

Rosa Freisond With Her Pupils And Director Of The School



The 3rd form of school #6 in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I am sitting in the center, director of the school is on my right. This photo was taken in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1955.

In 1945 I was employed as a primary school teacher by a new Ukrainian general education school in the very center of the town where I worked for almost 40 years. The classes were big. There were children of different years of birth studying in one class due to the war. Overgrown children felt awkward about it at first before they got used to this. Gradually, things were getting orderly and our school became the best. I remember all of my postwar pupils well. There were many Jewish pupils and teachers. Mogilov-Podolski was a Jewish town. According to 1969 census there were 6 000 Jews, while now there were a bit over 300 left. Many left the town and the others passed away. We got along well with each other and didn't face any anti-Semitism, though it existed beyond the school already.

I didn't have a private life. I was the only breadwinner and provider for my mother and sister Lisa, who could not work due to her deafness. They had so-called social pensions since they hadn't worked that were miserable. I knew they needed me and I realized that I would hardly find anybody, who would agree to support his wife and two old and ill women in addition. My school and pupils became my life. I taught my pupils from the first till the 4th forms. Starting from the 5th form they had different teachers in all subjects while in primary school I taught all subjects, but physical culture and singing. My schoolchildren were my children. Parents wanted me to teach their children, when admission to my class started. I was very pleased, I must confess. Then my former pupils brought their children and then - grandchildren to my class. It was wonderful, but also sad - a reminder of the flow of time.

Teachers got low salaries in the former USSR, and I didn't have any additional earnings. However, we were used to living a modest life and it didn't cause any disturbances to me. Besides, many people lived like this after the war. Even after working a few years I could not afford to buy a watch

and I was modest about my need in clothes. The only thing I allowed myself was buying a new suit or dress before the start of a new academic year.

When my mother was with us we celebrated all Jewish holidays. Of course, we did it in secret - if someone got to know about it, I wouldn't have worked one day as a teacher. On Sabbath my mother lit candles and prayed and we had a festive dinner, but for me it was a tribute of respect of my mother and not a need. I had to go to work on Saturday. My mother and sister tried to do no work on Saturday, but I didn't feel like following this rule. Before Pesach my mother baked matzah in the gas oven and cooked gefilte fish and chicken broth. She watched it that we didn't have any bread at home on Pesach. At home and at school we celebrated Soviet holidays: 1 May, Victory Day, 7 November, Soviet army Day, 8 March - international women's day and New Year. My mother died in 1968. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery according to the Jewish traditions, as she had requested. My sister or I didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays after she died.

I retired in 1975, but I could not live without my school and I returned to work. I finally retired in 1990.