

Evgenia Shapiro And Her Husband Vladimir Vassiliev



My husband, Vladimir Vassiliev, and I in Kharkov during a 1st May parade, in the middle of the 1960s. Vladimir was our neighbor and my classmate. He hated the Soviet power, and, arguing with my mother, he said, 'All those supporting Soviet power should be hanged and its leaders killed'. When he visited us my mother closed all windows so that our neighbors couldn't hear us. My mother kept sighing saying that he was a bandit. He replied, 'Bandit or not, I will marry your Evgenia anyway'. My husband wasn't a Jew, but my parents had no objections to our marriage, because they didn't care about nationality. My husband was born in Kharkov in 1933. After finishing secondary school he graduated from Kharkov Construction Institute and became a civil construction engineer. He was a very intelligent and educated man. I loved him. We got married in 1957. We had a civil ceremony at the registry office and then a big party. The following morning I moved to my husband's apartment in the same building. My parents and sister moved to Kiev where my father got a new job a few months after I got married. My husband's family didn't really like me. They never told me that they didn't like me because I was a Jew, but I could feel it. They were very correct, but very cold and reserved with me. They died in 1958-1959. My husband took good care of me. In 1958 I graduated from the Kharkov Polytechnic Institute and became a mechanic engineer. I got a job with the Oxygen plant in Kharkov. I was head of shift at the plant that was located far from the city center. I had to cross an abandoned area on my way to work. I often worked nightshifts and once I was robbed: some bandits stole my watch. Another time they beat me. I quit my job at this plant. It took me nine months to get another job. Again I had problems due to my Jewish identity. My husband went to the town party committee to explain the situation and complain about the fact that every time his wife filled in a questionnaire and the management found out that she was Jewish she was refused. They didn't believe him at the party

committee and told him that it couldn't be true and there was nothing to worry about. Only when my mother came and asked her comrades to help me was I employed by Giproenergoprom, a design institute, at the technical information department.