

# Grigoriy Kagan, The Referee Of A Boxing Match On The Ring



This photo was taken for a sport report for a military newspaper at the Dynamo sport association championship. I am the referee of a boxing match on the ring. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1966.

In 1963 I had to resign from the army due to my health condition. I lived a long time in the severe northern climate and it resulted in my foot artery congestion. The doctors said it might mean amputation of my foot. The doctor said that if I wanted to survive, I had to change the climatic conditions and my job. I resigned and decided to move to my parents in Kiev. By that time the relations between my wife and me were misbalanced. I divorced her immediately after I resigned. I left her everything we had in Arkhangelsk. I left Arkhangelsk having just one small suitcase. I went to my parents in Kiev. I was 43 and had to start life anew. Probably to make my life easier 'Destiny' sent me another wife. My cousin Israel Gershtein, my aunt Olga's son, introduced me to my second wife Asia German. We got married. We had a common wedding. Of course, a traditional Jewish wedding was out of the question: I was a member of the party and we were both atheists. We lived a happy life together. I moved into Asia's one-bedroom apartment. Asia was a dentist. The doctors she knew saved my leg. I didn't even need a surgery. I jogged in the morning until two years before, when I had to stop jogging in the morning. I jogged 7.5 km on weekdays and 10 km at weekends. I was a hockey and a box referee for many years. It was hard. I used to be referee at 3 hockey matches in a row: children at first, 3 15-minute periods, junior teams, 3 20-minute periods, and then adult games. I was on ice all this time. A referee has to be in the center of the field. Besides enjoying the sport, it also paid well and was a good addition to our family budget.

I started experiencing anti-Semitism immediately after I joined the civil life. It was hard for me to ignore it, though it did not refer to me directly. Those were anti-Semitic talks in transport means and in lines. One day something happened that I could never forget. In spring 1964 the Ukrainian Soccer federation authorized me to take command of the parade dedicated to the opening of a season on the Olympic Stadium in Kiev. This was a match between the Kiev and Moscow Dynamo.

The teams lined up before the gate of the stadium. I was to lead them onto the field where they were to line up facing the main tribune and then I had to give them this direction: 'Align! Attention! Eyes ...' and then I was to enunciate my words clearly: 'Commander of Parade Colonel Kagan!' When I was already at the head of the column, the master of ceremony approached me and told me to not say my surname! This was unequivocal: my Jewish surname was not to be said at the stadium! This made me angry, of course, but I knew that the parade commander should stay in line whatever the circumstances. I did not object. I don't know whether I was right.