in 1898. He was called Solomon. My grandmother was a housewife and was raising their children. In 1911 (15 years after they had their first son) Moishe-Haim - we called him Michail, Misha - their third son, was born. Their family was rather well off and they were trying to educate their children. Zinoviyy studied at the commerce school and Solomon went to grammar school. But in 1917 Lev, Leib Orlikov, my grandfather, died of a heart attack, and my father became the head of the family at 21.

I don't know any details. All I know is that since then he was involved in some sort of commerce. It was probably more convenient for him to live in Ekaterinoslav - Dnepropetrovsk at present - and he moved his family, his mother and two brothers, to Dnepropetrovsk. They lived in Bazarnaya Street in the center of the city. My father rented a comfortable apartment for them. Although this was a difficult time: the period of revolution and civil war. There were all kinds of gangs all around the country<sup>1</sup>, many enterprises were closed due to the war and there was not enough food produced. I don't know how Solomon, my father's brother happened to be in Mariupol, but he was shot there by some white guard bandits. The death of her second son was too hard for my grandmother. She died soon afterward in 1919. There were only my father and his little brother left. My father took his brother to his aunts' and uncles' families in Elisavetgrad - there were several aunts and uncles and my brother lived with whoever could afford to keep him in his family. He came to Kiev on business and met my mother there.

My mother Esther Malka-Kats was born on 12 March 1902, in Kiev. She came from a rich merchant's family. Her father Zelman Kats was a merchant of guild II<sup>2</sup>. At that time Jewish people were not allowed to live in Kiev, especially, in its central part, in the neighborhood of Kreschatik<sup>3</sup>. Only merchants of guilds I and II, doctors and midwives had this right. He lived near Kreschatik, in Mikhailovskaya Street. He owned a butcher's shop. A shochet was cutting the meat there and it was considered kosher meat. My grandfather Zelman Kats (people called him Solomon, as this name was easier to pronounce for other than Jewish people. They know this name from the Bible and it sounds like Zelman) was born in the late 1860s. As for the place of birth, I have no information about it. I only know that he came to Kiev and married Rachil Markovna Kulinskaya, the daughter of a rich merchant in Kiev. My grandmother was about 15 years younger than my grandfather. She came from Kiev. She got education at home, she didn't go to school, she had private teachers at home to teach her to read and write, as well as the rules of conduct in the society, good manners and foreign languages. Of course, she spoke fluent Russian and was an educated and intelligent lady. My grandparents' family wasn't very religious. They only celebrated the main holidays and very rarely went to the synagogue.

After the revolution the newly founded Soviet state expropriated all richer people's possessions leaving their families in poverty. All people were equal in their poverty. I don't know exactly how this all went with my grandparents. My grandmother died when I was 14 years old and I don't remember her telling me all details of their life. I knew my grandmother in the 1930s when she was a very fat and a very sickly woman and stayed in bed most of time. She talked (or argued, I'd say) with my grandfather in Yiddish. They lived in a small room in the wing of the house that they previously owned. Any observation of traditions, rules or just order in the house was out of the question. They became a poor and degraded family. My grandfather worked as a night watch in an office in Kreschatik. My cousin Gusta and I used to visit grandfather Kats. He wore a tyubeteika [*a small traditional Tajik cap*] cap. After he came back from work he went to bed and in the evening he went to work and took his violin. He used to play violin at work. Nobody bothered him there. I don't know whether he was religious. He never prayed in my presence, but I know that he observed Sabbath and celebrated holidays. On holidays all their relatives were supposed to visit and greet them. There were no festive dinners, because my grandmother was ill and couldn't cook for a whole family gathering. But it was a must to visit them on all Jewish holidays. Maria Illinichna Kats, my grandfather's sister, lived with them. She was born some time in 1870s and she was single. She was a dentist and was a very kind and nice person. People said that she belonged to such people that could only love once in a lifetime. She loved a man once, but he married somebody else. She did not forgive him and never married herself. Until her last days she walked to work, some children's home in the outskirts of Kiev. We keep her letters that she wrote in August 1941 as our dearest relic. She described the situation in Kiev before the very German occupation. All 3 of them - my grandfather, my grandmother and Aunt Manya - were shot when Germans entered the city. They didn't even take them to the Babiy Yar<sup>4</sup>; they just shot them where they were.

