

Jerzy Holder



This is my son Jerzy. The photo was taken in Warsaw in the middle of the 1970s after he graduated. I suppose he needed it for his passport.

I had my first child Piotr in 1948, but he died within 12 hours. In the army hospital, in Warsaw, he was taken to the other world. In 1949 my second son, Jerzy, was born, so we hovered over him. I even went to Wroclaw [to an expert in high-risk pregnancies] to give birth to him. Then we came back to Warsaw. There was an very good nanny and a maid. There was a very good nanny and a maid. So I finally went out to work, because we had to pay for all of it somehow. In 1954 I went on a year-long drafting course. I completed it, I even have the certificate, but I can draft just about as well as I can sew. So obviously I didn't work in that line, but as a secretary in an office of this state enterprise, Construction of Housing for Workers, BOR. First I was in the department of planning, but I just couldn't get it. Even today if they ask me to plan something, you can guess what it's going to look like. We had a manager who couldn't even sign his name, illiterate. So I said, 'I don't want anything to do with that kind of education.' Later I was the secretary of the main Director. I was bored witless, I read books, because he went to conferences every day and there was nothing for me to do. I didn't work there long, a year maybe. After that, I don't think I worked anywhere else.

During the summer we went to those government resorts, in Bulgaria, Hungary and the GDR. But I wasn't proud of that or happy about it. I knew people held it against us, particularly that we were Jews.

My son studied foreign trade. I wanted him very much to leave [Poland]. He gave up his studies to go abroad, but they wouldn't let him go. He had to do something, so he went to work for this company producing glass containers. But as soon as he started working, he got his draft card from the army. Our home was in a state of panic, almost like during the occupation. An acquaintance interceded on our behalf to get him enrolled as a student again, even though a year had already passed since he left. He did manage to become a student again and did very well. After he graduated he went abroad, first to Sweden-after all, so many different people went there at the time-and then to France, then London and finally West Germany, to the Gotfryds. Finally he called me from Germany to say that he was coming back. I can't believe he got out only to come back...

My son then started working for PAP [the Polish Press Agency]. The third husband of my friend Marysia called him because he speaks very fluent English, and asked him if he wouldn't like the job. He's been working there for 20-25 years now. He is a translator in what may still be called 'the English office.' We don't observe any Jewish traditions in our home, except my son buys matzah in this store at Twarda [the Synagogue and Jewish Theater are also on that street]. I don't eat it, because it's not what matzah used to be. But my son eats it for dessert after supper. I think he feels himself to be a Pole with Jewish roots.