

Rena Michalowska With Her Family After Her Son's Wedding



This is my family in 1997. This picture was taken the day after my son's wedding. It took place near Boston in the USA. I am in the middle. My son Piotr Michalowski is the first from left. His younger daughter Mina is between him and me. His wife Susan is second from right. She is putting her hand on the shoulder of my older granddaughter, Agata. My sister Uliana Gabara, nee Fischbein, is standing behind me, on the left. Her husband Wlodzimierz is the first from right. Their older daughter Rachel is behind me. Her sister Ester is standing between my sister and my son - she is holding my granddaughter Mina's hand. I got married in 1952. We met as students of medicine. My husband is my peer. His father's family was from Warsaw, for generations. Initially we lived separately, with our respective families; later we moved in together. In 1953 our daughter, Helena, was born, and in 1955, our son, Piotr. After graduating, I worked as a pediatrician at the local public clinic. I was aware how little I know in practical terms. Until my son was born, I did volunteer work at Professor Brokman's Pediatric Clinic at Dzialdowska Street. It was all rather hard. Then I had a year and a half break in work, I simply couldn't manage the so-called house help any more. Then I began working as a school doctor. My sister, born in 1940, lived with my parents. She spoke Polish to my parents at home. She has a very lovely name, Uliana. This name exists in Ukrainian, but she got hers from somewhere else, from Ulyanov, of course [the real name of Vladimir Lenin]. My father called her Julia or Julek [male version]. After graduating from the 1st year of Chemistry at the Warsaw Polytechnic, she got a Ford fellowship and went to college in the US. Initially, she planned to go for just one year, but then stayed for three. She never had any problems at school because she was very smart and always a good student. After getting her degree, she taught English at the American School, run by the American Embassy in Warsaw. My sister married a Jew from Lublin. He worked at the Polytechnic. My sister worked for Forum as an editor of the culture department, particularly English. In 1968, the chief editor said to her that it would be much more convenient for him and more pleasant if she resigned from her job herself instead of him having to fire her. And if

she doesn't, he will have to. Her husband got the same offer at the Polytechnic. So they left. First they went to Vienna, for a short time. I think they were helped by one of their acquaintances from the American Embassy. Then they went to the States. At first my sister taught Russian. And did a PhD in literature. Her two daughters were born there: Rachel in 1970 and Ester in 1972. My brother-in-law's parents also left Poland. They went to Israel in 1969 or at the beginning of 1970. My children graduated from music school, both as violinists. After matriculation exams my son picked medicine and, as it turned out, he treated his studies very seriously. He was a very good student; indeed he worked hard. He specialized in anesthesiology. He got married. His wife studied at the German Department; then she taught German at Warsaw University and did some translations. In 1984, their daughter Agata was born and in 1986, Mina. In 1991, two years after he did his PhD, my son went to the States on a scholarship. His family joined him, but my daughter-in-law didn't like it there and after 10 months she returned to Poland with the children. My son had to put his doctorate away, deep in a drawer, not to be upset by the thought of it. And he started with what they call an internship. Then he got residency, which comes down to picking a specialization and taking an exam to become an independent doctor. He did that in Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, one of the 5 best hospitals in the States. He found a job in Seattle and settled there. He still works there. Now he trains his own residents, he's an Associate Professor.