Rosa, my grandparents' older daughter, was born in 1900. My mother Maria Solomonovna was their second daughter. They called her Malyusia in the family. And their third daughter Evgenia was born in 1905. All three of them were born in Kiev. Evgenia was a housewife. She married a military. She died in Kiev in 1964. She had two children: Mila and Ilyusha. They live in Israel now.

Rosa finished grammar school. She got involved in the revolutionary movement and was fond of the revolutionary literature. She went to Moscow and worked in the Ministry of Education (ministers were called People's commissars - narkom<sup>5</sup>) with Anatoliy Vassilievich Lunacharskiy<sup>6</sup>. She met Osip Semyonovich Oguz (a Jew and a revolutionary, like herself - he came from the Baltic republics) and they got married. Very soon they both got disappointed in the revolutionary movement and in the idea of communism and moved to Kiev. They worked in medical institutions. Rosa died in 1955. Her husband Osip Semyonovich lived a very long life and died at 96 in 1990. He worked at the logistics department of Kiev Medical Institute until he was 92. He was a very respectable employee. Everybody liked him.

Gusta, Rosa's daughter, my favorite cousin, was my closest friend. She was two years younger than I. We even wore almost identical clothes. We lived in the same neighborhood and could often see each other. We remember how Borukh Kulinskiy, Boris, my mother's uncle, died. He died in 1937. Unfortunately I don't know anything about his life. I remember the funeral ritual. It must have been a strictly Jewish ritual, because his body was wrapped in a white cerements and he was on the floor. There was no coffin. There were women sitting around him crying. I can analyze it now, but in those years all such things were called prejudices and we didn't take a closer look to

the depth of such things. Gusta has worked as a children's doctor all her life. She is over 70 years old but she still works at the polyclinic twice a week as a consulting doctor. We have so many memories with her and many common friends. We are still good friends with her.

My mother was my grandfather's favorite. She was the most affectionate and feminine of all her sisters. They arranged celebrations for children at home. The children liked Hanukkah most of all. Their acquaintances' and relatives' children came to their house. They were mostly other merchants' or their friends' children. They had great parties and always enjoyed themselves. Each child got a golden coin and lots of sweets. My grandmother and her housemaids cooked all kinds of confectioneries, strudel, honey cakes, sponge cakes, etc. They celebrated all religious holidays in the family, but my mother didn't tell me much about it. My mother and her older sister Rosa studied at the grammar school. They had a music teacher and learned to play the piano at home.

My mother wanted to become a doctor and she went to study at the medical institute. She wanted to become a dentist like her Aunt. My mother met my father when she was a student. I have no idea how and where they met – I guess it was a party for students. My parents got married in 1923. They needed to obtain a special permission from the rabbi to get married. There was a Jewish law that did not allow two similar names in one family. And in my parents' case grandfather Kats was Zelman, as well as my father Zinovi Lvovich. He was Zelman, too. My grandfather had to submit a request to rabbi and the rabbi issued permission for my parents to get married. They had a real Jewish wedding. They had a huppah and followed the kashruth. The celebration lasted several days and there were many relatives and friends on it. I only know that people remembered this wedding party as most beautiful and joyful. The rabbi was present as a guest at the wedding, because my grandfather was a respectable man in Kiev at that time. This was the period of NEP<sup>7</sup> when private commerce was promoted in the country.

When my father notified his relatives in Elisavetgrad that he got married they sent his 12 year old brother Misha as a "wedding gift" to live with them. My mother treated him very well, he was a like a son to them and was a member of the family. He lived with us until 1936 when he finished his studies at the Polytechnic Institute and left to live separately.

