Evgenia Ershova And Her Older Sister Eleonora Gutianskaya

My older sister, Eleonora Gutianskaya (left) with me, Evgenia Gutianskaya Ershova. This photo was taken in Kiev in the early 1950s. We were taking a walk and dropped by a photography shop. Eleonora (Ella) was born in 1929. She gained admission to the Faculty of Philology at Kiev State University in 1948. This was the last year Jews were admitted to institutions of higher education. Upon graduation my sister went to work at the town of Kuzmina Greblia in Cherkassy. There, she worked for many years as a teacher of Russian language and literature at the secondary school.

She also organized a folk choir and an amateur theater. She returned to Kiev in 1970. Eleonora did not marry and had no children. She died from cancer in 1994. I was born on August 20, 1937. My sister Ella went to school that same year. After the war I studied at the Russian secondary school. I was a Soviet child, went to the May Day parades, collected waste paper (this was a popular pioneer activity) and was a Komsomol member. It wasn't that I liked it so much, but it was the only life we knew and we couldn't imagine a different life. In summer I went to pioneer camps near Kiev. I liked it there. We had lots of fun regardless of the strict discipline and lining up twice a day. We marched around singing patriotic songs. In our first years at school we Jewish children felt no prejudiced attitudes towards us. We were all children of war. Many of us lost fathers to the war, and many of the children lost parents in the Babiy Yar massacre. Our teachers sympathized with us. After my graduation in 1954 I went to work as a laborer at the glass factory. I didn't even consider going to the Institute. It was almost impossible for a Jew to enter the Institute. Besides, I wasn't very successful at school with my studies. In addition, we were very poor, and I understood that I had to go to work to earn money. Later I finished a course for radio operators and got a job at the military unit.