

**LINE FIVE: THE INTERNAL PASSPORT**  
**The Soviet Jewish Oral History Project of the Women's Auxiliary**  
**of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago**

**VLADIMIR GEKHTER**

**Civil Engineer**

BIRTH: 1950, Minsk, Byelorussia

SPOUSE: Anna Gekhter, 1953, Accountant  
Married 1975

CHILDREN: Roman, 1976  
Eugene, 1982

PARENTS: Raphael Gekhter, died in 1944  
Lydia Gekhter, November 7, 1922, Dentist

SIBLINGS:

MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:  
Berta Koltun, 1896-1977  
Marc Halip, 1894?-1935

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS (IF GIVEN):

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

WOMEN'S AUXILIARY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS OF CHICAGO

NAME: **VLADIMIR GEKHTER**

DATE: OCTOBER 30, 1990

Interviewer: Ellie Meyers

I am 39 years old. I was born in Minsk, Byelorussia. My mother was born in the Ukraine, in a small place near Kiev. My father was born in Minsk also. They met during World War II. They were evacuated to the south republic and my father was sent there after he was injured. He was in the hospital and in that place met my mother and they fell in love and came here. He died fourteen or fifteen years ago. He died of cancer in Minsk.

(grandparents)

My grandmother and grandfather lived in Minsk. And my grandmother, mother of my mother, she lived in the South Ukraine, where my mother was born. It happened that we lived

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in Siberia because my father was a military doctor and he served in the Soviet army and we lived very far from the place and maybe one time in three or four years we came to visit our grandparents in Minsk and the Ukraine. It was a very long trip, about three months. I stayed in Siberia fifteen years. It was very hard to live there. From two to sixteen years old. When (one is) very young, the world is wonderful. I thought that I was the happiest child in the world because every day I listen in child-care and school that I'm the happiest boy because I was born in the Soviet Union. But on the other hand my friends knew I was Jewish.

I had known I was Jewish from when I was maybe six or seven years old. It was very embarrassing. My friends told me I was Jewish. My parents didn't tell me. All my friends all around teased me. I don't know [how they knew I was Jewish] -- maybe their parents told them. I think so because they were also, like me, nine to eleven years old, and they teased me. My name is different, not Ivanov, Petrov.

[ANNA: Everybody knows. It's not a secret. Because, you know, even if you go to the hospital, everywhere, even in your class journal where they list the pupils, on the last page you can see "Nationality" --Jews. I remember this very well

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because I lived not so far from Siberia. It was near the Ural mountains so I remember this very well. I was the only one who was Jewish.]

I was the only one who was Jewish in our class and I got a lot of trouble from this, my nationality. I can expect that every time, at any moment, I can get this name like Jew, Jew. It's very terrible in Russian because it's very hard to defend yourself.

I don't think my father was sent to Siberia because he's Jewish. Maybe. He was born in Minsk and served in World War II and was injured in the battle with the Germans. And as soon as he became a little bit healthy he was dropped into the army again and was sent to Siberia.

(Did you have Jewish rituals and holidays?)

No.

([Teasing] Did you tell your mother?)

My father told me I should be proud that I'm a Jew because there were many famous people as Jews, but it was so little for me because I was surrounded in Russia by friends and they

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were different from me because I can be the best in the class, the best in any activity but then I hear behind my back, "Jew". It was very embarrassing. I had very good Russian friends who understood that it wasn't fair, but what could they do? Now I have very good friends in Russia, because all people are different. I can't say that all Russians are anti-Semitic. There's a lot of good people in Russia.

(Were there more Jewish families in Minsk?)

Yes. There were more Jewish families. For me it was like a gift because I thought that I am one on the planet that is Jewish, and when I came to Minsk I found more Jewish friends. When we came to Minsk, my father got his illness. He worked for a couple of months. My mother worked, she is a dentist. When she came to Minsk she couldn't find work, but in Siberia she worked as a dentist because there was a big shortage of dentists. In Minsk she worked as a nurse. In Minsk I lived with my grandmother and mother, wife and children. I'm an only child. It was very difficult living for my parents. They couldn't let themselves have any more children.

(Who took care of you?)

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I took care of myself. As a baby, my mother. She didn't work until I was six. My earliest memory is when I was at my grandmother's place in the Ukraine, and I remember a very tall tree and I'm sitting on this tree and I can't get down and I was crying and somebody didn't let me get down, maybe some bad guys. I don't remember how I got there.