## Growing up

I had a very happy childhood. I had young and happy parents. My father loved me very much. He also loved my mother very much. He always tried to make his family happy. He used to send Mommy flowers with little notes that said "To the best performer of Liszt [*a Hungarian composer*]" or "To the most beautiful woman in Mikhailovskaya street", etc. He also liked to do something nice for me. My friends liked him and so did our relatives. He always tried to do something nice to all people that were close to him. He issued a "wardrobe" newspaper for me. He hung it on the wardrobe and that was where its name came from. There were well meaning caricatures, jokes or photographs in it. It was issued on every birthday and every holiday. I still keep few of these newspapers. It is the dearest memory about my father to me.

We often had guests. We got together on any holidays: Soviet, Jewish, or on birthdays. A holiday was just a good reason to have a good time and have fun. My mother sat at the piano to play and sing. She sang very well. Their friends danced. This was a very merry company. They liked to play cards. My mother was a very elegant woman. She always dressed beautifully and had a good taste

in things. She could make a beautiful elegant outfit even from some plain cotton dress by adding a little ribbon or a brooch. She embroidered beautifully and could sew and alter clothes for her household. She worked at a shop that manufactured signboards and decorated shop windows. Nowadays her position could be called an advertising agent. She went out to various companies and executed contracts for this kind of work. She was successful in her work. At least, she earned good money at that time. Besides, she did all housework and my father and I were helping her as much as we could. My father was Commercial director in various shops or smaller companies. He would be called a businessman now. He was a good entrepreneur and could develop and start a production process very well. He was good at making contacts with people. And he was successful in his work. My father never became a member of the Communist Party. He was far from politics, although he read a lot and was a very intelligent man. I don't remember my mother or my father reading newspapers. However, there were books at home – classical literature, books by Russian and foreign classical writers. My father loved poetry and could recite many poems by heart.

He could discuss any subject. He loved humorous literature. I remember him reading Sholem Aleichem<sup>8</sup> to me and my mother. The book was written in Yiddish but he translated it into Russian. It means that he knew Yiddish well. I remember that we laughed a lot and my father enjoyed such pastime tremendously. I was very small when I had an appendicitis seizure. My father took me to the horse-driven cart on the pillow to take me to the hospital. When I was 10 or 11 years old we went to visit my father's relatives in Elisavetgrad -it was renamed to Kirovograd already. I remember we were staying in a big house near the synagogue. I also remember one of the relatives that served in the synagogue. He couldn't carry his thales to the synagogue on Saturday and it was my responsibility. But I was not allowed to go inside the synagogue, so I stayed outside peeping into the slot. I saw him praying. I have no other Jewish traditions related memories from my childhood. I had many friends. Looking back now I can tell that they were mostly Jewish children. However, at that time we didn't pay much attention to such things. My parents wanted to give me a good education. When I was 5 or 6 years old I joined a group of about 10 children. We had a tutor, a Jewish woman that had fluent German and she took us for walks. I also remember that each child could hold her by a finger when we were to cross the street. She spoke German to us but it was not quite effective. My German is very poor. When the weather was bad we went to somebody's home and spent some time there. Every child had his breakfast. We ate our breakfast and played. Now when I look back I understand that these were mostly Jewish children. They must have come from families that were acquainted with each other. And although it was considered to be the time when there was no anti-Semitism, Jewish people still tried to keep together.

My parents and I went to the beach in summer. My mother sometimes invited my friends to join us to keep me company. Few times we rented a country house in Vorzel near Kiev where our family stayed in summer. We went to the woods to pick berries, swam in the lake and lay in the sun.

I went to an ordinary Russian school. I had no problems with my studies. I liked mathematics and physics. My favorite teacher was Elena Ivanovna Kolotushko, a Ukrainian. She was a teacher of Russian language and literature. Now I understand that there were quite a few Jews in our class and at school: Lyusia Epshtein, Ania Greenberg, Raya Zaltzberg – they were all my friends. However, I had Russian and Ukrainian friends, too: Tania Ivanova, Tolia Morkachov and other children. We became young Octobrists<sup>9</sup>, then pioneers: we were Soviet schoolchildren. We didn't feel our Jewish identity at school. Nobody paid any attention to such things. The information about



the nationality was written down in personal files that were stored in the archives. However, teachers could identify the nationality of any pupil by his last name or appearance, but still nobody segregated people by nationality at that time, all people were equal. I don't think we realized that we belonged to different nationalities then. We went to all kinds of performances at the Palace of pioneers located not far from our house. I went to the singing club and my sister went to the dancing class and we were enjoying ourselves. We lived our own life and we didn't listen to what adults were talking about. We celebrate Soviet holidays at school, but it was just a holiday, a game, a party for me rather than a political event.

