

Betya G. was born in 1954, in Chernovtsky, Ukraine. Her parents were Sima P., 1924 – 1941 and Shaya Z., 1921-1975. Her mother was a mathematics teacher and her father, a manager in a soda water factory. Her grandmother, Golda Stein, was a great influence in her life. Her grandmother was illiterate but a successful business woman and introduced all the Jewish traditions to the family. While Chernovtsky had a sizable Jewish population, the Jewish traditions had to be hidden and practiced in private. Betya went by the name Beba to avoid her Jewish name in public. Betya recalls that saving money and buying commercial products like a TV or refrigerator had to be hidden to avoid being seen as a capitalist. Betya was very aware of the government policy to report neighbors who had luxury items. Betya's mother could never wear the jewelry that she owned, and they never invited neighbors into their house to avoid showing their greater than average wealth.

Betya was a good student and pursued medical school following in her sister's footsteps and was encouraged by a close friend of her mother who was a gynecologist. Betya met her future husband Boris when she was 10 and he was seventeen (they were second cousins). They were married when she was nineteen in 1974. Betya recalls the anti-Semitism that was rampant in Medical School policy – they would only allow 1% of the class to be Jewish so only 2-3 Jews could be chosen. Betya was denied a certificate as a medical text English translator despite being the best English speaker specifically because she was Jewish. After graduating medical school, Betya was forced to go to Tashkent to serve in an ambulance service rather than stay in Chernovtsky and practice OBGYN. Betya's family was able to immigrate to Israel in 1979. Betya and Boris did not go with them primarily because Boris' mother was a believer in the communist state. In 1985 however, they applied to join Betya's family in Israel and were refused. The government's response was that when the family renounced their Soviet citizenship, they no longer were considered related. Betya's mother was no longer considered her mother. The final straw for Betya was when her father was arrested for giving money to an official to get his daughter to practice medicine in a different city. After a difficult confinement, he died of a heart attack in prison just seven months later. After applying for immigration, they had to change their jobs and moved to Tashkent where Betya worked as a gynecologist from 1986 to 1988. Betya was determined to leave the Soviet Union and in Nov 1988 was able to immigrate to the US through the Joint Distribution Committee, HIAS. She passed her residency exam in 1990 and hopes to practice as a doctor. She and Boris are bringing up their two sons, Alexander (b. 1975), and Albert (b. 1981) in a Jewish community in the Chicago area.