(grandparents - stories)

My grandmother told me stories about her living. You know, it's a little different subject. It's difficult for me to find the special words for this conversation because I never used them. But I will try to explain to you. She lived in a special place for Jews. It's like round, not ghetto. They don't allow Jewish people to leave this place. It has borders. The czars decreed that there are certain places where Jews live.

I'd like to tell you about my other grandmother. She was a very educated woman. Very highly educated woman. My father's mother. She had two educations. She was an accountant and a dentist. And also in Russia when there was the first meeting of the all-Jewish Bund she was first delegate... Maybe my grandfather was active too, but I don't know. He

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passed away when I was four or five, so I only know stories. Only my grandmother was politically active. She dreamed about going to live in Israel. She told me that I should go to Israel.

[ANNA: I heard that her husband was arrested and put in a jail during Stalin's leadership and just because he was a boss in a factory and he was Jewish at the same time. That's why he was put in jail. She remembers that it was very scary.]

(Stalinism)

It affected almost all Jewish families. The brother of my grandfather was in camps. He did nothing. He was a simple worker. One morning he woke up and somebody was knocking at his door and told him, take your things and go with us. He asked for what. They said, "You'll get to know soon." And he came back only fifteen years later.

(Basically happy childhood, but was life in Siberia hard?)

No, I was never hungry. You know, it may be strange for you, but my father was a very good hunter. And he taught me how to hunt and fish. And I picked berries and mushrooms. I

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hunted and fished and had a happy childhood. And I was the only child.

(about being teased)

Sometimes I cried but my father told me "you should be strong, you should never cry, you should fight." And so I became a fighter and I got a broken jaw... but I fight them. After I fought I became more popular. They respected me.

[ANNA: They considered all Jews chickens. I don't know why.]

(Could you intermingle with everyone?)

Yes. They accepted me. I had friendships with different friends, Jewish, Russian, Byelorussian. I didn't enjoy school life. I almost finished school in Siberia, and I finished only a half year in a new class. I couldn't have very warm relationships and friendships. It was hard. Then I became a student at a Polytechnical Institute. This is after high school.

(early memories)



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I had a lot of obligations [responsibilities]. I brought wood for the stove. And I brought water from a well. And I washed dishes. I grew up fast because we had a small garden. I took care of it. It was a big obligation, maybe from age seven.

(Any holidays? vacations, trips?)

No. There was no travelling around the Soviet Union.

(In school in Minsk)

It was a policy in my family that I should get higher education. My father told me that I should be an educated person. I wanted to be a doctor because my father was a doctor and my mother, and I had a lot of my father's friends who were teachers in the medical institute. They told me, "Vladimir, don't even try to go to medical institute because now they are looking not for your knowledge, only for your nationality. Now we are the last to be picked for the institute. You should go to the polytechnical because not everybody will want to be an engineer because it's not so easy." There wasn't a lot of competition for engineering, because it's so small power and salary in Russia. [ANNA: Afterward it was about two percent. But I don't know any Jews who graduated from medical school.]

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I decided to go to polytechnical institute and spent one summer and I was well prepared and when I passed the exams in mathematics I had a 4. I understand that if I get a 4, I'll never pass the institute, and I ask why did I get a score of 4, because I answered all of the questions. And he was upset and asked, what mark do you need? I said, I want 5. And he gave me extra very difficult questions and I spent maybe 15 minutes on them and gave him correct answers and he told me, you should be more modest. I ask, what's wrong, I want to be a student, and he told me, "Okay, you got your 5. Get out."

I was never in the Communist party. My father was because he couldn't become a doctor without being a member of the Communist party. My grandmother, she loved my father and she was proud about it because she has two sons. She saw that my father was more persistent in his goals. He was smart and handsome. [ANNA: I think that he was a real Communist. He certainly wanted to be a Communist, to live in the U.S.S.R. He believed in the USSR.]

That's the tragedy of our parents. I can't understand how it happened. On the one hand he understands that everybody

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knows that he's a Jew so everybody can tell him, joke, that you're a Jew. Under the table joking. On the other hand, he really believes in Communism. He believes in Stalin. To me it's strange. He loves Stalin because he told me, "When I went to attack in the World War II, to fight, I cried, 'for Stalin, for the Communist party.'" [ANNA: They didn't even know that he was the greatest anti-Semite.]