### **During the war**

We didn't feel the approach of the war. On 22 June 1941<sup>10</sup> my friends and I were supposed to go to the theater. Of course, it was out of the question on this day. My parents did understand how threatening it was that German troops were so close to Kiev. I believe my parents heard some rumors about their ruthless brutality in Western Europe and wanted to take us out of Kiev. My father had a close friend Lubman. He worked at the Public Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine. He was responsible for the financial sector. He obtained a permit to leave Kiev. One couldn't leave Kiev on their own these days. This could have been interpreted as spreading panic and could be subject to punishment. Another acquaintance got a truck somewhere. There were so many people on this truck that we had to stand a long while, but we left Kiev.

My father stayed in Kiev. He was summoned to the so-called labor front. He was to clean up blockages after bombings. Besides, my father was involved in evacuation of his enterprise. He had the right to leave Kiev upon completion of all these tasks. My father removed all equipment and materials to Dnepropetrovsk. He was supposed to deliver the above mentioned and obtain the certificate confirming acceptance by state authorities. My father caught up with us in Kharkov and we headed to Stalingrad, which is now called Volgograd. My mother's sister Zhenia lived there. She was married to a military and lived at the military residential area. Our family hoped to be able to stay there for some time. There were quite a few of us: my father, my mother and I, my mother's older sister Rosa, her daughter Gusta and her husband Osip Semyonovich and Aunt Polia, my father's aunt. She was single and lived with us before the war. Aunt Zhenia had a two-room apartment. Her husband spent almost all his time at the military unit. So our whole family moved in with Zhenia. She had two children: daughter Mila and son Ilyusha. I went to school in Stalingrad. It was in September. I remember all children looking at me feeling sorry for the situation I was in. I was the only girl in the class that was in the evacuation.

Zhenia received the last letter from my mother's Aunt Manya. It was her detailed financial report for all payments for everybody's apartment, etc. She also wrote that she was often teased and called "zhydovka" in the neighborhood of the children's home. She wrote she wouldn't go there any more. And also "these bandits, these hooligans keep pestering me". She was a typical Jew. I guess this anti-Semite hysteria must have burst out in Kiev even before Germans occupied it. My parents couldn't find a job in Stalingrad. The fascists were approaching and we had to move on. In November when it was already cold we sailed on the last boat down the Volga to Kuibyshev. Now this is the town of Samara. There was an evacuation office at the railway station in Kuibyshev. There were crowds of people there. Trains were going in all directions. We got on the train to Alma-Ata. We were travelling in the railcar for cattle transportation. There were plank beds and hay in

this carriage. There were too many people in it. We all turned at the order to turn; this was the only possible way. We got off at the stops to go to the toilet. The trip to Alma-Ata took us several weeks.

We settled down in the village of Malaya Alma-Atynka near the town. We received half of the room that was divided by a curtain. My father went to work. The front required lots of clothing and there were quite a few tailor shops in Alma-Ata. I went to school. However, I didn't go to school often. It was located far away and I mainly stayed at home reading a lot. I was in the 8th form then.

Later we moved to Alma-Ata. We rented a bigger room from a Russian landlady. Our landlady was a seller at the market. Her son was a thief and he was hiding from the army and legal authorities on the attic of the house. We were afraid of him. He was some kind of an outcast that lived against the rules of society or any decent community. He was unpredictable and we didn't know what to expect from him. Later Zhenia's family joined us. Her husband Jim Samsonovich Waintraub went to the front. Then Rosa's family joined us and we were all together again.

