

## Simon Rapoport With His Wife Ruth Refes



This is me with my wife Ruth Refes. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1962. It was hard for me to find a job in 1950s. I had two considerable disadvantages: I was a Jew, which meant a lot at that time, and I had been in exile. Thus I could not be trusted. Finally I was offered a job in a small construction and repair company. The director was from Belarus, who didn't know a single word of Estonian. He needed at least one foreman who would speak Estonian. I was employed owing to that. Then I was hired by a large construction trust called Tallinnstroy. I was responsible for the construction of a residential house. was transferred to the construction department as a team leader. Then my career went swiftly up and before retirement I was the director of the department in spite of having two 'stigmas' - being a Jew and not a member of the Party. My boss was being constantly told in the regional and municipal party committee: 'Why are you keeping that Jew? He should be fired!' But he didn't give up and stood up for me all time. There were 32 construction departments in Estonia and our department had the worst performance ratios. When I became a chief engineer, it became the best in Estonia and was regularly awarded governmental prizes and orders. When I retired I couldn't stay at home. I worked in commerce for a year or two and then I was offered a job as a construction manager in one of the house-building organizations. I am still working there. Ruth and I got married in 1957. We didn't have a wedding party. We just had our marriage registered in the state marriage registration office and didn't have any celebration. At that time I just started working and practically had no money. We have lived together since that time. We are happy to have found each other. Ruth is retired now, but she didn't give up her favorite work. She is tutoring at home. Her son lives in the USA. In spring 2005 we went there for a visit.