

Bluma Katz



This is me at my work place at the quality assurance laboratory of the agricultural machine building plant. This photo was taken in 1985 in Mogilyov-Podolskiy.

In 1946 I went to teach at the agricultural courses in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I worked there for a year. I got along well with my colleagues and students. I faced no anti-Semitism. I got married in 1949. Our neighbor had a relative in Chernovtsy, regional town of Bukovina [650 km from Kiev] who was single. She told me about him. When he visited her, she introduced him to me. Somehow the wedding arrangements were expedited and I didn't even have time to learn more about my husband. Later I understood why his family was in such hurry. I don't want to talk about this period of my life. I don't even want to pronounce the name of my first husband. He turned out to be mentally retarded, but nobody ever mentioned this to me before the wedding. We had a short civil ceremony in the registry office, a small dinner party for the closest relatives in the evening and left for Chernovtsy. Chernovtsy seemed a real European town to me. It was a very cozy and clean town with wide streets. Chernovtsy was a Jewish town: before the war the Jewish population constituted about 60% of the total population. There were fewer left after the war: some perished and the others moved to Romania and Palestine. However, many Jews stayed: they spoke Yiddish in the streets, synagogues operated and there was a Jewish Theater. I went to all performances. I liked the surrounding of reserved, polite and well-dressed people. I went to work as an agronomist to the kolkhoz in Novoselitsy village near Chernovtsy. Commuted to work by bus. My husband and I lived several years together being absolute strangers to one another. I divorced him and the management of the kolkhoz submitted a solicitation to the executive committee for providing lodging to me. I received a small room in a shared apartment. I was happy to have a place to live.

I worked in Novoselitsy until 1959. Then I got an offer of the position of a scientific employee in the All-Union scientific research institute of potato farming, its affiliate in Chernovtsy, where I worked in the department of potato farming till 1983. The institute had its experimental fields where I spent much time. Farming is hard work, but I liked my job. I didn't face any anti-Semitism. I got along well with my colleagues. We were like a family. We celebrated Soviet holidays and birthdays together.

My colleagues were my friends and my family. I always spent my vacations in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I stayed with my mother and saw my brother, sister and school friends every day.

I met my second husband Lev Gershenzon, when I was on vacation in Mogilyov- Podolskiy in 1981. He was a teacher of chemistry at an evening school. I returned to Chernovtsy. Lev and I corresponded. When I came to Mogilyov on another vacation we got married. We were no young any more and we didn't have a wedding party. We registered our marriage and had a small dinner in the evening. Our guests were my sister and he husband and my husband's few friends. I exchanged my room in Chernovtsy for lodging in Mogilyov-Podolskiy, and moved there in 1983. In Mogilyov-Podolskiy I went to work as a lab assistant at the quality assurance laboratory of the agricultural machine building plant and from there I retired in 1993. We didn't celebrated Jewish holidays. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home: 1 May, 7 November Soviet army Day, Victory Day, and New Year. We had guests at home and visited friends. My husband's friends were his colleagues from school. His former students who remembered their teacher came to see him. Lev worked at school till 2002. He had turned over his retirement age, but he did not want to quit his job. In 2002 a car hit my husband. He had a craniocerebral trauma and he could work no longer.