

# Efim Geifman

Efim Geifman

Kiev

Ukraine

Interviewer: Elena Tsarovskaya

Date of Interview: December 2001

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[After the War](#)

[Glossary](#)

## My family background

I was born on 8 August 1923 in the small town of Novograd-Volysk in Zhytomir region. My ancestors must have come from Belarus. I had many relatives there. My grandfather, my father's father, Elia Berko Geifman lived in Novograd-Volynskiy. He had a small house there. There were three rooms and a carpenter's shop in this house. My grandfather was a carpenter. Perhaps, somebody still has those solid pieces of furniture that he made. There was always a lot of freshly cut shavings in his shop. This smell has become the smell of childhood to me. There was a small vegetable garden and an orchard near the house, but no cattle. My grandfather and grandmother were living in one room. There was a second little room with a small window in it that was meant to be mine later. My grandfather died in the early 30s. I remember him well saying his evening prayer wearing his tahles. He was prayed each day, often went in the synagogue, but me this not much interested. Clothing he was either as all handicraftsman, usually, only on the head always was hat. My mother called him and her own parents orthodox believers (orthodox here – extreme believers). I have no idea what was the name of Elia Berko's wife and my grandmother. She was just a Granny, wearing her shawl tied under her chin, and an apron (there were always dried pumpkinseeds in its pocket that she readily treated me with). In third room of this building live Israel, the only brother of my father, his wife Feiga and their many children (Grisha and Fania – the children of his first wife that died; Raya, Abrasha, Bella, Petia, Sonia, Rosochka and Fierochka were born in his 2nd marriage). I was very close with Fania (1907–1983). After their wedding my parents took her to their family. Father much liked Fania, and she was to him clinging. Feiga was not Fania's mother, and her was difficult to contain such greater family. She looked after me and loved me very much. Later she married my father's colleague Boris and moved to Kiev. Uncle Israel, Fania's father, had no education or profession. His 2nd wife Feiga was the breadwinner in the family. She was very handy. She did this and that, made little pancakes and sold them, sold something at the market and did whatever she could to support the family. Three of her children Grisha, Raya, Petia and became typesetters in a printing house. Raya was in evacuations in Chkalovsk. Her son become to the scientist, physicist, he after the war has left to work in

Leningrad. Presently it lives in Sankt-Peterburg, brings up grandsons. Petia waged war the whole war with 1941 before 1945 ordinary soldier, has finished a war in Berlin. Married, live in Belorussia, worked on post. Died In 1970s. He's son and daughter live in USA. Bella live in Ovruch, died before the war from some diseases. Abrasha studied in the Leningrad Aeronautical Institute (after finishing Jewish school in Novograd-Volynskiy). He was a pilot during the war. He died in the rank of lieutenant colonel in Kiev some time in the 1980. He's daughter Ella lives in USA in Baltimor. Firochka was the most small, she brought up Abrasha, as he's native daughter. After, she has married and has left in Belorussia. In Minsk she worked a master at the factory beside it three sons. In 1979 they have left with USA. Relationships with they are broken.

I not litter in the house of grandparent of religious holidays. Anyway, I not know that anyone from he's families kept traditions.

