

## Sophia Stelmakher's Family



This is our family picture: my husband Alexandr Stelmakher, my son Igor and I. The photo was taken in Chernovtsy in 1963 to send it to my mother who lived in Dubossary. When I was in the 10th grade at school I met a young Jewish man that was on military service in Dubossary. He was a driver for an officer. His name was Alexandr and he was two years older than I was. His parents lived in Chernovtsy. We began to see each other. He visited me in Kishinev when I became a student at the Medical Institute. His term of service was nearing its end and he proposed to me. He said that he and his parents were common people and that I didn't need higher education either. I didn't really enjoy studying and I decided to leave the institute. I took him to Dubossary to introduce him to my mother. When I told my mother that I didn't want to continue my studies my mother said that I had to finish a medical school and get a profession before getting married. I entered a medical school in Dubossary. Alexandr went to his parents in Chernovtsy and waited for two years until I finished medical school. In 1956 I received my diploma and went to Chernovtsy. My mother also came to Chernovtsy to discuss the wedding arrangements with Alexandr's parents. When Alexandr's mother opened the door she began to hug and kiss my mother all of a sudden. They both cried and laughed speaking Yiddish. We didn't understand what it was all about. My mother told me that this was Beilia Stelmakher and this was the family that shared their dwelling with us in the ghetto for three years. Alexandr turned out to be that boy named Shmil that had been hiding in the wardrobe. Of course, I didn't recognize him. We were children then and many things had changed since then. Our mothers remembered each other. This was miraculous, but it was true. We met twelve years after liberation. We got married. My husband was a driver and I got a job as a midwife in a maternity hospital. I had a good relationship with my colleagues. I never faced any anti-Semitism. Of course, I cannot say that there wasn't any anti-Semitism, but I witnessed no instances of it. I worked in the hospital for 22 years and the attitude towards me was always good. I retired quite a while ago, but my former colleagues often visit me and come to see me on holidays. Our son was born in 1957. We named him Igor so the first letter of his name begins with the same letter as my grandfather's name: Isaac Bekker.