My father worked long hours, he hardly ever came home. Father often went on business trips to Moscow and other cities. We saw him very rarely. My mother went to work in one of the shops. I went to school in the center of the city. I was fond of English and took a course of the English language.

I remember that we learned about what was happening in the Babi Yar from a newspaper article by Ehrenburg<sup>11</sup> in 1942. It was so horrible for us. We realized that we would never see my grandmother, my grandfather or aunt Manya again.

Life was difficult and tough. I remember how happy we were when my father or my mother received some kind of pies at work. They were plain pies, no stuffing, made from dark rye flour, but how we enjoyed eating them! Aunt Zhenia and I walked to some collective farm gardens many kilometers away. We picked up apples and brought them home. Alma-Ata is the town of apples and it was always possible to get some apples. The Moscow Law Institute was in evacuation in Alma-Ata. It was possible to take a preparatory course there and then enter the Institute without exams. I did so. I didn't want to become a lawyer but that was the only opportunity to get a higher education. In 1944 I went to Moscow with this Institute. It was very difficult to go to Kiev. People needed special access permits. My father was trying hard to obtain such permit. My family returned to Kiev in 1944. I also joined my family there.

## **After the war**

The house where we had lived before the war was ruined. The Russian family of Evgenia Nikolaevna Guzeeva, my mother's friend that she met in the evacuation, invited us to move in with them. They had a big communal apartment and they preferred to have their acquaintances as their neighbors rather than strangers. Evgenia Nikolaevna was a fabric painter. She mainly worked at home and she taught my mother to do this work. I enjoyed helping them and I was earning some money in this way. After the war little bright shawls and scarves were in big demand. They also made bedside rugs from old soldier blankets, with oil paintings. People were eager to improve their everyday life and bought these little things with pleasure. They were very inexpensive. Evgenia and my mother also painted buttons. There were only black buttons sold at that time.

In 1944 I transferred from Moscow Law Institute to the Law department at Kiev University. I was a first year student. At the beginning there were only girl students. But then gradually young men were returning from the army, those that started before the war and finished one or two years. One of them was Boris Veniaminovich Vilenskiy, born in 1923, a Jew. He returned in the rank of captain and was a very gifted and talented man. He was wounded and shell-shocked during the war. He started courting me and we fell in love with one another. His family lived in the town of Malin, Zhytomir region before the war. His father was an accountant, a quiet and calm man. His mother was a housewife. She was full of energy. I heard she held official Party positions after the revolution. But she got disappointed in the idea of communism and was no longer a Party member. I need to say that these young men that came from the front studied with much enthusiasm. One could tell that they were dreaming about the moment when they would be able to take to studying again. My Boris was an excellent student. We graduated from the University in 1948. It was the period of anti-Semitism and it was spreading promptly. Boris passed all exams and expected to receive a red diploma, issued to A-grade students. But he got a "3" in the history of the Party. But he had excellent knowledge of history and became a Party member on the front. He became a party member at the appeal "Communists, go ahead!" on the very front line, but he still got a "3" grade that closed the door to post-graduate studies for him. He was eager to continue his studies. However, my husband Boris Vilenskiy managed to finish his post-graduate studies within two years and defend his thesis. The subject of his thesis was history of state and law. He dealt with pre-revolutionary history and the legal reform of 1861 in Russia. He worked on this subject further on and was successful in his work as this subject was not widely explored.

We got married in 1948 upon our graduation. We had a wedding party at home. We had many guests: our relatives and friends. It was a nice party, very nice. It was not a Jewish wedding, but still, the main dish on the table was stuffed fish. My mother was great at making it. My father loved Jewish sweet-&-sour stew and it was often served in our family. We lived with our parents in the communal apartment. I went to work as a legal adviser to a small company. My father helped me to get this job. Boris continued his post-graduate studies. He finished studying but he couldn't find a job. This situation lasted over a year. He went to Moscow and spent hours and hours at reception offices. Their reasoning was always the same: no vacancies. But then other people were getting assignments when he was there. But for him there was no job. An official from the Ministry was mocking at him. He offered him a job somewhere far away and when my husband agreed he said "Oh, sorry, I've forgotten. There is no vacancy there either". It was exactly because of anti-Semitism and because the state allowed to treat its citizens in this way. And only in a year's time did they offer him a job at Saratov Law Institute to teach history of state and law. We were so happy when my husband finally got a job. He accepted it without doubt. In 1950 our daughter Ludochka was born. Boris went to Saratov alone. He rented a small room and began to work. He was successful in his work.