Lashanovskiys, my mother's parents, had a house in a different part of Novograd-Volynskiy. It was located not far from my Granny Geifman's house. Their house was different from the house of my grandfather Geifman. Theirs was a big house with big rooms. There was a kitchen, a bedroom and a living room in the house. My mother and I lived in this house for a very short time. I remember my grandmother wearing a wig. Their last name Lashanovskiys derives from the name of a little town Loshanka or Lashenka somewhere in Poland. My mother's grandfather came from this town. He was a cattle dealer. My grandfather Berko Lashanovskiy was his son and was involved in the same business. So was my mother's brother Petia. But this business didn't bring them any riches. My grandfather Berko Lashanovskiy had died some time before my birth. My mother told me that his last wish was to have the ritual of circumcision performed if they gave birth to a boy. They had a different opinion on this subject but dared not to disobey. I don't remember the name of Berko's wife, my mother's mother. She died from cancer in 1928 or 1929. Besides my mother, the Lashanoskiys had three sons and a daughter. Yakov, the oldest, was good at playing chess. He moved to the United States in 1905. He was single. After the revolution the family heard that he died. Aron (Arun), another brother, also died very young, but I don't know the reason why. His sister Sarah (Surah) married somebody by the name of Gorodetskiy in 1915 and moved to Alexandria (near the town of Rovno) where he lived. Gorodetskiy was a very well to do man. He owned a mill. After the revolution the Rovno region belonged to Poland. This was so until 1939. We were separated with our relatives by the borders. My mother's brother Petia, his wife Luba and daughter Golda (they called her Galia) lived in the village of Rykhalskoye in the vicinity of Novograd-Volynskiy. I spent almost every summer in my uncle's family when I was a child. He had a house and kept poultry and cattle. His wife Luba was a plain Jewish housewife. But my uncle was very religious and prayed every day, although he didn't understand a word in Yiddish. However, he knew his prayers and knew how to observe the rules. There were kosher dishes and kitchenware in the house. But when I was visiting them Luba used to fry eggs on pork fat, and my uncle was naïve enough to think that it was done on a different frying pan. However, he allowed himself some violation of the rules. On Friday night he used to secretly smoke a cigarette that he rolled for himself after a substantial supper. My uncle had a horse. He said that one had to treat her with the utmost respect considering her age. Once this horse got loose and broke into somebody's vegetable garden. This happened on a Friday night, when my uncle was praying. I ran to him to tell him to get the horse out of that garden, but he just showed by the intonation to leave him alone, murmuring his prayer. So Luba and I had to go after this runaway horse and take her back to where she belonged. Here's another story. Once uncle Petia and another farmer bought a haystack (the

two of them were going to share this one haystack). This farmer insisted on delivering this hay on Saturday. It looked like a storm and my uncle agreed. I put harness on the horse under my uncle's supervision. My uncle was walking beside the wagon (he walked with a stick, as he had a broken his leg). I had the reins. We came to the spot where some guys loaded our and that farmer's wagon with hay for a pack of makhorka (cheap tobacco). They put a long beam on the hay and tied it, and I sat on top of it holding the reins. The horse knew her way home well; therefore, my involvement was minimal. My uncle's house was on top of a hill. I was only 10 years old and knew little about reining horses. The wagon full of hay fell on its side on the ascent. I fell into that nicely smelling haystack. My uncle's partner had left by then. I couldn't possibly cope with that much hay alone. So, my uncle had to call his neighbors and they took all that hay to the attic of his house.

My uncle didn't do any work on Saturday. Besides my uncle's, there were five or six Jewish families in the village. The rest of the population was Ukrainian or German. Families of Jews spoke on Yiddish, German - on Germanic language, Ukrainian - on Ukrainian. Uncle liberally spoke on Ukrainian and Germanic by languages, but its neighbors knew little Yiddish. All live much amicably, all each other understood, respected and helped. The German community was big. They were all very close and well off. My uncle had a German friend that was a forester. I also played with German children. That was where I heard German for the first time. There were horses, cows, bulls, pigs, turkey and ponds full of fish in every German farm. At the beginning of the war Luba and her children came to Kiev and then moved on to Luba's sister in Dnepropetrovsk. Yasha Kotlar, her sister's husband, was Chief of the police department at Sinelnikovo near Dnepropetrovsk. We couldn't track them down after the war. They must have perished. Uncle Petia refused to give up his household and leave. Besides, his German friend promised to hide him in the woods. After the war people at Rykhalskoye told me that uncle Petia and other Jews were shot by the Germans.

The life of my mother's sister Surah was also tragic. She had a daughter and four sons. We didn't hear anything about their family until 1939. During the Stalin's period it was very dangerous to have relatives abroad and my mother didn't ever mention the fact that she had relatives. After the Western Ukraine joined the Soviet Union they found us. My mother went to visit them on 10 June 1941. The war began when my mother was there. However difficult it was she managed to return to Kiev on 23 June. My mother's family stayed in Rovno region. When the Germans came my aunt's family and another Jewish family went to the woods. The local people helped them to arrange a shelter in the woods. The local farmers provided them with food and everything else they needed to live there. Before leaving the Germans happened to discover their shelter. They were all exterminated. Only a girl from that other family and my cousin Yasha survived. Yasha went to the Polish army. After the war Yasha (Yankel) Gorodetskiy turned out to be in Israel. That's all I know about him.

My father Ios-Haim Elia-Berkovich Geifman was born in 1891. He must have been born in Novograd-Volynskiy. I don't have any information about his childhood or education. In one of pictures he's wearing some kind of a uniform. He was literate and had beautiful handwriting. This shows that he must have studied somewhere. My mother told me that my father could sing and play the violin and flute.

