

Emilia Kotliar



It's me, Emilia Kotliar. This photo was taken in Moscow in 1954. I am reciting my poems in the creative work association 'Magistral' (in Russian - Highway). My colleague photographed me and gave me this photo.

In 1943 I went to work as a tutor in a kindergarten. I worked there 4 years. It was hard work, but I managed and children were good to me.

There were 37 children in my group. It was a big group and besides, children of the war, they were problem children. Many didn't have fathers, they had dramatic living conditions and they were all hungry. They were nervous and excitable children. In general, they made a hard company.

While working in the kindergarten I finished a pedagogical school with honors and entered a Pedagogical College without taking entrance exams. I was only allowed to not take entrance exams at the Preschool Department.

I wanted to go to the Philological Faculty, but I just wasn't strong enough to take exams there. I finished my college with honors. I worked a mandatory term in the kindergarten and then couldn't find a job for a long time until I managed to become a preschool education teacher at the Pedagogical School.

I began writing poems. At first I didn't think much of it, but then I caught myself sitting at an exam at school putting down my lines instead of listening to a student. This shouldn't be! I met young poets and we became friends and they told me that I had to quit school immediately. 'Or, you will always remain a teacher and will never become a poet'.

I left school, though we didn't have anything at home. I found a job in a publishing house with low payment. I was to write responses to beginners of poets.

In 1958 my first book was published and I received a small fee for it. So I lived. I enjoyed writing poems tremendously, though it wasn't easy, hard to find a word I needed, on the whole, it was hard work. Soon young poets began to get invitations to recite poems at schools and in libraries.

I communicated with young poets in the poet section in the house of literature workers or in a café there. I wasn't a member of the Union of writers, but they allowed me to the house of literature workers. We recited our poems to one another there. I didn't finish Literature College.

There was a literature association 'Magistral' ['highway' in Russian] where I attended classes and took my entrance into literature. Igor Levin, a wonderful pedagogue, conducted classes. We recited our poems and criticized each other. It was a good school.

Levin invited best poets of the time to our sittings and they shared their views with us, recited their poems and listened to ours. I learned a lot at those classes.

In 1961 I entered the Union of Writers. Then I began to have my books published. I had 6 books for adults and 15 children's books. I also translated 10 children's books.

When I began writing poems and then became a member of the Union of Writers my life changed. I got very interesting friends who were poets. They visited us on New Year, my birthday or my mother's and we often celebrated on of my friend's birthday at our place. We had joyful and noisy parties.

I spent vacations in houses of creativity of the Union of Writers, mainly in the vicinity of Moscow and made new friends there. Since I was plunged into my creative work my mother cared about our simple life at home. It happened so that I never got a family of my own. My mother was my only close person.