I was fired. Many lawyers were fired. There were many Jews among lawyers. 1952 was on the way, the period of terrible anti-Semitism. They wanted to get rid of us. To be exact, I was offered a driver's position at my work. But I couldn't drive a car, besides, there was no vehicle in this organization and I refused. It was a paradox of the Soviet bureaucratic system: there was a driver's position but no vehicle in this organization. But I had an experience of painting on silk. I went to work at a shop. They painted on little shawls and scarves. Our facility was at the basement. We



worked in two shifts, but I earned twice as much as I did when I worked as a lawyer. The situation in Kiev was far from pleasant.

There were rumors in the city that the authorities were going to move Jewish people very far away, probably to Siberia or the Far East<sup>12</sup>. We still remembered what Stalin did to the Chechen<sup>13</sup>, Crimean Tatars and other people and realized that there had to be truth behind those rumors. So I asked my Russian friend Lida Govseyeva to take care of Ludochka if something happened to us. That was how much we were afraid. We believed that anything might happen to us.

We cared little about the death of Stalin in 1953. We didn't feel any grief or happiness. I don't understand why it was sort of a personal tragedy for many people. We realized that the situation in this country would never change in favor of its people, that nothing would change our life. Of course it was much later, in the 1980s, that we got to know the truth about him.

In Saratov Borya rented a small room from a Jewish woman from Byelorussia. She was a different woman with the views and morals that she had when she lived in a distant Bielorussian village. She didn't treat her tenants well and she was scandalous but they had to tolerate her character. Boris didn't earn much. He had to pay the rent and sent us some money. Besides, he always helped his mother. There were not many Jews in Saratov. They were mainly those that stayed in Saratov after evacuation. There were very few Jews at the Institute where my husband worked and there was no evident anti-Semitism there. Soon my husband fell ill with meningitis. I went to Saratov to take care of him. He was in poor condition and I had to stay in Saratov. I was looking after him and then I quit my job. At first I took Ludochka to Saratov, but later I sent her back to Kiev. She lived with my mother for several years. My mother didn't work then.

In Saratov we received one room and then another room at a hostel. This hostel was arranged on the ground floor of a garment factory. Students and lecturers of the Institute lived on this one and the same floor. There was a long hallway and a big kitchen with several gas stoves. We were in good terms with students and teachers. The hostel was located in the center of the town, not far from the Institute. Later I also went to work at the Institute. It was not easy to find a job. At first I replaced the employees that were on maternity leave, or on vacation. I was a lab assistant, and later was promoted to senior lab assistant. I had to prepare all necessary literature, materials and meeting of the Department I was working for at the moment. Some time later I received a full-time position.

Our son Alyosha was born in 1958. I never gave it a thought whether I give my children Jewish or non-Jewish names. This name was popular at the time. I came to my parents in Kiev to give birth to my child. I stayed in Kiev for half a year and then I went back to Saratov. The conditions in this hostel were uncomfortable. There was one common toilet and no bathroom or shower rooms. On weekends we went to a nearby hotel, where we had to stay in line for hours and hours to get washed. As for the children, they were washed in the room. We heated some water and washed them in a washbasin.

