

Yankl Dudakas And His Family



This is our family photo: I, Yankl Dudakas, am with my wife Sophia Dudakene, and our daughters, Inna is standing, and Yelena is sitting. Inna is an Octobrist, and this photo was taken in Kaunas, when she was going to school in September 1975. My private life happened to be very successful. In 1964 I went to visit my distant relatives in Vilnius where I met a Jewish girl. She became my wife some short time later. Her name is Sophia. My wife's maiden name is Gelzina. She was born in Gomel, Belarus, in 1939. When the Great Patriotic War began, my wife's mother and Sophia were in evacuation in Chkalov region in the Ural. Sophia's father, Itzhak Gelzin, was at the front. His wartime service was over in Vilnius. He liked the town and stayed there. He found a job and arranged for his family to join him there. Sophia finished school in Vilnius and found a job as a storekeeper. We liked each other and got married soon. Our wedding took place in early 1965. We had our marriage registered in a district registry office, and then had a wedding party at our home where my mother and mother-in-law made a fancy dinner. The food was delicious. We had about 30 guests. They were our relatives and friends. They were eating, drinking and having fun almost until dawn. In 1966 our elder daughter Inna was born. In 1968 Yelena, the younger one, was born. I worked a lot and provided well for the family. We had a good life. We spent vacations in Palanga, a Baltic Sea resort, and went to the Black Sea a few times. We went to the cinema and theaters. Mama lived with us until the last days of her life. She prayed and fasted on Yom Kippur. On Pesach we always had matzah. Well, we didn't follow the kosher rules, and I had to work on Saturday, but we always celebrated Pesach and Rosh Hashanah, the biggest Jewish holidays, at home.