(How did you two meet?) By chance. I had a friend and sometimes I saw this picture and would ask, "Who is this girl?" He said, "this is my cousin". I asked when I could see her and he said never because I know she lives in a different town, not in Minsk, and as far as I know she has a boyfriend and is going to get married. Okay. I had known that she came to Minsk and I called her to talk to her.

[ANNA: I would never have gotten married to him if he hadn't been so persistent. When we met you were twenty-three and I was twenty. Tomorrow it'll be fifteen years. He was twenty-four and I was twenty-one when we got married. I went for a holiday to my grandmother. And he called me, - He was calling me everywhere. He proposed.]

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She thought I was crazy.

[ANNA: I did not resist very long.]

(Wedding-Jewish ceremony?)

I have special feelings about this. I invited a lot of Jewish friends and relatives and I also invited Russian friends. And I was not comfortable because they heard the Jewish songs, very much Jewish dancing and I feel myself that my Russian friends don't understand. I have feelings that something goes wrong. I don't know why. I'm not afraid.

[ANNA: I remember - if anybody, my aunt, my grandmother, anybody spoke in Yiddish, I was so embarrassed. I didn't want anybody to hear this.]

We had a regular wedding, at the government office. Our parents were with us. It was a regular Soviet wedding like everybody gets. It's nothing. We go there, listen to special words. After this we exchange rings. And we give gifts and a little champagne and that's it. And we had a party. We invited a special Jewish orchestra. Jewish and Russian friends. But I wanted it to be a Jewish wedding. I think it's very difficult because I've never been to a Jewish

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wedding in this country, I can't compare. I wanted to hear Jewish songs, dance Jewish dancing. (Nothing else before this was Jewish?) No.

[ANNA: I remember one song [Ma....], the only song I remember.]

First time in my life I felt Jewish. I felt so strange, - I am Jewish. My parents spoke Russian at home. My mother speaks Yiddish. She spoke it with her mother and her family a little bit. (So they spoke Yiddish at home?) They spoke Russian and Yiddish.

[ANNA: Sometimes my father's mother. But I didn't like it, because I didn't want to be Jewish.]

In this country, my son speaks without an accent because he wants to be an American boy.

[ANNA: No, nobody wants to be different, I think so, especially in this age, when a little bit younger.]

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(When in childhood did being Jewish seem a problem to your parents?) My father wanted me to grow up with other Jews. That's why he wanted to bring me to Minsk. He dreamed about this his whole life, then came to Minsk and died. I worked for 120 rubles a month. New engineers... only for food and I paid for the apartment. I lived with my mother. Our salaries were together. I didn't live better than others... We lived in two small rooms the size of maybe this room and this kitchen. My mother, my wife, me, my son, my grandmother. My grandmother was very sick. She couldn't move. It was terrible.

We stand in line to get an apartment for nine years and I pay money, a huge amount of money and when I go to get the apartment they tell me you are not eligible to get this apartment because your grandmother died one year ago and now you have extra area and your mother should leave this apartment and find a smaller one for herself because you're going to go live as a family and your mother will live in two small rooms to exist. And they tell me, you can't do this. Why, what is wrong with my family? I stand in line nine years, I pay 3,000 rubles.

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Now you can compare. I earned in one month 160 rubles and I could collect 3,000 rubles and I paid for my food and clothes, and I give this money to the housing agency and they tell me I'm not eligible! It's my nature to fight. I have lots of experience in Russia. We finally got the apartment. Because I gave bribes to one lawyer and he got to court and talked to... I had no choice. I meet a lawyer and he tells me you should give me some money. I gave him more money and he talked to the judge and put my application to the court and wait six months. They're afraid to give right decisions. In my time also five, six, seven years ago, court was under Soviet law. They were afraid, but they took my money and I got an apartment.

(Work)

I was very good. I was on a high level of power. In Russia if you have high grades you can choose the place where you want to work because all students have get jobs according to their grades. They invite you for work. It's the system. And I decided to work at a radio technical plant. This radio plant manufactured very popular radios and televisions. I decided to work there. (Is that unusual?) Because my grades were high - they invited me before a commission. There was

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my director and my boss, people from other plants, people from the institute. It's a very rigorous commission. They ask me, okay, Vladimir, you have these grades, you may be fifth or sixth out of 200 people. Where do you want to work? I said, at the radio plant. They told me there was no place. But I saw on that list that there were six places and only one person had chosen the radio-television place. After me another guy chose the radio-television place and got the place. Because I'm a Jew, I didn't.

