

Faina Sandler



This is a picture of me. It was taken in Chernovtsy in 1979. I graduated from university in 1957. I had excellent grades in all subjects except for Marxism-Leninism; they gave me a '4' at the exam. There was an assistant professor at the exam - she came from old nobility - and when she saw what grade they were giving me she blushed of indignation. The students I was helping right there at the exams got a '5'. I received a diploma but couldn't find a job. Whatever vacancies I applied for the response was always that they had already employed someone else. I couldn't find a job for eight months until my brother's friend helped me to get one at the laboratory of a shop. I was paid 45 rubles per month. This seemed a fortune to me. I was happy to have this job, although it wasn't good enough considering I had a university degree. I worked there for 41 years. I faced anti-Semitism at work more than once. They appointed a young inexperienced girl for the position of the chief of the laboratory, although I was the only candidate for this position at that time. In the long run I got the position of an engineer and senior engineer, although I was the first female inventor in Ukraine. I could have been further promoted if I had become a party member, but I didn't want to be one. I worked in a Jewish team. Our chief and about 90% of the employees were

Jews, so my colleagues never expressed any anti-Semitic feelings towards me. When I began to work in this laboratory I believed it wouldn't be for long. I imagined a different career. I was told by someone that the head of department at Chernovtsy University said once that he would have loved to enlist me for the post-graduate course, but he was afraid they wouldn't have let him do this. Now, after all these years, I think I was very lucky. I worked in a great team with a great erudite boss. I learned a lot from him. I've never liked chemistry though. I do my job appropriately and thoroughly. In the 1970s Jews began to emigrate to Israel. I remember buying something from a peasant woman at the time, and she asked me why I didn't leave. I said I felt okay where I was. And she said to me, 'Have you read the Bible? You are young and you just don't know that the time has come when God gets all his people together at one location'. Another time I was waiting for a bus. Two Ukrainian women were talking behind me. They were saying with regret that there would be no good doctor or teacher left after all Jews emigrated. People in Chernovtsy say that the town was different before the Jews left. I never wanted to emigrate to Israel for different reasons. I'm all alone. I have some relatives abroad, but I wouldn't be able to find them. And here I have at least my friends, ex-colleagues and other people that I can socialize with. What would I find in a foreign land? Besides, the climate in Israel is unacceptable for me because I have heart problems. I have thought about it, and I understood that I was going to take my problems with me and have new ones there on top of it. When I was just beginning to think about it my brother was still alive. He worked at the Military Enterprise for many years. In his last years he was head of the shop at the Microelectronics Plant in Sevastopol and had access to sensitive information. Even if he had left his work he would have only been allowed to leave the country after 15-20 years. We were very close. I couldn't imagine leaving without him. My brother died in 1980 when he was still young. My mother died in 1962 and my father in 1978. It's impossible to live alone. I need somebody close. I'm not married, but that's the way things are. I was looking after my parents and lived in the same apartment with them for many years. I couldn't even imagine inviting a man to my home. But perhaps, I just didn't meet my Mr. Right. I would like to visit Israel, this wonderful country. But with my pension I can only dream about it.