

Sarra Nikiforenko



I, Sarra Nikiforenko, in my apartment. The photo was taken during an interview in Lvov in December 2002. I have an insignia in my hands that I was awarded for excellent shooting before the war.

I was a housewife and dedicated my life to my family.

My husband was a very ill man and in all those years the family adjusted to his schedule of life. He had to go to hospitals and recreation centers and I always accompanied him. Due to his illness we never traveled or went to theaters. We only communicated with our neighbors and my husband's former colleagues. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home. My husband's condition didn't allow us to have guests. At leisure time my husband and I read Soviet magazines. My husband had a big pension of a retired military. We could afford good food, clothes and had enough to pay our monthly bills for the apartment.

My husband Vitaliy died in 1983. He was buried with all military honors: there were soldiers and an orchestra at his funeral. We were inseparable for 52 years (except for the war period). I stayed with him even in hospitals. He was an invalid of grade 1 and I accompanied him to recreation centers to look after him.

The situation in our family changed after my husband died. My grandson Sasha (son of my oldest daughter's Ludmila), demanded that I gave the ownership for the apartment to him. We had to exchange our big apartment in the center for two smaller ones. I and my younger daughter Tamara live in a small two-room apartment now. But this didn't bring peace into our family. My daughters had a conflict associated with inheritance. Ludmila, my older daughter, and her family moved to Israel without my permission. I don't even know where they live. They don't call or write me. It's hard to talk about it. This is such a tragedy - no, I won't talk about it.

When perestroika began in 1980s my children had hopes for a better life. I told them that perestroika wouldn't change the situation. My husband received a pension and we raised our children, but nowadays pensions are too small to make ends meet. I am happy Tamara has a good job. She is a good corrector. Hesed provides assistance. They are so good and caring. They came to greet me on 93rd birthday: I am so grateful, they give us what has a high value - care. I cooked food for guests from Hesed that came to greet me. They said that it was so delicious that one had to be a professional cook to make such delicious food. This was in summer and I made vegetables:

tomatoes, peppers, etc. I can hardly move in the apartment, but I can cook all right.

In 1998 Tamara's husband died of stroke. She and I live together. Her son Vitaliy is a nice boy. He has a Russian wife. They are very much in love. Tamara and I had no objections to their marriage. Vitaliy works, but they have a hard life since employers do not always have money to pay their employees.

I've always remembered Jewish holidays. I celebrate them, only we do not follow all rules. We make traditional food and fast at Yom Kippur. I wish I had traveled to Israel and other countries, but now that I am 93 I feel happy when I can get to the kitchen or balcony.

I have plenty of time to recall my life. I recall my parents and my childhood more and more. I loved my husband. We had a long and good life. This was the problem of our generation that we grew up as atheists and forgot traditions and language of our ancestors and that we didn't raise our children with this knowledge. It is not just a Jewish problem, it's a problem of almost all nations in the USSR. My husband's ancestors were Christian, but he never went to a church. However, we had a lot of good in our life. We had our belief and ideals. I have no regrets.