[ANNA: You forgot to tell one story. You remember about the explosion in the radio factory? It was before. That's why they did not take you for this job.]

In twenty minutes my group leader came out. "Why do you risk being without work? Don't be stubborn. Go again and take any place because you'll never get another one." I was afraid. So I went in and they said do you want any place and I couldn't fight. I couldn't find the force and power I need to fight. Because I don't want to fight. Whom? The government, policy? So I pick up any place. I think it was not too bad. I got a different place because I'm Jew. It's a very interesting story.



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I was a research engineer at a design company. I worked in a department and we developed some new manufacturing processes. And I decided to become a scientist because I spent maybe three years working making new research for manufacturing processes. I was invited to the Academy of Sciences to work, but in Russia it's all paper and approval, all procedure. I couldn't work with this science. I should fill out the paper and get approval from my Communist bureau and I couldn't get this paper and get ahead because I could not get access to some equipment in this Academy of Sciences. I couldn't finish my work because I couldn't get enough equipment, and special adjustments and fixtures and official books and I left this job after that because I feel I am a little child being hit by a very cruel man.

And I decided to go to work in the plant. I decided to become a designer. I decided to leave my job because I got an invitation from the factory. I got an approval, - this place very much needs a designer. So I quit my job. I finished my job but I couldn't get new job because they refused to give me the job.

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Before I quit my job I had approval that I would get this new place because the chief of this department needs me, and he invited me. He signed my application. And when I came to put on my last signature, they didn't let me have the job. I understand and they understand and everybody understands that they invited me. And I said: yesterday you invited me. "Yes," they said, "at that time, when you walked from that place to our place, another designer came here and took your place." I told him it's wrong, I just talked to the boss of this place, and he needs me, he needs my experience. He said, I don't know. You should talk to the boss. I talked to him...

In Russia it's a policy, you can't live without work for more than one month. If it's more than one month, you can be kicked out of the city. I was afraid that I could go to jail for not working. I fought for my place and I got this place. All the same place. I don't know what happened. (Do you think a non-Jew came in and took your place?) Sure. Without a doubt. I thought that I worked hard, and I got very good experience. I was a tool and die designer.

(on the job)

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I got along with everybody. There were a lot of Jews. Of course there were a couple of anti-Semites. I couldn't get along with them. They were so *kodjavnaja*. They couldn't look in my eye because they were my enemies. I don't know, they seemed to have animal feelings inside them.

(ANNA: I think.. it's hard to distinguish here because a lot of people, nations, everything. There it's more prominent...)

(Would being a Communist have helped?)

I don't know. Maybe a little bit because everybody laughed he's a Jew and a communist, all at the same time. I didn't join because I don't need it. Because I didn't trust this party because I saw what my father got for fighting for this party, I saw how Communists treated me. (ANNA: Are you sure they would have allowed it?) I don't know. (Anna: I know they keep about two percent of the population, two percent is Jewish and they are trying to keep the proportion in every sphere.)

I don't know about this percentage, but I do know that they didn't allow Jewish people to become Communists, because

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if you're a Communist you're able to get a better position. During World War II it was different. It was very easy to become a Communist during then because if you're asked, "Who wants to be a Communist?" you could join, and maybe you will be killed.

(at the plant, tool & die work-- could you do what you wanted to accomplish?) It's not a simple question. They allowed me to do good design, to do some stuff but they couldn't allow me to grow in my position. My salary grows the slowest because I have no choice, no room for growth.

(Why did you decide to leave Russia?)

I understand that it is worst of all. I have kids. You can tell that people tease you. I was afraid because I didn't want my kids to have the same feelings as I felt when I was growing up. I want them to feel equal. If you're smart, you should get the job. Because on my way, I got a lot of obstructions. I understand that I didn't get my higher level in my dream, in my goal, because when I was young I always had very high goals in my life.

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Now I'm running nine miles every other day. I put in my life, in my mind all the higher goals. It's my position, my policy. In my family, my father always told me, you always should get the higher goals, because anyone can get the low goals and the middle goals. It was policy. I never can be happy with what I have now. I have to grow and grow and grow. But I think that if you're thirty years old, forty, fifty, sixty years old, you always have room for improvement.

(At what point did you decide to leave Russia?)

