

Ronia Finkelshtein



This is me photographed for the Board of Honor at the State Institute of Engineering and Technical Survey in Kiev. I worked at the Geological Department for five years. In the early 1950s, during the campaign against cosmopolitans, five employees of our laboratory, including me, were fired because we were Jews. I had access to sensitive information before. This access was cancelled, and my photo was removed from the Board of Honor. I was looking for a new job, but Jews weren't

employed. Later the Geological Department offered me a job at a geological expedition near Genichesk [700 km from Kiev]. There was a vacancy there because it wasn't an attractive location to work at. I was offered the position of the manager of the laboratory. The expedition site was 35 kilometers from the railroad. We were searching for nickel and cobalt - this was also sensitive area, but I was allowed to go there. [Editor's note: Natural resources deposit areas were state secrets in the USSR.] I took my mother with me. I lived with her and a friend of mine in a small room. I was glad that my mother was with me. She was a great cook and a very hospitable person, and my colleagues liked to visit us. Those were two beautiful years in my life (1952-1954). We were a great team of geologists and enjoyed working together. We got together in the evening to sing songs, discuss the latest news and books that we had read, had tea and danced. Life seemed wonderful to us. Our expedition was over in 1954, and we returned to Kiev. We had no place to live and Aunt Sonia gave us shelter in her house. They exchanged their apartment in Kharkov for one in Kiev. I began searching for a job, but due to state anti-Semitism it was almost impossible. I never faced everyday anti-Semitism. My colleagues always treated me nicely. Uncle Yunia helped me again: He got me a job at GIINTIZ [State Institute of Engineering and Technical Survey]. We completed surveys for the construction of sugar factories and other industrial facilities. I submitted my request for an apartment for my mother and me. Meanwhile we were living with Aunt Sonia and Uncle Misha in their 30 square meter room. Their son, Boris, and his wife, Fania, played an important role in my life. When I was 43 I received an apartment. My colleague and I got a two-bedroom apartment in the Otradniy neighborhood, far from the city center. I got a room and my colleague got a room. My mother and I shared my room. My mother didn't have a right for this apartment as she wasn't an employee of our Institute. She was very happy that we had a dwelling of our own, but she only lived in this apartment for three years. She passed away in 1966. She was buried in the Jewish section of the Baikovoye cemetery.