Marina Shoihet With Her Husband Leonid Fishel And Their Sons, Timur And Pavel Fishel

My family: me, my husband Leonid Fishel and our sons, Timur and Pavel Fishel. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1977. I met my husband Leonid Fishel, born in 1937, at the Institute of the Textile and Light Industry. We got married when we were 4th year students. Leonid was raised in a very intelligent Jewish family in Kiev. The family of my husband's parents was not religious. His father worked as a chief engineer at one of the greater plants in Kiev. He died there in the 1960s. His mother was a home-maker, she lived to a ripe old age and died in 1988. His younger sister Sonya left for Israel in the 1970s and lives there with their two children and grandsons. Leonid worked as an engineer in light industry enterprises. I worked as a designer my whole life, but I didn't enjoy it. Our older son Timur was born in 1962. He finished school in 1979. We understood that it was impossible for a Jew to enter a higher educational institute in Kiev. We were afraid that he would be recruited to the army. At this time it was all very scary because of anti-Semitism and terrible attitudes. I took him to Tallinn, Estonia. He entered the Energy Department of the Polytechnic Institute there. He got married in Tallinn. His wife's mother is Estonian. Her father is Lithuanian. She has Poles, Russians and Lithuanians in her family - any nationality, but Jewish. When Timur studied in Kiev he had Ukrainian, Jewish and Russian friends. He didn't choose his friends by their nationality. In Tallinn he had mainly Jewish co-students. He has a very good sense of music. He sings songs in Yiddish. He even gives concerts in Yiddish. He receives invitations from the Kiev Jewish Cultural Center and gives concerts there. This year he took part in the festival of Klezmer music in Evpatoria [in the Crimea]. Our second son, Pavel, was born in 1971. He was a talented boy. He studied music and then began to draw. He was good at both but he chose drawing. He studied at a studio and had private teachers. Then he decided to enter the Republican Art School, although they didn't admit Jews. In 1990 (after perestroika began) Pavel entered the Theatrical

Department at the Art Institute and graduated from it successfully. When he was studying at the art school, Pavel got interested in philosophy and religions. He started buying books by Russian and other philosophers when he was 13 or 14 years old. He started from the Christian religion and then turned to Judaism. My husband and I are atheists and it seemed strange to us. In 1994 Pavel was circumcised and took the name Pinhos in my father's honor. Nowadays Pavel studies Hebrew. He goes to the synagogue and celebrates Sabbath. We also became interested in Jewish life along with him. My husband and I read Jewish newspapers and attend the Jewish charity center, Hesed. It's a pity that it took us so long to start identifying ourselves as Jews. I say my prayer on Friday and light a candle. We try to observe kashrut. Unfortunately we have never been to Israel, but I hope that we shall go there one day.