I decided to leave Russia twelve years ago.... I applied with visas and regulations department... I applied twelve years ago and was refused. At work they didn't know. This information didn't come to my place of work. (Was this after you applied for the job you didn't get?) I don't know. Maybe it was on my record, but I don't know because I didn't have access. Action wasn't taken against me. I was a very good designer. I had a very low position. I did a very good job. I didn't look for a higher position. They kept me because I was a very convenient worker. It was in 1979. Ten years ago.

(How many times were you refused?)

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Once. We applied again two years ago. We've been here one year and six months... First we applied in 1979, then in 1988.

(Chernobyl) I first heard about it the night of May Day. It was a big Russian holiday. It was a victory holiday. I remember it was a Sunday. I remember that it was a beautiful day and we went out with my family and my kids and nobody knows that there was this radiation. Nobody knew. What could I do? Nothing. No place to escape. Minsk is about 200 miles from Chernobyl....

(Gorbachev--your feelings. Did things change with *glasnost*?)

I remember him. I thought that he could change things. But now I'm in doubt about it. A couple days ago I got a call from my brother and he talked about the situation. Starvation. There's no food, there's no bread, no eggs. He told me that now on the market eggs cost 15 rubles. He makes 200 rubles a month. (ANNA: You know, hunger is not dangerous in and of itself. Dangerous is the situation in any point, who is guilty? Jew? My brother, what he said, I said to him it

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takes much more time to make it here. He said, okay, I'm going to Israel. I want...)

We were going to live together. But it's overcrowded. Even in Israel. There's no place for Russians. I just heard from my friend and there's no place to work. (ANNA: ...I cannot imagine if nothing happens there. She applied to come with us. She hasn't been refused yet. But it's going to take two years to get here. I don't know why she decided not to apply. She has my grandmother. Probably she did not know that things were going to be so much worse like now. She cannot leave the graves. She's religious. She's 87 years old. She kept holidays... My mother didn't know what the holidays were. I have very similar story because my father was a military man. Keep Russia, he kept talking about Jews. I just knew that I was a Jew.)

We weren't Jewish in our customs, just in our passports. I didn't understand. What does this mean, Jew? It's just small word, Jew, but it changed us.

(Would you like to start following the traditions?)  
Yes, we do this. Of course. We don't understand the

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services. Now to start, right now, I cannot speak English very well. I cannot let myself learn Hebrew. Maybe in a couple of years.

(What happened when you left the USSR?) We had friends here from Minsk who sponsored us. From Minsk we went to Vienna, to Italy.

(language-- you speak well, etc. What have you found in America?) Differences. Big differences. People think differently in Russia. I don't know why. A different way to start thinking and make decisions. I have tried to change my mentality. Not change, maybe my feelings would be helpful for me, but I'm trying to learn how Americans think. You have to find a way. It's very difficult. Two people think and are talking and sometimes it's hard to find something in common. And now, you can imagine how difficult it is between the United States and the Soviet Union. It's not one person. It's a world, a system.

I changed my system here. And I'm working here and I'm working hard to try to understand what goes on and how people think and how they work, why are they laughing at these things,



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why are they crying at these things. And I try to understand American TV. (Anna: Jewish people whose parents and grandparents came from Russia, they are close. They have a closer mentality to us and I don't know why.)

(Because if not for my grandparents, I would be you. My grandparents came in 1905 because they were peasants and were not educated. They had no choice... Fiddler on the Roof, etc. It was the story when things were so bad that the soldiers would come and shoot the Jewish babies. Things were so bad that our grandparents came. If they hadn't come, I'd still be in Kiev... So when you say Americans who are from Russian descent feel a certain closeness, that's why.... There were Russian Jews who came ten years ago. Many live near here. How are they reacting to you?)

They asked us, why didn't you come earlier. (Anna: Is it so bad there that you came now?)

(It seems that the Russian Jews who came earlier aren't sympathetic to the Russian Jews coming now.)

Yes. They feel superior.

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(Your friends who have been here for ten years, do they know what's going on in Russia?) I don't know if they know for real, or if they know rumors. I didn't talk to him after this one ... I have met him at work. His parents were from Russia. He's about 55. He said his uncle went to Russia to Leningrad and came back after two days. And he didn't have time to talk to his wife, he came back so fast. No food...

If he keeps Jewish traditions, on Saturday, there's no way to do this. I went to synagogue in Russia a couple times, in Moscow. I was maybe twenty years old when I went to synagogue in Moscow. And I went with my friends in Moscow who were Jewish. [And a militia man followed us.]

