

Asia Matveyuk



I, Asia Matveyuk at the meeting of veterans of our division in Odessa in 1998. I came to this reunion every year and every year there was somebody gone. On these days we felt like boys and girls going through the war. I have a medal 'For Valor' on my chest, awarded to me in 1944 and other orders and medals that I received after the war: Orders of the Patriotic War of the 1st and 2nd grades and medals to memorable dates.

I worked as director of a pharmacy in Kherson for many years. I was secretary of the pharmacy department Party organization. Now I retired. Perestroika was a strong blow for my family, and it is not a deficit of material character that I mean, but it is of moral value. I have a rather good pension as a veteran of the war. My husband Vasiliy died in 1995, so little before our 'golden wedding'. It was so very hard for me. I continue to be a Soviet person. During the Soviet regime I felt that people needed me: I was secretary of the Party organization of pensioners and often met with veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Now I don't think anybody needs me. My activities and ideals don't mean anything and I've lost a lot. Most importantly, I've lost my idea and faith.

I always attended meetings of veterans of our division in Odessa and also went to a meeting in Leningrad, but now I am hard up and cannot afford it. Besides, nobody wants this to happen. All of my fellow comrades happen to live abroad: in Russia, Baltic republics and Moldova and even to correspond with them is far too expensive, to say nothing of arranging meetings. Besides, not many of us are living. I am a client of Hesed and attend the Day Center, but I do not observe Jewish traditions or celebrate holidays at home. It's too far from me and I take no interest in them, but my daughter Natalia is close to the Jewish way of life. Her father-in-law Mikhail Gorskiy is head of the Jewish community in Kharkov and he gradually involves Natalia's family to the observance of Jewish traditions. Victory Day, when we meet with my fellow comrades, has always been the biggest and most important holiday for me. On these days I feel a young and fearless girl again.