

Sarra Nikiforenko With Her Husband Vitaliy Nikiforenko And Work Colleague



I, Sarra Nikiforenko (in the center wearing a beret) and my husband Vitaliy Nikiforenko (sitting at the table), in the laboratory at work. The photo was taken in Kremenchug in 1931.

Once during a party where I sang Ukrainian and Jewish songs a young man approached me. He was Vitaliy Nikiforenko. He was a student of the Institute of Food Industry in Kiev. He was on vacation in his hometown visiting his parents. He went to take me home. He was looking at me with admiring eyes. To make the long story short we were destined to be together. I have no regrets about it.

Vitaliy, born in 1908, came from Smela: we were neighbors. I knew his parents and they knew me. They didn't mind my being a Jew. Vitaliy came from a very nice family. His father was a teacher at College - I don't remember at which, and his mother was a teacher, but she didn't work. They had a son and a daughter.

We saw each other for a year. I finished College and Vitaliy graduated from the Institute in 1930. He wrote me nice letters. Upon graduation Vitaliy got a job at the sugar factory in Smela. We had our wedding registered at registration office. We had a wedding party in my parents' garden, but it was a Soviet wedding without a chuppah or any other Jewish rituals. There were Ukrainian and Jewish relatives and guests at the wedding. They shouted 'Gorko!' [Russian for 'bitter' - a Russian tradition] to us. Jewish young people that left their families stopped observing traditions. We believed in new socialist life and thought that Jewish traditions belonged to the past. We thought we were more advanced than older people and had to look into the future.

I worked at the laboratory at the sugar factory and my husband was an engineer at the same factory. We worked there a few months since Vitaliy got a job offer in Kremenchug in the same year of 1930 [an industrial town on the bank of the Dnepr River in Poltava region, 240 km from Kiev]. There was a military laboratory responsible for monitoring strategic stocks of grain and later it was involved in the development of food stock storage conditions. My husband and I went to work in Kremenchug.

We got a room in Kremenchug. We cooked on the primus stove and there was a wood stoked stove for heating. I went to work and didn't spend much time doing the housework. Vitaliy was manager of the laboratory and I was a lab assistant at the same laboratory. My husband held an important position related to restricted information and he just had to join the Communist Party. Besides, since this was a military laboratory he was given a rank.