

Emma Balonova On Vacation



This photograph shows me in Gagry on vacation. It was taken in summer of 1950 by my colleagues whom I met there by pure accident. Now I'll tell you about our life at that time.

In 1958 my husband got demobilized and we returned to Leningrad as a family of four.

My husband went to the State College for Advanced Training of Doctors. [The State College for Advanced Training of Doctors was the first in the world educational institution for improvement of doctors' skill.

It was founded in 1924.] He wanted to get a specialty of radiologist. To tell the truth, he had already got it. You see, serving in Germany he did not drink vodka every evening (like others), but spent his spare time with his friend who worked in the local hospital.

His friend was a radiologist; he taught my husband fine points of his profession. In Leningrad he studied at the advanced training courses for half a year and got a certificate of radiologist.

And he worked in one of the Leningrad hospitals as a radiologist for about 30 years.

We all lived at my mother-in-law in her large five-room apartment. She put a room at our disposal. And I went to work at the Chemical and Pharmaceutical College.

There I worked 5 years. But before I went there, I made an attempt to return to the Institute of Toxicology, where I worked earlier. I did not go to its personnel department; I addressed my former laboratory head directly.

He said 'You'd better find some other place to work now, but when it becomes easier from the certain viewpoint, I'll call you, and you will come.' It was absolutely clear for me what he was talking about: at that time they were not permitted to take Jews.

He called me 5 years later (in 1964), during the so called Khrushchev Thaw. I came to the Institute and worked there till 1979. I had the right to retire on pension at the age of 45 (because we worked with chemical agents dangerous to health, though pension age in the USSR and in Russia was 55), but I worked 14 years more.

I came across no manifestations of anti-Semitism: I worked under very pleasant conditions, though I knew that it was practically impossible for a Jew to find work in our Institute. It is interesting to mention that a veto was put only on newcomers of Jewish nationality.

In the institute there worked a lot of Jews, almost all of them occupied leading positions: managed laboratories, directed scientific investigations, etc. I retired on pension in 1979, and did not work any more.

As in our Institute we worked with chemical agents dangerous to health, each employee received a free-of-charge place in any recreational center he liked one time in 4 years. But every year we used to go for vacation to the South: sometimes to Crimea, sometimes to the Caucasus.

During the year we saved money to have an opportunity to go for vacation in summer. My sister's husband was military (a colonel), he was one of the major executives and used to go for vacation to very good sanatoria every year.

Being in sanatorium, he used to find and rent an apartment for his wife, his son, my little children and me. When my children grew up, they started spending summer holidays in sports camps.