

Leonid Aptekar With His Wife Enna, Daughter Svetlana And Grandson Vladislav



My family at our flat, from left to right: my wife Enna, me holding my older grandson Vladislav and my daughter Svetlana. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1985.

In 1950 I went to work at the 'Kist' company ['hand' in Russian] as a founder. There were good earnings and bonuses in the shop. Latter our shop was converted into a small plant. A short while later I went to work at the photo goods factory where I worked 42 years. I started working with plastic and in due time I became a caster. I worked decently. My colleagues treated me with respect.

We celebrated Soviet holidays at home: 1 May , 7 November [October revolution Day], Soviet army Day, New Year. Of course, my favorite holidays is Victory Day. If our army had not chased away the enemy from the USSR and other European countries the fascist black death would have spread all over the world. I had ambiguous feelings on this day. I was happy to have survived, of course, and have a family, have my daughter growing and then grandchildren, but there was always sadness and sorrow about those who became victims of this horrible war: my dear ones, friends and comrades. I always remember them. One cannot forget this.

Our only daughter Svetlana was born in December 1952. After finishing school Svetlana studied in Kiev Industrial high school. After finishing it she worked as a rate setter at a plant and later she became an economist. Later she went to work as an economist at the district trade department. In August 1975 Svetlana married Igor Benyumov, a nice Jewish guy. Igor was born in Kiev in 1951. He finished a college and worked as an engineer. They had a secular wedding. Traditional Jewish weddings were very rare at that time. My older grandson Vladislav was born in 1977, and Mikhail, the younger one, was born in 1985.

In the late 1980s the Jewish life revived in Ukraine. At first these were books of Jewish writers, which had not been published in the USSR since about the 1930s. There were plays by Jewish

writers staged in theaters and there were concerts of Jewish music. We were happy about it. Jewish newspapers and magazines started to be published, and various Jewish societies were established. The Hesed takes care of the young generation. I have two grandchildren and one great grandson and Hesed did a lot to raise them Jewish. Svetlana's husband, my son-in-law, also works in the Hesed. When the Jewish school was opened, my grandsons went to study there. They were eager to learn about Jewish traditions and the Jewish history. They also have classes where they study prayers. When in my older grandson's class the teacher asked who wanted to be circumcised, my grandson Vladislav was the first to raise his hand. The ceremony was conducted at the synagogue. My grandson went there with his father. At first the children had treatments and then the brit milah was conducted. Later my younger grandson was also circumcised. My grandchildren are religious. They have everything a Jew needs for a prayer: a tallit and tefillin. Their life is still ahead of them and I hope they will be all right.