

Rimma Leibert



This is me again. This photo was taken in Ternopol in September 2003 during the interview in the Ternopol hotel. In 1956 I got employment at the Ternopol Department of Cinema Logistics where I worked as an engineer/economist till retirement. I also entered the extramural department of Kiev College of Public Economy and finished it. I had no conflicts or problems at work. Everything went quiet. I dutifully did my work as an engineer of the cinema physical plant. I got a small salary that was only enough buy sufficient food, necessary clothes and spend one week per year in the Crimea. I've never dreamed of having a car, a dacha or traveling far away. However, the majority of people in the USSR lived like this, and I never felt uncomfortable about it. I've never met a man, whom I might fall in love with and who would be close spiritually to me. Firstly, there've never been Jews in my surrounding, and I've felt antagonism from others. Generally, I've been humble in life and it's been hard for me to make a closer acquaintance with somebody. It seems to me, I've grown up in the warm atmosphere of our home and was afraid that I would not love or be loved. I had friends and we went to the cinema and theaters and on tours together, but there was nobody with whom I might want to live my life. At work I was an active Komsomol member and even applied to the party, but the party district committee invited me there telling me that I wasn't mature enough to join the party. This was another demonstration of anti-Semitism. My stepfather felt so sorry for me. He told me to not reapply to the party. I became even quieter, worked mechanically and tried to not stand out. So I kept living in the apartment with mama, stepfather and my brother's family. My mother died in 1991. A year and nine months later my stepfather passed away. Since then I've lived with my brother's family. My brother Eugeniy finished a music school and worked as a music teacher for some time, but later he began to play in restaurants and organized his own band. His wife Galina is Ukrainian. Boris, Eugeniy's only son, born in 1977, is my joy and delight. I helped to raise him and I feel happy for his successes. After finishing school Boris moved to Israel under a students' exchange program. He now studies in the University in Karmi'el in Israel. Galina has visited him there and now my brother's family is going to move to Israel. I will probably go with them. Traveling will be hard and I will have to cope with the hot climate in Israel, but I am so eager to see Israel. I dream of approaching the Wailing Wall and visit towns in Israel and I hope to be needed in Israel and if not - I will come back here. Besides, a short time after my stepfather died, I was forced to retire before time since I was the only Jewish employee at my work.

I was having a hard time, but it happened so that at that time I came to the newly founded Jewish community in Ternopol. I felt myself at home and among my own people. I became an activist in the community. I go there for Sabbath every week, I help them to prepare for Jewish holidays, enjoy their celebration and study Yiddish in the community. I like everything about it. I feel that I missed a lot, when I was young. My mother or father were far from the Jewish life, but now I feel like discovering the Jewish world.