

Fenia Kleiman With Her Parents



This is a picture of me as a first year student of Chernovtsy University. I was photographed with my parents, Aron and Mina Trachtenbroit, nee Zilberman, when I came home on vacation to Briceni in 1950. The photo was taken at the request of my father's cousin, Isaac Trachtenbroit, who gave shelter to our family in the first days of the war. In the post war years I faced direct anti-Semitism at school. The senior pupils at school were to become Komsomol members. I didn't feel the need to join the Komsomol league, but when I heard that only Komsomol members could enter university I submitted my application. I was one of the best pupils and had the highest grades in all subject so I didn't have any problems at school. After I was admitted I went to the district Komsomol committee to have an interview. They said to me, 'Your father owned a store, didn't he? He exploited working people'. They told me that I was a class alien [i.e. not a member of the working class or the peasantry of the Soviet Union]. I don't remember any details, but I remember that these accusations seemed to last forever. Of course, I was admitted in the end because they didn't make any exceptions and admitted everybody, but I felt hurt and was hysterical when I came home. My mother and I went to Chernovtsy in 1949 where I was to take entrance exams to the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics at Chernovtsy University. I had to take five exams. I passed them with good grades and went home to wait for the notification that I was admitted. I received such a notification before the final lists were issued, but when I saw the final lists I didn't find my name there. My mother and I went to find out what had happened. In the Dean's office I was asked who my father was. My mother said he was a clerk and they said that they preferred to admit children of workers and peasants. My mother and I understood what the real reason was [the real reason was that Fenia was Jewish] but what could we do? They advised me to agree to become a candidate of this faculty. Mathematics and physics were difficult subjects and children from villages often gave up their studies and then a candidate could take their place. I could attend lectures, but I had no right to even borrow textbooks from the university library. One of the students borrowed them for me. However, I studied well and was admitted even before the first semester was over. Our lecturers went to the Dean's office to ask for me. I lived in my Uncle Grigory's apartment. I

didn't face any anti-Semitism at university. Students and lecturers treated me well. I received a small stipend and my parents supported me. My mother got a job as a receptionist in a polyclinic in Briceni in order to earn some money to support me with. I met my husband, Esiah Kleiman, when I was a 1st-year student. He was my group mate. We fell in love and got married before graduation. Esiah and I had a civil ceremony and a small wedding party arranged in my husband's home. My parents came to the wedding from Briceni. We don't have children. Doctors said this was the consequence of the ghetto. It is such a shame to have no children.