During WWI my father was in the sharpshooter unit on the front. After one of combat actions there were only three of them alive. My father returned from the front with a gray strand of hair. During the civil war he struggled in a Red Partisan Unit. My mother and I had a certificate confirming this

fact and we could have some privileges, like food ration, and later we received an apartment in Kiev.

After the civil war my father was Chairman of the United Consumers' Community in Novograd-Volynskiy. Although he wasn't a member of the Communist Party, he had an official position being an intelligent and honest man. Once he went on business to Zhytomir. He let his accountant take a seat in the cabin and he sat in the body of the truck. He was wearing shoes although the weather was cold. His employees told him to take warm boots from the storage facility but he refused, saying that warm boots were for the workers. He caught cold that resulted in the fulminate tuberculosis. His friends took him to a hospital in Kiev but they failed to stop the hemorrhage. He only lived three months. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery [1](#) in Kiev. My father died in 1926 when I was 3 years old.

My mother Reizia (Rosa) Berkovna Lashanovskaya was born in 1898 in Novograd-Volynskiy. I don't know anything about her life before the revolution. During the civil war she was in a partisan unit where she met my father. My mother told me what Petlura [2](#) soldiers were doing in their town, how one of the bandits ran after her sister, throwing his rifle with a bayonet in her direction but missed. My parents had a friend in the partisan unit. His name was Froim. He was a rabbi's son and he left his family to take part in the revolution. He perished in 1919. His Party nickname was Efim. I was called after him. Children are usually named after their deceased relatives, but I was named by the Party nickname. The civil war left many children orphans. My mother and few other volunteers opened a Jewish orphanage in Novograd-Volynskiy. My mother was its director for some time, but then she was assigned to go to Kiev to continue her education. She finished the Jewish Pedagogical School [3](#). Then my mother returned to Novograd-Volynskiy and was director of a kindergarten. She worked in the institutions for children all her life as a tutor and music teacher. She had a beautiful soprano.

## Growing up

When I was a child I was in the care of our housemaid. She milked the cow and gave me some milk. After my father's death we moved to my grandmother Lashanovskaya. She also died and we moved my mother's friend. She and her husband and her son (we were the same age) lived in the house of an Orthodox priest. His was a very big house. At that time people like him having bigger living quarters let other people get accommodation in their houses. Such was the rule at that time that did not allow people to own bigger living areas. There was a beautiful orchard near the house. We, kids, were allowed to eat whatever we wanted there and play with dogs. However, even this well off priest didn't have power supply or running water in his house. The early 30s were the years of hunger in Ukraine. It was difficult for my mother to survive in that smaller town and we moved to Fania in Kiev. My cousin Fania worked as cashier at the railway station and her husband Boris was involved in commerce. Fania lived in a communal apartment with 18 neighbors and no water or toilet. We lived so for about two years. Then my mother received a small room as a widow of a red partisan.

I only visited my hometown Novograd-Volynskiy in summer. There is a very beautiful and picturesque river Sluch with the rocky steep banks and fast and clean water. There is a big park in the center of the town. The town was sinking in the green trees. There were big markets where farmers were selling their products. There was a big synagogue across the street from the house of

my grandfather Geifman. We, kids, used to peep in there, but we were chased away. I think it functioned until the beginning of the war. The rabbi lived in a small house near the synagogue. There were many Jewish people living in this town. But the majority of the population were Ukrainian, of course. But they all got along very well. I don't know what Jewish people were doing for a living. I remember that Zukheli, our neighbor was dealing with salvage materials, and Pesia Harbat, our distant relative, was selling dried fruit at the market. I loved visiting her when I could eat dried apples from her bowls. Before Pesah people got together at Pesia's place to bake matsa. There wasn't much of it but it was fresh. Fried eggs with matsa were very delicious. They washed and cleaned all kitchenware and dishes before holidays. Once there was a wedding at Pesia's place, but I only remember the huppah, a very beautiful bride and a very beautiful ritual. There were about 150 people and there was a lot of noise and much fun. Pesia lived across the street from the market. Intelligentsia – dentists, attorneys, etc. – had their houses closer to the central part of the town.

I didn't know any Yiddish. My grandparents spoke Yiddish, their Russian was poor, but they only spoke Russian with me. Although my mother worked in a Jewish kindergarten we didn't have any Jewish books at home. We had many books by Russian classical writers. I learned a little Yiddish when I was visiting my uncle Petia in his village: they only spoke Yiddish in his family.