(What did you bring with you from the Soviet Union?) I brought my family, my occupation and my knowledge. (Anna: They didn't allow us to bring anything except our baggage out.) I brought shoes, shirts... and ninety dollars in my pocket for everybody.

(In the year and a half you've been here, are you meeting your goals and dreams?)

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Yes. I am mad that I can't go a little faster in English. It's the main struggle, communication. At home we speak Russian. (Anna: You know, I like my language. My native language. I can't give it up.) At first I tried to talk in English, my kids talk to me in English. It's a pleasure. The youngest one, every night, dad, tell me a story. And he says, "in Russian. You're a very good storyteller, but only in Russian." He likes it. But when he speaks to other kids, they speak only English. And they speak to one another sometimes only in English. I try to talk to them. But my wife, she doesn't like to. (Anna: By the way, you know what I heard... and she speaks English since seven years old, and her native language is considered to be Spanish. Still she feels more comfortable with Spanish than English.)

I want to talk in English. I need to speak in English....

(School) [something], Niles... The kids are doing well. My youngest son is very good in mathematics. I teach them algebra. He can multiply.... (Anna: He is supposed to be in third grade but because of his language he's in second grade.)

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(hopes for children) (Anna: Don't feel like we felt about ourselves. Don't be embarrassed about being Jewish.) You are equal. (Anna: When my father said to me that I'm a Jew I was crying, I thought, I'm the same like anybody.)

Everyday I tell my older ones, everyday you live you should work hard because you have everything. You can get everything. And you can get every goal if you work hard. If you are genuine/generous. I do believe in hard work... establish yourself like a man because you should be healthy. But the main goal is education. If you study poorly I prohibit you to... because I need a clever man. Not just big muscles.

(anything else) I have some special memories. Six years ago I decided to change my work because I was not happy with my work because I had a lot of knowledge and I gave all I could give to this plant, and at that time I decided to build like my own plant. I will try to explain. It's the property between government and private property. Like collective farm. It's like *kibbutz* in Israel; it's called a *kolkhoz*. They invited me to build a plant because there's not much work in the wintertime. I spent three years. It was flat ground, no engineering at all, just simple people. And I found, fixed,

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and installed equipment. It's not like in America where you call and get equipment tomorrow. In Russia you fight for every machine, for all materials. I think that I was a very good manager because my plant had made two or three million net profit. It was very good because I was different. I was the manager of this plant. Everybody worked for their salary.

I had some power, because I made decisions, and I developed new products myself. I negotiated to sell... It was very good experience. When I developed good connections between sales and development and production and when I had all the connections, ... they tried to push me out because I had too much power. I decided that this country will never change. Maybe after a civil war.... If you want to get raw materials, you should pray. In Russia, for example, I have.... I have ordered from government... I have real order only for 5 million but I can only get 1 million. I should get something but it's all distributed. For example, if I have this piece of paper for four pieces, where can I get these resources? I couldn't, but I could.

(Anna: He wasn't in the military, that's why.) I was a little bit, three months. I served maybe a couple times in

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the summer in the Soviet military forces, it's huge. I never met something similar to our military forces. Every man after institute must serve three months. I had military education during my training. When I served the three months in the military forces I was invited as all my friends. We were together five years in the Institute. And I couldn't imagine that they could have minds so different. They were my friends in civilian life.

As soon as they went into the military they changed dramatically. They changed to talking about Jews and they'd laugh at Jewish jokes. I feel they tried to hit me and to push me because the policy in the Russian military forces is very cruel. One night I asked, why are you talking only about Jews? There were a lot of sharp-minded guys. One of them said, "Okay, today we're going to talk about African people. Here's a story about Africans. There were two Africans, Abraham and Sarah." Two Africans. A lot of this. I fought a couple of times, but I was alone.

(back from the army)

I never was friendly to these classmates again. I had only one real friend who understood. I don't know. You can

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imagine my life. On the one hand, I had a good education and I understood what happened. I thought maybe things could change, because every day... but you can read in the paper you should do this and this, you can become better and better... difficult things like I told you about my work. In real life what can I tell? It's my opinion. Russia is not a good place to live for Jewish people. It's bad for everybody. But for Jews? They are very afraid. It's more dangerous. (Anna: This situation. They know, stand in line for days, people are very mad. It's only a prison.)