

Zoltan Shtern With His Family



This is a picture of my family. From left to right are my wife Prascovia Shtern, nee Goncharenko, my younger son Victor Shtern, my older son Evgeni Shtern and I. The photo was taken in Uzhgorod in 1964. In 1961 I married Prascovia Goncharenko, a Ukrainian girl. I met her at a party. Prascovia was a student of the Faculty of Philology of Uzhgorod University. My wife is much younger than I am. She was born in a village in Sumy Region in 1936. I've forgotten the name of this village. Her parents were kolkhoz farmers. After finishing secondary school Prascovia entered Uzhgorod University. Her childhood dream was to become a teacher. We saw each other for about half a year and then we got married. We had a civil ceremony and in the evening we had a wedding party to which we invited our acquaintances. My wife took my surname after we got married. Upon graduation from university she was an elementary school teacher. She loved children. Every now and then strangers approach me in the street telling me that my wife was their first teacher. I can tell you frankly that I appreciate it. In the 1970s the school management applied to the higher authorities requesting the approval of Prascovia's award of 'Honored Teacher of Ukraine'. That was when my Ukrainian wife faced anti-Semitism. The director of the regional department of public education didn't like her Jewish last name of Shtern. He didn't forward her documents to Kiev. I got to know about it several years later. Our first son, Evgeni, was born in 1962 and Victor followed in 1964. I tried to teach my sons Jewish religion and Jewish traditions. Regretfully, they were far from conceiving them. My sons were pioneers and Komsomol members and lived in accordance with the laws of the USSR. They didn't identify themselves as Jews and were just Soviet people. In those years we didn't observe any religious traditions at home. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays either. We celebrated our birthdays and our children's. We invited friends, had parties, listened to music and talked. We spent vacations traveling to Subcarpathia or to the Crimea with the family.