

Sarah Kaplan With Her Husband



My second husband Zeilik Kaplan (on the left) and me with our acquaintance on vacation in Essentuki in the 1950s.

In 1943 I met a Jewish barber in Kazan. His name was Zeilik Kaplan. He came from Mohilev-Podolsk. He was on business in Kazan when the war began. His wife and daughter perished in the ghetto in Mohilev-Podolsk. Zeilik and I fell in love and began to live together. We stayed with Tamila. I went to work at the barber shop of the military unit and Zeilik worked there, too. In 1943 the situation became easier. The officers shared bread and sugar with us knowing that our children were hungry. My son grew attached to Zeilik; they became friends. Zeilik read books to him in the evening.

When Kiev was liberated in December 1944 my son and I went home. We came to Moscow to see Shunia's parents. My mother-in-law got very attached to her grandson. She didn't want to let him go with me. She convinced me to let Izia stay with her because the war was still on and there were Germans in Ukraine. I decided it was alright for my son to stay with her.

I arrived in Kiev. The city was ruined. Zeilik's relative Mendel met me at the railway station. He put me on the train to Berdichev. I didn't recognize my town or our house. After some time Zeilik arrived at his relative Mendel's place in Kiev. We got married shortly after. We had a civil ceremony and began our life together in Mendel's one-bedroom apartment. When the war was over Mendel helped us to obtain a license, and we opened a barber-shop at the Evbaz. [Editor's note: Evbaz is the name of the Jewish bazaar, an old Jewish neighborhood in the center of Kiev.] However, there

was too little space in Mendel's apartment and we had to think about getting a dwelling of our own. At that time people were recruited to work in Western Ukraine and the Baltic Republics that had joined the USSR some time before. We were attracted by the promise to get a job and a place to live and went to Chernovtsy. There was work, but we didn't get an apartment. In 1950 my husband and I arrived in Lvov where my husband's uncle lived.

I still had some money left from selling the house. We bought an apartment and paid for the license to open a barber-shop. The shop was in the bigger room of the house. Zeilik was a barber, and I was a hairdresser. We lived in the small room in the back of the house. We had many clients and made a good living. We went to the theater and to resorts in the Crimea and the Caucasus.