

Mina Gomberg With Her Parents Surah And Ilia Roitman



My parents Surah and Ilia Roitman and I on my last day at secondary school before the final exams. I went to Russian secondary schooling Kiev. I did well at school. I became a pioneer when I was 9 and a Komsomol member when I was 14. I took part in various activities at school. I was responsible for the wall newspaper at school. I was also a pioneer tutor in the 1st grade. I took the children to museums and theaters and arranged parties for them on New Year's and on Soviet

holidays. When I was in the 4th grade I was elected chairman of the school pioneer unit, and I was a member of the school Komsomol committee. I had many friends at school. My closest friends were Nelia Vakulenko and Inna Geizer, two Jewish girls. Nelia's parents worked at an office, and Inna's parents were workers at one of the plants in Kiev. I had no more contact with them after we finished school and thus don't have any information about what they did later. While at school I spent my summer vacations in the pioneer camp Smena near Kiev. I liked it there and stayed in the camp as long as I could. We went swimming and lay in the sun and participated in all kinds of activities such as games and sport competitions. I also read a lot. I read fiction, love stories and Russian and foreign classics. I don't remember any demonstrations of anti-Semitism at school or in the camp. We believed everything the official propaganda told people about the prompt victory of communism all over the world and about the leading role of the Communist Party in the struggle for communism. My mother was a dedicated party official and had no other thoughts but those about Marxism-Leninism. I finished school in 1953. At that time it was next to impossible for a Jew to enter a higher educational institute in Kiev. We knew some very smart and talented children of my father's friends failing to enter institutes. Each time after exams they were told that they failed to win in the 'competition of grades' [it was necessary to get a certain number of grades based on the results of entrance exams], but it was clear that the reason was their Jewish nationality and anti-Semitism in the country. I went to the Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad. I passed my entrance exams with two '5' grades [highest] and two '4' grades [good], and the total sum of these grades wasn't sufficient to win the competition. I was ashamed to go back to Kiev with such poor results. I entered the Faculty of Electronics at the Electro Vacuum College in Leningrad. I rented a room for 20 rubles - that was half my stipend. I fell in love with the beautiful city and spent all my free time in museums and theaters. My parents sent me some money. I mainly had non-Jewish friends. I only communicated with them while studying in the College.