Of course we missed Kiev so much. Each vacation we came to visit our parents in Kiev. But we were grateful that we found shelter in Saratov and my husband got a job there. He soon took to his thesis for a Doctor Degree and he defended it and got a position of Chief of Department. He also lectured at the Saratov Militia high school (a post-graduate institution). He was a very respectable

man. However, he never overcame his feeling of hurt when he couldn't get a job in Kiev. He was not a man of strong health and suffered from the consequences of his wounds and shell shock for the rest of his life. He published many books and scientific manuals. He was known in the scientific circles in Moscow and he was one of the leading specialists in history and law. Soon we received an apartment and a plot of land in the country. We built a very nice little dacha [*summer hut*]. It was on the hilly bank of the Volga in a very picturesque spot called Utyos. We got used to all kinds of infringements because of our Jewish identity. When my husband's colleagues could take a trip abroad, for example, but he couldn't. Nobody explained to him why it was so, but everybody understood the reasons. However, the attitude towards Jews in Saratov was much better than in Kiev. Our friends' children used to enter higher educational institutions in Saratov (with our help, to be frank), because it was impossible in Kiev or other towns in Ukraine. Our daughter studied very well. She finished school with a medal. We recommended her to choose a different profession than we did, remembering all our problems and difficult life and career. She entered the Physics department at Saratov University, although she was not fond of physics. But she was good at all subjects anyway. She got married when she was a second year student. She and her fiancé were 18 years old. Her husband came from a Jewish family. His parents were teachers. Their family came to Saratov during WWI. We were in very good terms with the boy's family. We were not happy that they got married so soon, but we are glad that Luda is happy now.

My father was a very kind, caring, merry and loving grandfather. He wrote letters from Kiev and always sent little gifts. My parents visited a couple of times. My father retired, but as he was full of energy he couldn't help doing something all the time. He became Chairman of a public court at the residential facilities maintenance agency (ZhEK) in Kiev. This was a kind of social activity. They were to review all kinds of disputes between neighbors, complaints or somebody's indecent behavior, that were to be resolved at the social court sitting. My father was very enthusiastic about this work. He wrote prosecutors' or attorneys' speeches for these sittings. His neighbors respected him a lot and valued his opinion. And my father liked this a lot.

In 1966 my mother fell ill and died soon. She had cancer. I came to Kiev from Saratov and spent her last days at her bedside. Alyosha was on vacation in Kiev and Luda was in Kiev, too. My father's brother and my uncle Misha Orlikov helped me a lot. Misha Orlikov was a lecturer at the Polytechnic Institute by then. He had a family: Wife Eva and daughter Ella. They all helped me to look after my mother. We were all very close in our family. When one was having a problem the others supported and helped him.

My father died in Kiev in 1972. He was buried near Mamma at the Jewish cemetery. After they died I rarely visited Kiev, just to go to the cemetery. My husband was very ill in Saratov. He went through several heart attacks, we counted about five, but perhaps there were more. He continued working doing his scientific research.

My son Alyosha helped me to look after my husband and got very fond of medicine. It was very difficult for a Jew to enter Saratov Medical Institute, even though we lived there for a long time and people knew us well. And I decided to have his nationality changed in his Birth certificate. My son studied his last year at school and I decided that I had to change the data about his father in the documentation, filed at the civil registration office. I shared this idea with my husband. He was against it at first but then we agreed that it was the right thing to do and would help our son to

make his dream come true. I went to Kiev and had an agreement with our Russian or Ukrainian acquaintance. We went to the court and he stated that he was the father of the child and wanted to claim all his rights as his father. We gave a bribe and obtained a new Birth Certificate. My son became Orlikov, it is my last name. Orlikov sounds like a Russian name. The name of his father was written Vilenskiy. Vilenskiy was the name of this friend of ours. And my son received his secondary school certificate as Alyosha Orlikov, Russian. So, he could enter the Institute. He was a good student but not as excellent as Luda. In a number of years I did the same trick with my grandson's birth certificate. Dima, Luda's son, also dreamed about medicine and later he also entered Saratov Medical Institute. Alyosha graduated from the Institute. His specialty was psychiatry. Now he is a pharmacist/psychiatrist. He is a very talented young man. He got married when he was a student. He married Olia, a Russian girl. Later he was a post-graduate student in Saint Petersburg. Then in the 1980s, he went to work in England. He was awarded a gold medal for his work there and the right to take a training course in the United States of America. He went to the US and stayed there. He works in one of the biggest psychiatric hospitals as a pharmacist/psychiatrist. He had divorced his wife by then. He has a son in Saratov, Zhenia Orlikov.

