

Grigory Gutgarts



This is a photograph of my husband Grigory Gutgarts.

I found a part-time job at a school in Kiev in January 1945. I met my future husband, Grigory Gutgarts, there. My husband was born to a Jewish family in Kiev in 1920. His father, Nohem Gutgarts, died when my husband was two years old. His mother remarried, and Grigory lived at his grandfather's. He finished secondary school and was an ordinary Soviet child. His family wasn't religious, so Grigory grew up an atheist. My husband understood a little Yiddish but couldn't speak it. In our family he took it up promptly. Sometimes he even used words that I didn't know.

Grigory entered the Sevastopol Navy School in 1939 when there was a Komsomol call to enter it. He had studied two years before the war. During the war the cadets were sent to the front near Novorossiysk. He was wounded there and stayed two weeks in hospital. He returned to the front and was wounded again in 1943. He was about to have his arm amputated, but a doctor from Leningrad saved him. He had a nerve wounded on his right hand and he couldn't control it. Then he was wounded on the head. He stayed in hospital in Kislovodsk for half a year and didn't return to the front afterwards. In 1944 he arrived in Kiev and got a job as a locksmith at the Lepse Plant. Soon his uncle, Matvey Gutgarts, returned from evacuation with his wife. They couldn't get their apartment back, although they had lost two sons on the front. Grigory helped them to get their apartment back and stayed with them. He wanted to get a job in Podol to be near where he lived. There was a position for a teacher of military disciplines open at the school where I worked and he got the job.

We decided to get married in 1945. We didn't have a wedding party. We couldn't afford it. Besides, my sister Sonia had died in a car accident on the eve of our wedding. We had a civil ceremony. However, my father was famous for knowing the Torah, and besides we lived near the only operating synagogue in Kiev, so Papa insisted that we had a wedding ceremony in the synagogue, too. We didn't understand much of it, but it was a very ceremonial and strict procedure.