

Chasia Spanerflug With Her Friend Fanya Brantsovskaya



This is me, Chasia Spanerflug (on the right) with my friend Fanya Brantsovskaya, The photo was taken in Vilnius in 2004.

We had a lot of friends, but the most loyal were our bosom friends: Mikhail and Fanya Brantsovskiy. We often spent time together on the weekends, went for a picnic or to the beach. In September 1967 my husband died. The Brantsovskiys were constantly by me, and Mikhail Brantovskiy stayed with me at nights. Mikhail was buried with honors, at a military cemetery. I remained on my own with two children and 800 rubles in the saving bank – it was the only thing we had. We had neither a car nor a dacha. For about a month I was beside myself. My friends came over and told me something, even fed the children. So...life is life. I was to be a mother and a father to my children. I devoted my entire life to them. We were rather well-off. I got benefits for the children. I was a very young and beautiful woman, but I didn't want to look at men. I didn't want to take care of my life and I had no time for it. I didn't go to the theater or cinema. My friends were my joy. I can say from the bottom of my heart that the Brantsovskiys were like kin, sharing my joys and troubles. Mikhail helped my daughter enter the institute.

In the early 1990s Mikhail Brantsovskiy died, and Fanya became a widow as well. When the Jewish community was founded, Fanya and I were some of the first who went there. We suggested working there as volunteers. I wanted to work for the department of the veterans of war, and Fanya for the department of ghetto prisoners. Both of us are former ghetto prisoners and veterans of war. I have a medal for participation in the partisan squad. Fanya and I worked a lot, went from house to house, arranged get-togethers for veterans, published their stories for everybody to find out that Jews had struggled as well as other people of other nationalities.

And now the community means a lot to me. I go to work every other day and I feel an incentive. I take care of my looks and try not to give in to illnesses. I also brought my son to the community: he takes lunches to those old people who can't come and get lunch. Fanya and I are very much respected. We are honored members of the community. We are often invited to take the floor on the occasion of holidays and anniversary events. Fanya and I are bosom friends. We had a lot in common when we were young: ghetto, partisan squad and also the post-war life. Now we see our calling in the Jewish community. I am not a religious person and I am not going to change, but I am happy to go back to Jewish traditions: celebrate Sabbath and Jewish holidays in the community, fast on Yom Kippur. It brings me closer to my Jewish roots.