

Leonid Krais



This is me after finishing trade school in Chernovtsy in 1949. I had my first job as a driver. In 1947 we moved to Chernovtsy. Our neighbors told us that there were many vacant apartments in the town and that it was possible to get a job there. We found an apartment and moved in there. My mother went to work at a bakery. I was 14 and had only studied for four years at a secondary school; one year of it in a Russian school. My Russian was very poor. My mother and I went to the director of a trade school. My mother explained to him that my father had perished at the front and that I wanted to become a driver. I was admitted and finished school as a professional driver and mechanic. I remember my first day at work in 1949. I was driving a huge dump truck delivering debris to a dump site. There was a good team of drivers and I was accepted by them. They were experienced drivers and shared their knowledge with me. That was 53 years ago, and I never regretted my choice. We didn't face any anti-Semitism in Chernovtsy, because the majority of the population of this town was Jewish. It's an old and cultural town. Even now there are many different nationalities in the town. There have been no conflicts or national segregation. Local people told

me that even before the war a janitor had to speak three to four languages in order to be employed. There could be Jewish, German, Romanian and Russian families living in one building, and janitors had to communicate with them in their own languages. I understand Romanian, German and Moldavian, too.