

Zhenia Kriss' Parents And Paternal Aunts



From left to right in the bottom row are my father Haim Kriss, my mother Sima Kodrianskaya, and my father's sisters Rosa Yufa, Pesia Kriss and Clara Waisberg. Standing, from left to right are my other aunts Hana Kriss and Golda, my cousin Adel and my aunt Enta. The photo was taken in Kiev in the early 1950s on my father's birthday. I finished university in evacuation in Kzyl-Orda in Kazakhstan. I worked in Kzyl-Orda for a few months when I got assigned to the position of head of laboratory at the iodine and bromine factory on Chiliken Island in Turkmenistan. There was sand on this island, clear seawater and bright sunlight. There was one saxaul tree, and local schoolchildren came to look at it to see what a tree looks like. I stayed in the hostel. Although there wasn't enough drinking water and bread, no books, theaters and cinemas, I recall this period of my life with pleasure. I returned to Kiev in 1946. It was in ruins after the war, but how I longed to see my city! I began to look for work after I returned. My nationality - it was called Item 5 - was in my way wherever I went. When I went to inquire about a vacancy I was told there was one, but after I left my documents it turned out that there was no vacancy any more. Once I visited the chemical laboratory at the Arsenal Plant asking if there was a vacancy. I was refused. When I left the egress checkpoint I saw Isaac Gragerov, a former fellow student who had been in love with me before the war. 'What are you doing here?' I asked him. 'Waiting for you,' he replied. He was a post-graduate student in Moscow and was working on his thesis. When he came from Moscow he found my parents, and they told him where I was. We got married a few months later. I managed to get the position of junior scientific employee at the Institute of Non-Organic Chemistry. After a few weeks the director of the institute called me and said that it was a mistake to employ me as junior scientific employee and that if I wanted to stay with them I had to accept the position of senior lab assistant. This was at the onset of anti-Semitic campaigns that became a state policy in 1948-49. [This was the so-called campaign against cosmopolitans.] While working as senior lab assistant I prepared my thesis. But this took place at the height of anti-Semitism in 1952. My tutor Efim Grinein, a Jew, was fired. Nobody wished to even accept my thesis for review. I prepared another

thesis and defended it in 1956. I had many publications and students who were working on their thesis. But whenever I addressed the director of the institute, asking him when I would be promoted to the position of junior scientific employee he got embarrassed telling me that the time would come. I have been happy in my personal life. Isaac and I have two children: our daughter Irina, born in 1948, and our son Alexandr, born in 1953. My parents were helping me raise the children. My father wanted to go to work after the war, but we didn't allow him to. My parents lived with my brother and his family. My mother died in 1967, my father in 1970.