

Grigoriy Stel'makh



I, Grigoriy Stel'makh, in the soviet army. Kiev, 1960. I was photographed in my Soviet army uniform of the 1960s, during a military parade on the occasion of the victory in the Great Patriotic War anniversary in. I gave this photo to my mother.

After leaving school in 1959 I worked in a shop few months and then I went to the army. I served in the engineering troops and my unit was in Kiev region. I have good memories about the army. There was no discrimination and senior comrades always supported the newcomers. We had plain, but sufficient food. There was one Jew from the Western Ukraine in my platoon. Once, during our leisure time in the barrack one guy began to provoke me telling about 'zhydy' and caricature features that people 'granted' to them. I understood that he was doing it on purpose and if I didn't react than anybody would humiliate me. I didn't think long: I approached him and hit him on his face heartily, from all Jewish people, so to say. My fellow comrades started talking: 'Good for you, you've done right'. 'However, none of them spoke in my defense till I did it myself, but it strengthened my authority in the unit.

I went to work as a locksmith at the Kiev motorcycle plant. I understood that I had to work better than the rest of us to avoid any complaints about my performance. I worked there for some time and then I understood that I needed higher education. I entered the Mechanical Faculty of Agricultural Academy where I studied by correspondence. I worked at this plant all my life. I started as a locksmith and then I held many positions: controlling inspector, foreman of the Technical Control department, shop superintendent and was promoted to commercial deputy director. I was the only Jewish manager. Besides, I wasn't a party member. At first they didn't want to admit me to the party, because they were reluctant to admit Jewish engineers, but then my colleagues began to

recommend me to join the party, but I didn't want to. In contrast to my father, I didn't have belief in the party.