

Ignac Neubauer



This is me. This photograph was taken for my passport, Uzhgorod, 2003.

In 1946 I became an apprentice of a tailor in a garment store. I had to support my mother and sister, being the only man in the family. It stimulated me to study well and two years later I became a good tailor. Many people ordered their clothes at garment shops since it was hard to buy anything in shops. I could make any clothes, but I was good at making men's suits. The town and region's top men were my clients. Besides my salary I got good tips from my clients, and they also brought me food products that were hard to buy. I retired only in 1988.

When after the breakup of the USSR [1991] Ukraine gained independence I was hoping for a better life. Ukraine is a rich country: it has fruitful lands and natural deposits. There are good reserves requiring effective management, but I don't see it happening. Life is more difficult than it was during the Soviet rule. My heart squeezes when I see comely old women digging in garbage pans looking for food leftovers. Fortunately, Hesed provides assistance to us, Jews. Old people can have free meals in the Hesed canteen and Hesed delivers meals to those who cannot leave their homes. We also receive food packages and clothes. I've been invited to this canteen many times, but I prefer my own cooking. It's not bragging on my part, but many housewives ask me for my recipes of traditional Jewish cuisine. My daughter's family likes my cooking as well. I've had two infarctions and several serious surgeries. Hesed helps me with medications and I can consult a doctor from Hesed. When my wife was ill, Hesed also helped us. A visiting nurse from Hesed came to look after her and we received all necessary medications. Lubov died in 2003. Hesed helped us with funeral arrangements. My wife was buried in the Jewish sector of the town cemetery in Uzhgorod. There was a Jewish funeral. The rabbi of the Uzhgorod synagogue conducted the ceremony. Hesed takes great efforts to revive the Jewry of Subcarpathia. There clubs where Jews of all ages study Hebrew and Jewish religion and traditions. My grandson also studies there. Besides, he is a member of the club for Jewish youngsters in Hesed. There are clubs of foreign languages, la literature studio, a choir and dance studio. There is a club for older people in Hesed where they can talk, listen to music or watch a film having a cup of tea. This is so wonderful since older people suffer more from solitude than diseases. Besides, there is a Jewish community and I have been chairman at the synagogue for 8 years. I know Yiddishkeit and can help those who are just coming to the religion of his ancestors. We go to the synagogue 4 times a week and people got used to this. Now we finally have a rabbi and this is a big relief for us. Young people begin to attend the synagogue and we are very happy about it. However, there is still anti-Semitism in Ukraine. Actually, it exists on everyday life level, but it is still there. It is possible to fight open anti-Semitism through court or state authorities, but when a young guy in the street yelled 'Heil Hitler!' seeing me, this means that fascism is alive and it can come back in Ukraine. Only if everybody stands against it there can be hope that all those horrors it brought to our country once would never recur.