I went to school in Kiev. I went to a Ukrainian school (there were no Jewish schools at that time). My Ukrainian was so fluent that I even wrote poems in Ukrainian. I wrote a big poem dedicated to the anniversary of Taras Shevchenko (a famous Ukrainian poet) and recited it at a contest. I was awarded with an album and paints, although I couldn't paint at all. There were about 30 pupils in our class. All boys (except 2 boys) were Jews, and only two of the girls were Jews: Ronia Lipshits and Olia Olgar. But we were all friends. We celebrated holidays together. Our school was located in the pre-revolution high school building. And our teachers were all former teachers in this school, all professionals, we learned a lot from them. There were no Jewish teachers among them. I was reading a lot at school. My mother and I shared one room. To be able to read at night I made a special lamp with a cap. I was also fond of photography. I also learned to play a piano for a year. She hired a teacher, but she couldn't afford to buy a piano. I had classes at her kindergarten when the children were asleep, but it wasn't very convenient and I gave up.

In this Jewish kindergarten where my mother worked, they taught children to read and write in Yiddish. I learned to write my name in Yiddish. I studied well at school and actively participated in the school life. I attended a history, drama and literature clubs and was head of the Kosomol unit of our class and a member of the Komsomol district committee that was great recognition for a schoolboy. I also edited our school newspaper and conducted political information sessions. In 1939 Western Ukraine joined the Soviet Ukraine and there was a parade in Kreschatik, the central street in Kiev. There were representatives of these regions wearing bright Ukrainian folk costumes.

In Fania's family and in our family we only celebrated the Soviet holidays. However, my mother and Boris used to sing Jewish songs during these celebrations. The father of my best friend Misha Gorokhovskiy, was a carpenter. His Russian was very poor, but still, they didn't have anything Jewish in their house.

In summer, besides visiting my uncle Petia, I went to pioneer camps in the outskirts of Kiev. Life was interesting there: contests and competitions, etc. We used to make a fire: it took a while to get

prepared to make it high and remarkable. It happened in the evening when we all got together. Sitting around the fire we sang songs.

In the higher secondary school my classmates and I got very fond of Western European dances. I went to a dancing club and learned to dance waltz, tango, rumba and foxtrot. My dream was to become a cameraman or producer. We were also fond of football. We went to the cinema. "Chapaev" (a legendary Red Army commander, 1917-1923) was film #1 for us. We watched it for so many times and knew every word pronounced by our favorite characters. They also showed anti-fascist films. I remember the movie "Jew Zuss" (after a novel of the famous German writer Lion Feuchtwanger). But such films disappeared from the screens after execution of Non-aggression Pact with Hitler in 1940.

In 1940 our school was turned into a military hospital for the wounded from Finland, and we went to another school and had classes on the 2nd shift. My cousin Grisha, uncle Israel's son, participated in the Finnish campaign. We held our patriotic spirits high, regardless of repression in the 30s. Fania's husband Boris used to talk to me about the repression. He was critical and tried to explain things to me. I don't think I understood much about his stories.

My father's comrades fell victims of repression. One of them, Anatoliy Illich Zamoschin ( his real name was Tulo Goldfarb) was like a father to me, he often visited us and helped my mother about the house and helped me with my classes. He was member of the Communist Party and held high official positions. His latest position was Executive director of the Communal Bank. Once he came late at night and told us that they were going to arrest him the next day. I pretended to be asleep but I heard the conversation. He was summoned to come to NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) and offered him to write a report on his deputy. Zamoschin refused and was arrested at the following night. His wife Klara (the wife of the enemy of the people) was sent to Siberia for ten years. She never returned and we never heard from her. Zamoschin returned in the 50s after the general amnesty after Stalin's death. He had two legs amputated in Kolyma. We didn't communicate with him during his exile – it was dangerous. But after he returned I often visited him. He brought few note-books with his poems from exile. All his poems were extremely patriotic, with Stalin an idol and Khrushchov too, after rehabilitation. He never talked about the horrors of his life in the camp. I don't know whether it was because he didn't want to influence me, or was it because he thought that everything was correct. He received an apartment and was restored in his Party membership. But he only enjoyed 3 or 4 years of freedom. He died from the infarction. I took the responsibility to bury him, and I washed his dead body. I lost a very close and devoted person who sincerely loved me. I would have considered him my godfather if we were of the Orthodox faith. But as we are not I don't know who he was for me. He said on the grave of my father that my father's son would always be his son. And he kept this promise. He didn't have his own children.

