

Vera Dreezo Near Her Relatives' Grave



I am photographed near my relatives' grave. Kiev, 2002.

In 1960 I went to work as a consultant at Kiev Institute of advanced training of teachers. I was responsible for making arrangements for conferences, discussions of new school curricula, innovations and school academic plans. I retired from this position in 1984.

We didn't observe any Jewish traditions. I even didn't know any. We would have been even afraid of coming close to a synagogue. Of course, I cannot turn to religion at the end of my life or observe any traditions or celebrate holidays. We celebrated Soviet and family events and holidays and invited my colleagues and later - my son's friends.

In 1991 perestroika began. [Editors note: perestroika started in the mid 80s. In 1991 communism finally fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated.] My son and his wife lost their jobs. My granddaughter entered the music school named after Lysenko and they needed money to pay for her studies. Their situation was very hard. Somebody recommended me to go to Hesed, this charity organization. I liked the friendly atmosphere there and nice people. They provided food assistance and medications to people. I also wanted to do something good. I suggested that I could read lectures. In 1992 was 90th birthday anniversary of Ovsey Driez and we made a very nice soiree dedicated to him. I spoke about him. To prepare for my lectures I went to libraries and archives and read magazines and newspapers. I got acquainted with the Jewish culture not going too deep into Judaism. The lectures that I read can be united under the title 'Jews and the world culture'.

Neither my son nor I have considered emigration. Aleksei and his wife work for private business that has nothing to do with their education. They deal in commerce. I can't speak for my children, but speaking for myself I can say that I've found my niche. Of course, it's not easy to lecture to people and travel a lot, but it's interesting. I meet with many nice people traveling to Ukrainian towns. I lecture to them and they tell me about themselves. This gives me a feeling of the fullness of life.