

## Yevgenia Kozak With Her Older Son Alexey



This is me with my older son Alexey. This photo was taken for the memory in 1954 in Bershad. Once in 1952 mama's old acquaintance offered to introduce me to her distant relative Meyer Kozak. I liked Meyer. We got married in 1953. Life was getting better and I even thought that my fortune smiled at me, but it happened to be an illusion. On 11 February 1954 my son was born. We named him Alexey. Shortly afterward I got pregnant again. As for Meyer, he fell severely ill. When I was pregnant 5 months, Meyer died from tuberculosis in hospital in Odessa. I was struck with grief. Mama and I went to the funeral. On our way back my son got severely injured - his hand was squeezed by the door. He burst into tears and I finally started crying. Now I knew I alone had to raise our children. My second child was born in late 1955. I named him Mikhail after his father Meyer. My parents helped me to raise the children. In 1958 I went to the town committee to ask them to help me with employment. My boys were with me. They gave me a job of a janitor and then I became a worker in the dyeing shop where I worked till I retired. My older son to go to a kindergarten. Mama looked after my younger son. My work was very hard: there was no heating and it was freezing in winter. There were also hazardous vapors from paints, but I was glad to have this job. In the morning taking a slice of bread - my lunch - I ran to work and returned home late in the evening. I worked overtime to earn more. In the evening I did the laundry and fed my kids trying to give them whatever little bit of motherly care. My older son Alexey had all excellent marks at school. His teachers praised him at parents' meetings at school and thanked me for raising them well and I listened proudly. After finishing the 8th form with all excellent marks - and I was sitting in the presidium, when he obtained his certificate, my son finished the Radio Electronics College in Lvov and served in the army. Then he met Yelena, a Jewish girl from Leningrad, married her and moved to Leningrad where her family lived. From the very beginning I didn't quite get along with my daughter-in-law. She probably thought I was an uneducated provincial Jewish woman and didn't pay much attention to me. She didn't even want to send her son Maxim, born in 1989, to Bershad in summer. However hard life was, we continued to observe Jewish traditions. My parents went to an old synagogue (the new one had been removed) but that one was all right. On Saturday father didn't work and mama tried to cook something special: latkes, kugel, even there was nothing else, but flour that she had. Father always brought matzah from the synagogue on holidays, or sometimes we made it in the Russian stove. We fasted on Yom Kippur and I still keep fasting

nowadays. On Chanukkah mama made buckwheat pancakes. My children also know this holiday - they always got a few coins for sweets on this day.