Vornovitskiy, another friend of my father, a Jew, was arrested. He was Kiev NKVD Deputy Prosecutor. In 1937, long before his arrest he went on business trip to Zhytomir. Among others, he happened to interrogate his comrade from their partisan unit, also an officer. They recognized each other. Vornovitskiy told my mother later that the only thing he could do for his combat comrade was to let him sleep right in the office where the interrogation was to take place. He brought him some food and cigarettes on the next day. That was all he could do for him. This comrade of his was soon executed, and Vornovitskiy was arrested. Many people around were arrested and



executed, but it had nothing to do with nationality. There was no anti-Semitism then, and one could hear the word “zhyd” only from a drunken man at the market.

## **During the War**

Our attitude towards the Germans was negative. On 22 June 1941 there was to be the opening ceremony for a new stadium in Kiev for 50 000 seats. I had tickets to the opening ceremony. They had crossed out the name of Kossior [4](#) (he was one of organizers of this ceremony and his name had been printed at the invitation tickets before his arrest) on the tickets.

On 20 June (Saturday) we went to the Circus. Eddy Rozner jazz band gave a concert there. They came from western parts of the country. After the concert we walked a while, and early in the morning I was woken up by the sound of anti-aircraft guns. At first we decided that this was some kind of training, but then we saw German airplanes. At 12 o'clock in the afternoon there was an announcement on the radio. Boris was mobilized immediately. Fania and her children evacuated in June. Her daughter left a little chocolate Bunny. I and my relative Dina were in two minds whether we should eat it or not. Decided not to touch - after all soon all will be finished, and evacuated returned. That we will say Firochka? We left it there in the cupboard.

On 6 July (I hadn't reached 18 then) I was summoned to the recruiting office. Soldiers were marching from Kiev. I had a small backpack and my mother put few cookies and a jar of jam into it. Neither of us cried - we were sure that this was going to end in a month or two and I would be back. We went to the left bank of the city where we were supposed to board a train. But there were bombing and no trains. We walked another 150 km to the town of Yagotin. We didn't receive any uniform and my shoes were all torn. I walked almost barefooted. We got meals on our way, but we also begged food from the local farmers, they felt sorry for us and gave us whatever they could. We got few spades on our way and tried to entrench ourselves during bombings. From Yagotin we went to Donbass by train. We were divided into small groups and sent to various areas. I came to the town of Khartsizsk. Being a big patriot I agreed to go to work in the mine at first, but then after my first try I refused to work there. It was too hard work for a town guy. We all went to work at a local collective farm. It was a former German colony. The Germans, being probable fascist accomplices, were removed to the Urals. We lived in their houses and harvested what they sowed. I received a letter from my mother. I assured her to stay in Kiev, as our army would never leave the city (although I didn't even hold any weapons in my hands). My mother was evacuated as a widow of a red partisan in one of the last trains in September 1941 [5](#). My mother was evacuated to the Northern Caucasus, to a collective farm. She was physically strong and worked at the poultry yard.

At the end of autumn we were dismissed, I obtained my documents and went to join my mother. Somehow I managed to reach the village where my mother lived. When I got to the village the first person I saw was my mother's friend from Novograd-Volynskiy. She almost fainted when she saw me. I did look terrible - hungry, shabby and dirty. She only shouted “Rosa! Come here but stay calm!” And my mother cried out “Fimochka!” from her house, even not seeing me.

I stayed at this collective farm until February 1942, when the recruiting office sent me to the Makhackala Military Infantry College. It was located in 60 km from Tbilisi. Upon graduation from it 588 of 600 cadets finished it in the rank of junior lieutenant, and only 12, including me, finished it in the rank of lieutenant. I was sent to Tbilisi, to the Vinnitsa Military College that was in the evacuation there. I was to be a platoon leader. I was supposed to teach cadets all subjects except

for political information. I went to the General to introduce myself and when he saw me I could read in his eyes “Well, this must be the end of Russia”. I presented a poor sight: I was short and thin and looked pale... and the one to be a lecturer at their school. But in due time I managed to gain authority at their institution.

