

Iosif Yudelevichus



This is me by memorial plaque near the moat, where Jews, executed in Jonava in the period of 1941-1944, are resting. Jonava 2004.

I was always fond of art and could draw pretty well, so in 1947 I entered Kaunas construction institute, the architecture department. Later on the institute was reformed into polytechnic one. I got the specialty of the architect. I worked with layouts. During my first years after graduations I made designs for agricultural arrears in Lithuania. I traveled a lot and communicated with people.

In the 1970s my friends immigrated to Israel, USA. I understood that my negative attitude to the Soviet regime required some actions from me. Israel always appealed to me. But I am a conservative man and it is hard for me to imagine that I have to break things conventional for me,

get used to new town, country, language, friends. Besides, my mother had been rather sick in the last years of her life and I had to take care of her. Mother died in 1976. She was buried next to father. I have lived by myself since then.

I always had different interests. Being adult I learnt how to play accordion and I played classic repertoire pretty well. Music was my passion. I attended all opera performances. Another passion of mine is art. Having some penchant for that I have always painted some pieces, mostly landscapes of my native Kaunas. I have always traveled a lot. I was in many cities of former Soviet Union. I liked old cities most of all, where I enjoyed architectural masterpieces. Gradually I came to liking bells and I started collecting big, small and diminutive ones. Collectors are crazy with their hobby. I remember one story about it. I went on a tourist trip to Czechoslovakia in order to meet my friend collector who lived in Austria and give him some of my exhibits. In Soviet times KGB agents were in every tourist group being on vigil to follow the morale of Soviet tourists. I had to exert my every effort to slip out from the group and to meet with the guy. Fortunately, the meeting with my friend was not noticed.

I am currently living in bourgeois Lithuania and I am happy with that. I also treated Soviet regime as something negative and temporary, so I took the independence regained by my country in 1991 as long-awaited and wishful. I think, when being the member of European Union my country will become a true European country with European ethic standards. Recently I became the member of Jewish community not because I started being religious, but out of solidarity. There are few Jews, and there are getting less of them in Kaunas, and in Lithuania in general. That is why we have to stick to each other, learn Jewish culture and history. I make my contribution the way I can. The first thing I decided to do was to find people, who saved my relatives - uncle Isaac, his wife and daughter. I met uncle Isaac in the 1960s in Leningrad. He came there from Israel and was still scared to come to Kaunas. Uncle invited me in Leningrad and we met couple of times. He was constantly saying how grateful he was the people, who rescued him. Uncle asked me to do my best to find them. It was impossible in Soviet times. In the 1990s I found two brothers, who saved him on the island and other people who saved our family. I plead for them to be recognized as righteous among the nations, some of them posthumously. Then I enjoyed doing that. I spend a lot of time in the archives, meet people, help them find those, who saved Jews in Lithuania. Owing to my modest work, many people became famous and got recognition and gratitude from the state of Israel. It is my last hobby. I think this is the most important thing in my life. Besides, I help out community members with some legal issues. I was raised in the lawyer's family and was taught how to make applications and claims. I also do it voluntarily.