

Sholom Rondin's Younger Son Matvey Rondin



My younger son Matvey Rondin. Photo made in Lvov in 1952 when he was 5 years old.

After demobilization in 1941 I went to Gomel. My yahger son was 6 years old. When I was leaving he was just a baby and when I came back home he was about to go to school. Of course, the boy didn't recognize me when I arrived, but it took him no time to get used to me. My wife told him about me.

I didn't have work to do in Gomel - my profession is to do the finishing of a construction structure - and it didn't even occur to me to do other work than al fresco. I did my first job in Rovno. I went alone and my wife stayed in Gomel. I lived in a men's hostel in Rovno that was not a good place for a family. Besides, my son had to go to school. Rovno is a regional town in the west of Ukraine, in 800 km from Gomel. Our crew - I knew its members before the war, they also demobilized from the army - was invited to do the finishing painting of the railway station in Rovno. We enjoyed doing our work. We painted the railway station and the restaurant at the railway station. It was beautiful. Acceptance commission that came to accept our work said that they needed us to work in Lvov. I told them that I had a family and needed a place to live. This was in 1947 when my wife was expecting our second baby.

I went to Lvov I liked the town and found many job opportunities there. However, we didn't get any place to live. Those people lied to us and we quit working for them. We worked in restaurants. I found a vacant apartment that belonged to a Polish family. There were many vacant apartments in the town. I obtained a residential permit for us to reside in this apartment and we moved in there. It was an old apartment in an old house, but there were two rooms and tiled stoves in it. I refurbished this apartment and went to Gomel to move my family to Lvov. My wife already had our second baby (1947). We named him Matvey, but called him Marek in the family.

We've lived in Lvov since 1948. My wife didn't have to go to work. I provided well for the family. We gradually made friends. Most of them were my co-workers. We had Jewish, Ukrainian and Polish friends. We celebrated Soviet holidays, went to parades, sang Soviet songs and got together at birthdays. We didn't observe any traditions or celebrate holidays. We didn't even know the dates of Jewish holidays. The Soviet power didn't allow to publish Jewish calendars. We didn't go to synagogue. We were not interested ourselves and didn't want to involve our children in those outdated and unnecessary rituals.

Our sons were good boys. They were successful at school. My wife was raising them, as I spent a lot of time at work. I don't remember any discussions in our family related to the issues of nationality. Our children studied in a Russian secondary school where there was a number of Jewish teachers and schoolchildren. They spent their summer vacations with my wife's parents in Gomel. My mother also loved them dearly. They enjoyed going to pioneer camps.

My sons were not raised Jewish, but they always identified themselves as Jews. My older son knew Yiddish since he was a child. However, they married Russian girls. I wished they had married Jewish girls.