Before we finished the full course we were given automatic guns and sent to the 4th Guards Kuban Cavalry Corps. That’s how I, Efim Geifman, turned into a Kazak cavalryman (Kazak – people in the Southern part of Russia, bordering on Ukraine. They live in villages. Their men breed horses and master the art of cavalry. They make brave, courageous and masterful cavalymen). They recruited people from the surrounding Kazak villages in this area to form the Corps. There could be a father and a son or an uncle and his nephew in one and the same unit. Their attitude towards me was good. Perhaps, my knowledge of the Ukrainian language helped me. I had problems with riding a horse. Once, at the very beginning of my service the commanding officer ordered me to deliver a package to the Division Headquarters, located in 30 kilometers from our place. A mature master Kazak was to accompany me. We started in a trot, the most difficult pace for the horse and the rider. Trot is a specific running pace, where the rider has to rise in his saddle to ease the horse. On our way the Master Kazak was giving me instructions regarding the riding techniques. When I got off the horse my legs were a pair of compasses and I was all sore. Only then I realized that this ride was my horse riding lesson. After that trip I stayed in bed for a couple of days but I never had any riding problems any more. In total I rode four thousand kilometers from 1943 before 1945, from Mozdok to Hungary, we freed Europe from fascists. At the time of tanks and aircraft the cavalry existed for a break-through in the army. We broke into the rear of the enemy, participated in the raids in the vicinity of Odessa and Taganrog. We advanced for a 100 km into to the rear of the enemy.

For the first time I read about the Babiy Yar [6](#) in newspapers at the front. In spring 1944 we were relocated from Odessa to Belarus. Fania was in Kiev then and my friend and I willfully ran away to Kiev. I met there my classmate Dunia Radchenko. Before the war she and a very pretty girl Ira Mikhailovskaya lived in the same apartment. Ira and her mother (an actress) went to the Babiy Yar and Dunia was seeing them off. Dunia and I went to the Babiy Yar. I saw its sands and ravines for the first time. I have been to this place many times after the war, but I’ve never participated in any meetings. I became a member of the Communist Party when I was 19, and I feel no regrets about it. I was not just a member of the Communist Party; I was a convinced and educated Communist. Only now I realize how powerful the propaganda was.

I was wounded for the first time in the vicinity of Slutsk. But that was a minor injury. I was wounded for the second time in Transylvania, in the vicinity of Debrezen on 10 October 1944. I was sent to a hospital in the rear with my wounded leg and discharged in April 1944. I was sent to Germany to finish my service term. I had restriction of grade I for military service. Restriction of grade I is the last stage before invalidity. I could only walk with a stick and stuttered for some time. My hearing hasn’t restored up to date. In Germany I served in Dresden commandant office for two years and a half. I learned conversational German soon. I was Head of Department in the Commandant’s office. My position was industrial engineer-controller. Each department was responsible for some industry. My responsibility was optics and fine mechanics. First came disassembly – they were transporting all equipment to the Soviet Union and then it was required to fix the production process. The manufactured product was part of the reparation (reimbursement of losses to the winners). The



Germans were giving cameras, fabrics, typewriters, etc. The Soviet Union sent food products to Germany. In 1946 they had problems with food and we were supporting them.

In Dresden I married Galina Karabanova, a Ukrainian girl from Kiev. She was given birth in 1923 in the village near the Kiev. Her parents worked in the agriculture. Galina and her senior sister Katerina have arrived before the war in the Kiev to learn. Katerina finished a financial institute before the war, married, in 1940 gave birth son Kolia. During the war they were in evacuations, afterwards returned and live in the Kiev. Katerina worked an accountant at the factory, presently it housewife, brings up a grandson. My wife's parents have outlived war and died in 1960s in village Brovary, near Kiev. Galina had finished a financial college before the war. She stayed in Kiev during occupation and was taken to Germany in 1942. She fell ill and was put in a civil hospital near Dresden. After she recovered she became a cleaning woman in this hospital. She met a German anti-fascist girl. They listened to the news from Moscow, and then Galina sent this information to Ukrainians in a work camp. On the eve of 1943 she was arrested and sent to the prison in Dresden. They beat her demanding to tell the names of the people she was in touch with. They sentenced her to death, but instead they sent her to the penal block in Ravensbruck. Penal prisoners had a target painted on the chest and on the back. One step aside was punished by shooting. Galina read a lot before the war. And in the camp at the end of a hard work day she retold these novels to prisoners. She enjoyed doing it. Her Czech friends had access to the card-files. They replaced her card with a dead person's card and sent her to work at the Wolfen factory under a different name. This was a large chemical enterprise, a department of the Buchenwald camp. On 17 April 1945 the camp was eliminated and the people sent for extermination. She ran away on the way there and happened to get into the disposition of the Soviet army. She went through an appropriate check up procedure and got a job in this same commandant's office where I was. She was an accountant. We made friends with her and then got married. We returned to Kiev together in 1946.

