

## Semyon Nezhynski With His Wife Irina Nezhynskaya At A Purim Celebration



This is me, the 2nd on the left, and my wife Irina Nezhynskaya, nee Razumnaya, on the right, at a celebration of Purim in the Kiev Palace 'Ukraina' in 2002. The children in the photo were participants of the performance. I retired at the age of 70. By that time I had worked for 52 years, including my military career. I decided it was time for me to rest from work. The new director tried to convince me to take any position I liked, but it was hard for me to continue working and I refused. Between 1970-1978 my wife was a bibliographer in the assortment office of my supply company. Irina loved books. Besides, she finished the Faculty of History and this helped her to do her job perfectly. Irina retired in 1978. She still loves books. She is fond of reading memoirs of people of the arts and theater. She spends her pension at book markets. After I retired I bumped into my old friend Arkadi Zaretski. He was deputy chairman of the Kiev Association of Jewish War Veterans at the Jewish council in Ukraine. He convinced me to join this veterans' organization. I couldn't refuse: they were my comrades, veterans of the war. I joined the Kiev organization of Jewish war veterans in 1993. A couple of years later I became a member of the council of veterans and in 1980 I became chairman of council. We do interesting work and meet twice a month. Those meetings are always interesting, but alas? There are almost 300 members in our organization, but half of them are confined to bed. About 100 veterans attend our meetings. Regretfully, one to two veterans leave us each month. The average age of the veterans is 80. However, we go on... The Jewish life has revived since Ukraine gained independence. Besides working in Kiev organization of Jewish war veterans I'm a member of Kiev Association of Jewish War Veterans, department for the ties with war veterans in Israel, a member of the organization of intellectual Jews 'Bnai-Brig' and a volunteer at Hesed. Besides, I'm a member of the Presidium of the International Ukrainian Union of War Veterans. I enjoy meeting with schoolchildren. I tell them about heroic deeds of our warriors on the front during World War II. I cannot say that I've turned to religion. Some of the veterans attend the synagogue regularly, but I don't. However, I appreciate those that do. I cannot say that I'm far from Jewish traditions. After I retired from my governmental service and started work with the Kiev association of veterans of the war, my family and I began to observe Jewish traditions. At that time

religion wasn't persecuted any longer. In the 1990s we began to celebrate Jewish holidays at home. My wife cooks traditional Jewish food. We receive matzah for Pesach at Hesed. Irina makes chicken broth that we eat with matzah, like we used to do in my childhood. Our daughter identifies herself as a Jew. She joins our celebrations and likes going to Hesed with me. Our son is far from the Jewish life while our daughter is close to it. Our first toast at any celebration is 'Lehaim!' - 'To life!'