

Grigory Gendler And His Classmates



This photograph, taken in Moscow in 1937, shows me and my classmates.

We are pupils of the 8th form.

At school I came across no manifestations of anti-Semitism and till the 8th class did not know my nationality. My parents never spoke about it.

I was an excellent pupil; I liked to study very much. Every subject was easy for me: literature, mathematics, etc. I used to take part in different contests for schoolchildren. I remember that one day my teacher of Russian language Antonina Ivanovna said that in her opinion I should become a professor in the future.

Our teacher of physics was a very interesting person, he was elegant in dress. I remember that our teacher of biology Bella (I do not remember her patronymic), a Jewess pronounced the word myasso (meat) in a very funny manner.

In my early childhood when we got to Moscow, my parents bought a violin for me, but my studies lasted not long: my family could not afford my lessons.

I remember that in 1930 (when people suffered from starvation) my parents sold their wedding rings and bought tasty meals in Torgsin store.

During my school years I was engaged in amateur art activities, an actor Yemelyanov from the Vakhtangov theatre taught us. We put on the stage "Gypsies" by Pushkin. I read the narrator's text, and my friend Tolya played the role of the old gipsy. I also recited the poem To The Sea by Pushkin, and got a diploma for it.

When I was a pupil of the 8th and 9th form, I studied at a glider school. There I learned to make short climbs, but did not fly. I remember the opening ceremony of the Palace of Pioneers in 1937 or 1938. N. Khrushchev was present at it (at that time he was a secretary of the Moscow CPSU committee). I was an active pioneer.

I visited Yumashev [Andrey Yumashev was a test pilot, a member of the Gromov's crew - participant of the flight over the North Pole in 1937] and Krestinsky [Nikolay Krestinsky was a Soviet CPSU and statesman, in 1930-1938 he was a USSR deputy people's commissar of foreign affairs] to invite them to our school. Yumashev did not come, and Krestinsky came and gave us a lecture.

In my childhood I was lucky to see Chkalov and his son in Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. I heard that his son said to him 'Daddy, look! Here is your portrait'.

At school I was the chairman of the group pioneer organization. Kanina, our school director was an Honored Worker of Education; she was always nice to me. I had got a schoolmate Boris Goldin, who became an outstanding architect later.

After school (in 1939) I entered college without entrance examinations (because my school leaving certificate was full of excellent marks). My parents did not interfere and I chose the Moscow College of Philosophy, History and Literature named after Chernyshevsky (philosophical faculty).

I studied 3 months and a half, and was called up for military service. Later my parents helped me to transfer to the correspondence department of the Moscow State University (by the way, during the war the Moscow College of Philosophy, History and Literature was liquidated).