

## Igor Lerner And His Granddaughters



This photograph shows me with my granddaughters. And I'll tell you about my children and children's children.

My son Alexander graduated from the Shipbuilding College in 1977. [The Leningrad Shipbuilding College was founded in 1902.] He worked at the design office of the factory producing escalators for underground. I wanted him to work in GIPH, but he refused flatly. At that time I did not understand him, but later I realized that he planned to emigrate to Israel, and his possible work in GIPH could become an insuperable obstacle. He knew that GIPH employees had a let-pass and were permitted neither to go abroad, nor to communicate with foreigners. Alexander took it into account.

But there was another difficulty. I had to grant him an exit authorization. Alexander brought a paper for me to sign. I realized that the next day after signing the document, I should be fired. Therefore I refused. Then my son sent me an official certified document by mail. It read the following: I was obliged to list (in written form) my claims to my son. If I failed within 2 months, it meant my consent automatically. I addressed some people in GIPH (experts in such affairs). They confirmed my fears saying that if my son left, I would be fired immediately. OK, I listed my claims. Several years later (already under Gorbachev) the same people said 'Now let him go'. I signed all the papers, and my son left. At present he lives in Chicago. He has got a daughter.

After my first wife's death I thought I would never marry once more. But I was carried along by my destiny. My second wife also worked in GIPH, she also held a high position. We got married in 1965, and in 1967 our son Oleg was born. We did our best to give Oleg everything possible: when he was a boy, I went with him to hockey and figure skating training groups; he studied at a musical school and finished it successfully. We visited puppet theaters, and usually bought season tickets to the Kirov Opera and Ballet theatre. I think we put our souls into him and he grew up a very good person. He does not smoke, does not drink, he has got a good family: 3 children. All his children are girls, therefore I think they will give birth to more and more children, waiting for a boy. Oleg graduated from the Technological College (like me). At present he is a businessman.

Here I'll get back a little. When Oleg was 16 years old, he had to receive his passport. His patronymic was Izraelevich. I went to the local civilian registry office and asked to change my name Israel for Igor (on account of disharmony). They examined my application very long, but after all they complied with my request. I changed all my documents. Oleg got patronymic Igorevich, but Alexander did not want to. My old friends call me Israel (of course), but I introduce myself to new ones as Igor. I already got accustomed.

My both sons studied at school very well, and gave us no troubles.

We lived OK and had many friends, but unfortunately most of them are already not with us.

After my second wife's death in 2000, I consumed away with grief. And now it is very difficult for me to speak about her. Don't hold it as a grievance against me, but I still cannot speak about her, it still hurts me.

Almost every year we together with children went to the Black Sea to spend summer vacations. We used to rent a room at the same owners. They said that we became more than their relatives.

I always worked much. Besides during my life I had to go through 2 periods of great starvation (I guess the worst ones in the history of mankind): starvation in Ukraine and blockade of Leningrad. Of course they had an effect on my health: I had problems with my gastrointestinal tract. I started treatment in sanatoria. At first I went there alone. When I became older, I asked for 2 permits: for me and for my wife. After sanatorium I always felt much better. In addition to it we had got a dacha near Leningrad. Now I sold it: without my wife it was unbearable for me to stay there. I also sold my car: at present I want to go nowhere.

I'd like to tell you about my granddaughters separately. I think that they saved my life. After my second wife's death I was completely confused, I did not know how to go on living. My son took me to his place, not listening to my objections. When the girls were born, my life gained sense. My heart went out to these children, and they loved me too. During celebration of my 80th anniversary I said that Oleg and his wife took care of me, and my beloved granddaughters made me happy. It's true!