

Avi Dobrysh And His Family



From left to right: I, my elder daughter Ilona, my first wife Aleftina Dobrysh (nee Zavadovskaya) and our younger daughter Daniela. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1966.

I got married for the first time in 1958. My first wife, Aleftina Zavadovskaya, was born in Russia, in Kalinin, in 1939. Aleftina was half Jewish: her father, Mikhail Zavadovskiy, was a Jew, and her mother was Russian. Aleftina finished seven grades of compulsory school and worked as a sales assistant. Her family moved to Tallinn after the war.

Our elder daughter, Ilona, was born in 1961 and the second one, Daniela, in 1963. My family life wasn't easy. Aleftina was extremely jealous and she was even treated by a psychoanalyst at a certain point, but it didn't help and our life turned into a nightmare, not only for us, but for the daughters as well. It was dreadful and finally I asked for a divorce.

This was right before I finished my postgraduate studies. At that time it was considered that a party member had not right to get divorced. The party committee of our institute told me to choose: to put my party membership card on the table or to go back and live with my family. I said that I could do neither. My decision was final and I wanted a divorce.

As a result, I was expelled from the Party in the institute, where I was a postgraduate student. My membership was restored by the secretary of the municipal committee of the party in Tallinn, who knew me very well as a tennis player. His previous position was the secretary of the central Komsomol committee of Estonia. Every winter we had an open competition for the Komsomol cup of Estonia, and I was an arbiter. He stood up for me along with the director of the enterprise where I was working. At that time I was employed as deputy department chief by the design institute Estgiproselstroy, involved in design and construction in rural areas of Estonia. My party membership was restored within a couple of months and I got my membership card back.

My daughters from the first marriage have lived in New York since the 1970s. They have children of their own.