

Shahne Berznitskiy And His Family



This is me with my wife Charna Berznitskaya and our two sons Ilia (standing on the parapet) and Aaron. The photograph was taken in Vilnius during a stroll, in the 1950s.

After the war I found a job with a state supply company, Gossnab, in Lithuania, where I worked all my life. I had to think of my personal life as well. I liked some Jewish girls. I also had pals, with whom I spent time. None of my temporary girlfriends aroused such deep feelings or affections as I felt for my brother Isroel's widow, Charna. In the postwar years we lived in one apartment and Charna treated me like a brother. She also had suitors. I liked my nephew Aaron, Charna's son. I didn't want Charna and Aaron to leave our family, so I proposed to her. My action corresponded to Jewish traditions: the younger brother should marry the widow of the elder brother. Charna agreed and in the late 1940s our marriage was registered. Charna was two years younger than me. She was from the Lithuanian town of Moletai. Charna's parents, her brothers and sisters - I only know the name of her younger sister Nehama, as we keep her picture - perished during the occupation in Moletai.

After a while I got my own apartment. In 1952 our son Ilia was born. We had a happy life together. Charna was a true wife and friend. I didn't differentiate between Ilia and the older Aaron. I loved them equally. I did pretty well at my job, while Charna was a housewife and raised the children. In 1956 there was a big sorrow in my family. Aaron had dreamt of a bicycle and I gave him a new shiny bike. The boy went outside with it and fell down. The trauma was very serious; his spine was injured. Aaron stayed in bed for three months, but all efforts by doctors were futile. Our son died three months later. I still cannot forgive myself for giving him that bike, as that present led to my

son's death. Charna took his death very hard as she had exerted her every effort to save the boy during the war. Afterwards, she completely devoted herself to the upbringing of our son Ilia.

Charna and I had a wonderful life together. Charna was a housewife as my salary was enough for a moderate, but comfortable living. We had a lot of friends. We went to the theaters, the cinema. Usually the three of us went on vacation to Palanga. Sometimes we were given trade union trip vouchers to the South-Crimea or Caucasus. I was an ardent sportsman, played tennis, skied. In 1970 we got a plot of land. Since that time the orchard, planted by my wife and I, is a comfort and a hobby at the same time. Unfortunately, my Charna died in 2002. I cannot overcome such a loss.