

Boris Shteinas And His Friends



This is a get-together before I was to go for army service. I am in the center, to the right is my friend Grisha, who died in a car accident. The rest are our pals- Siauliai Jews. The picture was made in 1952.

In 1948 I finished 7 grades. I was not a mediocre student at school. I joined komsomol when I was at school, but I was not interested in social work. My close friends, classmates were both Russians and Jewish. I felt no anti-Semitism. Our family was needy, so I went to work after having finished school. I worked at the tannery owned.

I was in the youth brigade. We were called Molodaya Gvardiya. We worked in the origination workshop. I had worked here until 1951. In some 1951 I went to study in the evening school and finished one more grade. By that time we moved in another apartment. We rented apartment in the downtown area. It was more convenient for us. The landlord, Lithuanian, also worked as a cabman. One evening, our neighbor Micho Chase came over. He was the director of the jewelry store. He suggested that my parents should send me in Moscow to study. He said that there were courses of appraisers of precious metals. I still remember that discussing- we were sitting at a round table. My mother had frightened eyes. How could she let her favorite sonny go to another city? It took Michor long time to convince parents and explain the advantages of my education. Our neighbor Chaya came. Her sister lived in Moscow and agreed to provide lodging for me. I came to Moscow and stayed at the place of Chaya's sister, Faina. I still remember her apartment. It was a huge room with numerous partitions. Here her husband and she lived as well as many of her children with their families. They also found a place for me in the corner of the room. I was given a warm welcome. I was not hungry. I had meals with everybody. I did not have enough money, so I hade to learn how to be a stowaway. I studied at the courses for three months and then came back in Siauliai.

I was offered a job right away. I worked at the pawn shop. I was still living with my parents. In spite of having a job, we still had a very modest living. My salary was a considerable makeweight to the family budget. We marked all Jewish holidays with the family. There was no synagogue in town.

I worked only for a year and in 1952 I was drafted in the army. When I was in the army I was enrolled in sergeant school in Minsk, and after that I was assigned in aviation in aerodrome maintenance. I worked with radars. Then I was transferred to Kovel. I had business trips to other towns, for instance in Saratov. I got along with my colleagues.

In 1956 I was demobilized. I was offered to stay in the army, but I was looking forward to go home. I had to help mother, whose life was difficult. When I came home in late fall, my brother Avigdor wore slippers, as he did not have any other footwear.

Our living was poor. I even did not have a place to sleep. Brother and I slept in the old cart in the yard. I wore military uniform for a long time as I did not have any other clothes. I started looking for a job right after I came back.

There was a cooperative trade in Siauliai and I got the offer from there. Practically I and a Jew from Vilnius founded that organization. At first, I was HR manager with a skimpy salary of 640 rubles, but still it was a big help for the family.