

Dora Puchalskaya



This is me Dora Puchalskaya photographed during an interview on 10 August 2003. There are my embroideries on the wall and on the sofa is my pet Tom: the gift that I made for myself on 8 March.

My younger daughter Evgenia married a Ukrainian man after finishing school. His name was Grigori Kudiakov. Grigori went to serve in the army and in 1981 my daughter gave birth to a boy. She named him Grigori. When the child was one year old Evgenia and her husband's sister went to visit Grigori, her husband, in the north of Russia where he was on service. Grisha came to stay with them on a short leave. They stoked a stove in the house. They had a substantial dinner and they probably had a drink or few. They didn't open a choke in the stove and were poisoned with charcoal gas. Grigori survived and Evgenia and his sister died. I didn't think I could survive my younger daughter. One thing that helped me was caring about little Grigori.

My older son Anatoli entered a military school in Kamenets-Podolsk. After finishing it, he served in Georgia and then in Czechoslovakia. By that time he was married to a Ukrainian girl Maria. Then my son served in Latvia. His wife and their two daughters - Inna, born in 1976 and Anna, born in 1985 - were with him. In 1984 my son felt ill and came to me. He had to stay in bed. Doctors diagnosed that he had disseminated sclerosis. My son was ill for 17 years and for 15 of them he was confined to bed. His wife Maria only rarely visited her husband. I was trying to do all I could to help my son live longer. My husband died in 2000. I stayed with my son cooking for him and giving food. I invited best doctors to consult him, but even now medicine is helpless against this terrible disease. My son died in July 2003. I buried my son in accordance with Jewish traditions near my parents. Members of the Jewish community recited a prayer. Although Anatoli and my daughters were registered as Ukrainians, in his last years Anatoli read about Jews and Jewish life and felt closer to Jews.

The joy of my life is my grandson Grigori, Evgenia's son. I've raised him Jewish, telling him about the Jewish history, traditions and culture and took him to a Jewish Sunday school. Few years ago, in

1997 my grandson went to Israel under a students' exchange program and decided to remain there. He serves in Israeli army now. Grigori observes Jewish traditions. He is religious, but he isn't an orthodox Jew. He put a mezuzah on our front door. He calls me before each holiday, greets me and reminds me of what I have to do on each holiday. The other day he reminded me about fasting at Yom Kippur and I fasted.

I've never been well-off in my life, but when perestroika began in the late 1980s it made life unbearable. Therefore, I have negative feelings about perestroika. At the same time I am happy about a rebirth of the Jewish life. I am a member of the Jewish community in Ternopol. There is a Hesed affiliate that provides assistance to old Jews. They deliver food packages and send a nurse to help me. Besides, I receive a German pension as victim of Holocaust and I can manage all right. We always observed Jewish holidays in the family, particularly when my mother lived with us. We bought matzah in underground bakeries before Pesach and observed Rosh Hashanah. I must say that my husband showed understanding to our needs. Now I observe Sabbath, light candles and pray over them on Friday evenings. I do not attend community events since I will be in the mourning for Anatoli for a year. I used to go to the community on Jewish holidays. I enjoyed the celebrations. I cannot attend them now. There is a lot of joy and entertainment at these celebrations while I feel like thinking about my son and praying for him. Then I would like to visit Grisha in Israel. Perhaps, I shall go there for good.