

Sarra Shylman With Her Colleagues



Me, the first on the right and my colleagues during a parade on 1 May. Amateur photo. Kiev, 1954.

In 1952 my father's acquaintance helped me to get a job of a lab assistant in the factory of musical instruments I had a small salary, but I liked my job. There was a clasp in tape recorders. It had to be solid enough and my task was to inspect its solidity. I began to modify the process. I was a beauty and my chief fell in love with me. He arranged for my transfer to the quality assurance department. I was responsible for determining thickness of units and accuracy of turner work. But I was a production engineer with higher education and had to do such unqualified work! I felt hurt and I quit. There was a Stroyindustria Design Institute in Kreschatik [main street in Kiev] and my father's acquaintance helped me to get a job there. I worked as a production engineer for designing of brick factories in Kiev region. I often went on business trips and I got familiar with the process in no time and soon I was doing work on the level of chief engineer.

Once I returned from another business trip and got to know that my management had increased my salary and promoted me. The next day I was fired. Besides me, Luba Bencionova was fired. Her father-in-law Bencionov was chief modeler in Kiev. Chief engineer of the institute Sokolovski asked Bencionov to make a nice coat for his wife. That modeler was probably too busy and didn't make a coat. They fired us both: Luba due to her father-in-law and me because I was a Jew. Some time before this chief of our estimation department offered me a job. I went to talk to him. There were about 20 employees in the room. He took my passport and began to read aloud 'Shylman Surah-Leya Duvidovna'. I was still Surah by my passport. I changed my name to Sarra later. 'Shylman Surah-Leya, you know, we have no vacancies left'. I turned my back to him and walked out, I was walking along the street crying. I changed my name in 1961 for convenience and simpler pronunciation.

There was a small design institute nearby. Luba Bencionova's husband was chief engineer in this institute. He helped Luba to get a job there and later Luba helped me to get a job of design production engineer. I got a task to design manufacture of bricks from brown coal. I made a design

of a brick factory in a village. Later I made a design of a chalk factory. Then there was another project: separation of molding at the 'Leninskaya kuznia' plant. However, I didn't like the atmosphere in our group. There were few of us and everybody thought he didn't fit in there.

In 1955 I met with my cousin Yefim, my mother sister Fania's son, and told him that I was looking for a job. He spoke with chief of the design technical bureau of the construction materials trust who told him to invite me to come to see him. He employed me as a designer. They had got an order to design an automatic line at the brick factory in Podol. I took those drawings home, reviewed them and came to the office to work. I made sketches for production engineers and they were to make drawings based on my sketches. We received a bonus for this job. I was designer and received 125 rubles. I bought a wireless, it still works. I liked my job in this bureau and I worked there until I retired in 1976.