

Efim Finkel With His Wife Olga Poliakova-Finkel And Son Oleg Poliakov-Finkel



It is me, Efim Finkel, my wife Olga and son Oleg Poliakov-Finkel on Victory Day, May, 9 1958. Photo made in Chernovtsy. I met my future wife Olga Poliakova in Vinnitsa in 1946, when visiting my acquaintances. We got married soon. She was Russian. In 1947 our only son Oleg was born. In 1948 my brother wrote me that there was a vacancy at a car pool enterprise in Chernovtsy. I asked a job assignment to work there and got it. We moved to Chernovtsy and I worked at the enterprise for 25 years before I retired. After we moved we lived with my brother and his wife in their small 2-room apartment. We stayed in one room and my brother and his wife lived in another. At leisure

time we went to the cinema and theatre. My brother and I went to the Jewish theater. Sometimes our friends came to visit us. In a year I received an apartment from the enterprise where I worked. My wife got a job at primary school. I liked Chernovtsy and its spiritual and cultural atmosphere. Jews had constituted half of population of Chernovtsy before the Great Patriotic War. I was told that there was a Jewish ghetto in the town during the war. Even after the war people that went through the horrors of the ghetto spoke Yiddish in the streets, went to synagogues and sent their children to the Jewish school. They were not afraid of showing their Jewish identity and found sympathy and understanding with people of other nationalities. Residents of Chernovtsy dressed in a nice fashionable manner. Men wore kippah at the synagogue only. After the war there was one synagogue in Chernovtsy. There was a Jewish theater in the town attended by Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals. There were no signs of anti-Semitism that was already felt in central parts of Ukraine. Unfortunately, I didn't keep any Jewish way of life after I married a Russian woman that was also a convinced atheist. At first I attended the synagogue in Chernovtsy to have Kaddish said after my family, but gradually I began to get adjusted to my wife's way of life. Jewish traditions were out of the question in our family. I am not a fighter, unfortunately. It was easier for me to give in than insist on my own ideas. I became a nobody - neither Jew nor Russian. Olga didn't celebrate any religious holidays. Christian holidays were as far from her as Jewish. She was a typical Soviet person that was raised an atheist and I became like her. My brother didn't keep any Jewish traditions. I don't know whether it had to do with his wife or it was just the spirit of the time. We led a quiet life watching TV in the evenings. We bought our first TV set in 1960's. We only communicated with my brother's family and our colleagues. It was not often. We invited them to our house or went to visit them. We celebrated birthdays in the family. My wife made a dinner and we had guests. We had a good time talking and singing Soviet songs. We didn't celebrate Soviet or religious holidays at home and didn't travel on vacations. We didn't earn much and when we could buy our son a vacation in a pioneer camp we were quite happy.