

Faina Gheller With Her Husband Mark Gheller



I am marrying Mark Gheller. The registrar hands our marriage certificate to us during the ceremony.

This photo was made in Saratov in 1966.

I was born in Saratov on 30 April 1941. I went to kindergarten at the age of 6 in 1947. Before this I stayed at home with mother or, if mother was busy, my older sister or brother looked after me or I was taken to my maternal grandmother who lived in Saratov at that time.

We, children, made fairy tale performances and concerts in the yard. We made costumes and stage scenery ourselves and invited adults. We even made tickets and gave them to adults. We were a big success. I played with boys for the most part: we played 'highwaymen' and football where I was a goalkeeper.

We were very poor. I went to school in 1948 wearing the dress that both of my sisters had worn before me. My mother patched it and my father made me a bag. Life was poor, but interesting. We had plain food. I went to the Russian grammar school for girls. When I was in the 6th form schools for boys and girls merged and I was transferred to a different school. I

had many friends. I went in for sports: skiing and volleyball in winter and racing bicycle in summer. I spent all my spare time in a gym. I took an active part in public life at school. I was chairman of a pioneer unit council, chairman of the school pioneer unit council, head girl of my class and chief of Komsomol unit.

I was a strong girl and had authority in my class. My favorite subject at school was mathematic. I read round the clock. The power was cut off at night and I read with a kerosene lamp burning or candles.

I spent my summer vacations in pioneer camps. This was wonderful time. We were taken out of town near Saratov where there were wooden summer houses on the bank of the Volga.

There were 6-7 groups of children in the camp, 20-25 children of the same age in each group. We went hiking played sports games, has track-and-field contents, gathered around fire in the evenings, baked potatoes and sang songs. We visited relatives and I spent a lot of time with my friends.

After finishing school in 1959 I entered the Faculty of Energy in the Polytechnic College of Saratov. After finishing this college I worked as production engineer in the electric engineering shop, then operations engineer in a design institute and then I became a designer.

The story of my acquaintance with my husband was traditional and customary for the time. We met through matchmakers. Shadkhanim existed in all times. They worked secretly in synagogues.

Some people liked to make others happy and despite all prohibitions they collected information about young people to make matches of young people. Of course, they kept these activities in secret, but all Jews knew that they could get this service for a small fee at the synagogue.

Several times people from the synagogue came to offer me an acquaintance. It was a routinely matter since my mother was Jewish and she believed this was the only way to arrange marriages. She addressed this matter to the synagogue and they brought a bunch of fiances to be whom I didn't like whatsoever.

My future husband Mark Gheller, a Jew, came to spend vacation with his brother who lived across the street from our house. At first we became friends and didn't make any plans for the future. My mother wanted me to meet a Jewish boy.

My mother made every effort that I married Mark . Mark was in no hurry to put an end to his bachelor's life. We got married few years after we met. Mark served in the army three years and then returned to Saratov. He went to work and we continued seeing each other two more years.

We registered our marriage in 1966.

We didn't have a chuppah at the synagogue. We began to live with my mother. I have two sons: Dmitri Gheller, an older one, was born in Saratov in 1967, and in 1974 my second son Albert was born.