

Ninel Kunina



This is me in Leningrad on the Neva embankment in 1964. At the time I was already working at the plant as a planning engineer. My friends from another city were visiting me and took this picture, and then sent it by post. I adored walking about my native city, especially when some acquaintances visited, I guided them and showed them places of interest. I dressed stylishly, looked through fashion magazines at the fashion atelier and got this suit and other things made in the fashion atelier on Nevsky Prospekt 63.

Only in February of 1952, by knowing the right people, by way of several people I could meet the deputy director of the plant 'Svetlana' Petrov. During the blockade of Leningrad between 1941 and 1944 he was a simple engineer, and one cook of this plant, a Jewess, fed the weak and hungry

people, among which was this engineer. He turned out to be talented and became the deputy director of the plant. And when this cook, a pensioner as well, addressed him with the request to give a job to some Jew, he did not refuse her. In such a way I, a specialist with an incomplete university education, began to work at the plant as a tester of measurement instrumentation; it was merely a worker's position instead of a financier's position.

My female chief was an anti-Semite and tried to get rid of me; I was advised to address the chief of the special design office, where the planning department was, led by a Jew. He took me on in the position of a technician, though I was the only person with special economic education. And when at the end of 1952 my dad was arrested, I stayed at work in the evening and shared my trouble with him. His name was Naum Efimovich Ostrovsky. He ordered me to tell the 'First Department.' ['First Department' or 'Special Secret Department' employees had access to state secrets of the defense and other industries, they couldn't go abroad for ten and more years, on the other hand their salary was a bit higher than that of ordinary employees.] Our plant belonged to the electronic industry, and everything was classified as secret. I refused, then my chief said, 'You did not tell me anything, and I don't know anything.'