

## Zakhar Benderskiy With His Friends



This is a photo of my friends and me in Kishinev on New Year's Day 1934. I sent this picture to my sister Frima in Israel. I had just returned from the army. I am 1st from right in the lower row. In the center is my friend Yakov Golub. The 2nd from right in the upper row is my friend Iosif Shwartz. My wife, daughter and I lived in his apartment after the war when we returned to Kishinev from evacuation. I finished school in 1932. I was 20 years old. I went to the army for one year. After the army I entered Commercial Academy in Bucharest. Since I was an officer who had completed service in the army, I was admitted without exams. I had to pay for my studies. I attended classes in the morning and worked in the afternoon. I worked at an insurance company. Later I got a job as a waiter in a restaurant and worked night shifts. I was a good employee and promoted to administrator soon. I was responsible for the waiters and the dance group at the restaurant. This was a good job and paid well. But I had to leave this restaurant after an incident. This incident happened in 1938. The fascists were in power in Germany, and the Romanian fascists became more insolent because they felt that they had a backup. Once there was a fight in the restaurant. It turned out that members of a fascist organization, the Iron Guard, were sitting at one table, and members of another fascist, anti-Semitic organization, the Cuzist, at another table. They started a fight. I called the police, and they took the fighters to their office. They called me to the police station to testify. I told the commissar about the fight. Then one of the suspects, who wore a jacket of a military cut and boots, said that his name was Zelea Codreanu. Everybody in the room turned pale when he said his name. He was the leader of the Iron Guard. I got very scared and left the police office. On the next day I told the owner of the restaurant about the incident, but he replied that there had been no incident whatsoever. I understood that the police had hushed up this case and feared that the Iron Guard would be looking for an opportunity to take their revenge. I had to leave the restaurant. I left before they could fire me. It didn't make my life easier, but it probably helped me save my life. I graduated from the Commercial Academy in 1938 and got married. My co-student introduced me to my future wife, Jeannette Duvidesku, a Romanian Jew. She was called Hana in Kishinev. She was born to the family of a Jewish tradesman in Bucharest in 1911. Jeannette only spoke Yiddish and Romanian. It was okay with me - I was fluent in both languages. We had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in Bucharest. It was no problem at that time. The

synagogues were open and there were rabbis there. We couldn't imagine that it would be over so soon. There was a rabbi from the big synagogue in Bucharest. The synagogue issued the ketubah to us. We lived with my wife's family in the beginning. I met people in Bucharest and soon they began to address me to issue annual reports for them or conduct an audit. We purchased an apartment and good furniture. I had several permanent customers, and my wife and I were quite well off. Jeannette was a housewife. We went to the synagogue on holidays and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays quite like our parents did.