Luda also got divorced, regretfully. She lived twenty years with him, but their marriage didn't work out. Her son Dima is a surgeon in microsurgery. He and Luda live in the United States. He is working on obtaining a diploma to start his own practice.

My husband was very ill. He died in February 1991. We didn't have close friends in Saratov and I moved to the United States to join my son there. I do all housekeeping chores. I visit my cousins in Kiev as often as I can. I also come here to go to the cemetery where my loved ones are buried.

My son has been in Israel several times. He has quite a few friends there. But he has an interesting job in the United States. And, of course, he will go on living in the country where his job is. He is very interested in Israel. He likes to travel there. He says he will take me there one day. I would like to go there, if everything goes all right. My son and grandson have always been interested in their Jewish identity as well as history of the Jewish people. My son had books related to this subject as soon as they became available. It was when he was a student in Saratov. Now he reads more and more about it as he travels to Israel. I've never told my children anything about Jewish history or traditions. I know very little about them myself. I just explained to them that there are Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Jewish people, etc. We are Jewish, and Jewish people historically live in various countries. So they happened to go back to their roots at their own initiative.

Unfortunately I do not observe any Jewish traditions or rules. I don't remember and I don't know any and it is perhaps too late to start anything in this respect. We were brought up as atheists and this cannot be changed. I think this is what many Soviet people of our generation are like. Only on family gatherings in the memory of my parents I make stuffed fish and sweet and sour stew according to my Mamma's recipe.

## Glossary

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<sup>1</sup> In 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

2 Before 1917 merchants were the wealthiest and most respectable people in Russia. Guild I is higher than Guild II in the hierarchy of merchants' association. Guild – professional association.

3 Kreschatik is the main street of Kiev

4 Babiy Yar is the site of the first mass shootings of the Jewish population that was done in the open by the fascists on September 29-30, 1941, in Kiev.

5 PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT (NARKOMAT), was a central body (ministry) in the Soviet state of 1917-46. Narkom (People's Commissar) was at the head of it. This institution was established in 1917. In 1946 People's Commissariats were transformed into ministries.

6 LUNACHARSKIY Anatoliy Vassilievich (1875-1933), a Russian political activist, writer, academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1930). He took part in the October revolution of 1917. In 1917 he became the Narkom of education. In 1933 he became plenipotentiary representative in Spain.

7 NEP - «New Economic Policy» of the Soviet authorities declared by Lenin, when private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by wars and revolution.

8 SHOLEM ALEICHEM (real name – Shalom Nohumovich Rabinovich) (1859-1916), a Jewish writer. He lived in Russia and moved to the USA in 1914. He wrote in Yiddish, Hebrew & Russian. He described the life of Jews in Russia and created a gallery of bright characters such as an entrepreneur, a victim of adventurism and a decent worker. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and everyday life details and expressed democratic principles.

9 Oktyabrenok – “pre-pioneer”, Soviet child of seven years or upward preparing for entry into pioneers.

10 22 June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning fascist Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring a war. On this day the so-called Great Patriotic War began.

11 EHRENBURG Ilia Grigorievich (1891-1967), a famous Russian Jewish writer, columnist. His adventure novels show the philosophic and satirical panorama of life in Europe and Russia in 1910-20s. He wrote books of memoirs with many facts, events and names from the history of our country and European culture and public life in the 20th century that had never been mentioned previously.

12 In 1930s Stalin's government established a Jewish autonomous region in Birobidjan, in the desert with terrible climate in the Far East of Russia. Conditions were unlivable there. There was no water, power supply, houses or transportation. The Soviet government hoped that educated people would populate this area and make it a civilized republic. People were in no hurry to leave their jobs and homes and the comforts of living in towns and move to the middle of nowhere. The Soviet government set the term of forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidjan in the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled.

13 Stalin's policy, forced deportation of the Middle Asia people to Siberia. People were thrown out of their houses and into vehicles at night. They were caught unawares. The majority of them died on the way from starvation, cold and illnesses.