### **After the War**

My mother returned in 1944. She had problems with coming back as one needed an invitation to return from the evacuation. When she returned Fania was already in Kiev. My mother went to the Prosecution Office to get back our room in the communal apartment. We moved into this room. My mother treated her daughter-in-law (she was not Jewish) very well, especially when she got to know what she had to go through in the camp. We lived together for few years until we received our own apartment. When my mother turned 78 we moved to live together again. We were all in good terms. My wife's mother was very religious. When she met me and heard that I was a Jew she said that all human beings were equal in the face of God. She had another son-in-law that was Ukrainian. She called him the devil.

Because there was a war I didn't receive my secondary school certificate - the archives were destroyed. So, I had to finish the 10th form in an evening school to get the certificate. After finishing it I entered Polytechnic Institute, extramural Department of mechanic equipment for metallurgical plants. I chose this department because I had already found a job related to this profession. I only studied three years at this Institute. It had to do with my family responsibilities, living conditions and my wife's diseases. However, I was Head of a shop at the plant. I worked at this plant 30 years and was one of the best specialists.

Galina couldn't find a job for a long time for the reason that she had been in the camp. The authorities didn't trust her. They thought she had cooperated with the fascists. She decided to omit this fact when filling up application forms. This resolved the problem and she found a job of an accountant at a factory. She worked there all her life. Although my wife was very ill she decided to have a baby. Our son was born in 1948. We gave him the name Zhenia. We gave him my wife's last name. Although I never suffered from any anti-Semitism I wanted to protect my son from any possible complications. My son wasn't raised a Jew. However, he has many Jewish friends. My son the whole life knew that his father a Jew, he never this was not restricted and did not hide. With us vein my ma, which we always reminded of our origin, it little remembered Yiddish and sometimes prepared Jewish meal, stuffed fish, hen with prune, salad with cheese and garlic. Zhenia much liked a grandmother. He participated in making a film about the Babiy Yar, made by a famous producer Shlaen. Nobody in our family died in the Babiy Yar, but many people that I knew and loved before the war had gone there.

My wife died n 1998. My son studied in Kiev Cinematography Academy. He works as sound producer. He travels a lot to wherever he can get a job. He married a very nice Russian girl Natasha. They have a lovely daughter Lerochka.

My Jewish identity is associated now with the Hesed. We get food and medications there. We can also get Jewish newspapers. I not mark Jewish holidays, therefore that not knows as is necessary this do. If invite in synagogue on holiday, with pleasure and interest there go. Regretfully, I have never been in Israel. It was impossible in the past. And now it would be too big an effort. It's a pity, as I would love to see this country.

I never thought that leaving this country was a reasonable thing to do. My opinion is that nobody is waiting for us there. My cousins live in the United States, but I believe that one has to live and die where one was born.

## Glossary

### **1 This Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of the town, called Lukianovka, was opened in late 90s of the 19th century**

It functioned until 1941. First destruction of monuments and the cemetery took place during the German occupation (1941-1943). In 1961 the cemetery was officially closed based on the decision of municipal authorities. Jewish families had half a year to rebury their relatives at the Jewish areas of a new cemetery in the city. A new TV Center was built at the spot where the cemetery of Lukianovka was located. There is no separate Jewish cemetery in Kiev nowadays.

### **2 Petliura Simon (1879-1926) , a Ukrainian politician**

Member Ukrainian social-democratic working party; during the Soviet-Polish war emerged to the side of Poland; in 1920 emigrated. Killed in Paris in revenge for Jewish pogroms in Ukraine.

### **3 January 1918 the Cultural League (a Jewish cultural and educational organization that existed until the middle of the 20s**

Some Jewish technical schools and a university were established under this program.

**4 Kossior - member of the Communist Party since 1907, one of the founders of the Communist party in Ukraine, in 1928 - 1938 год - General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine**

In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

**5 The Germans occupied Kiev on 19 September 1941**

**6 Babiy Yar is the site of the first mass shootings of Jewish population that was done in the open by the fascists on September 29-30, 1941, in Kiev**