Elizabeth and Matvey Story

A Classic Russian Journey

Elizabeth Chudnovsky
And tired hand, I cross that field

It is pain and it is flour, but I am

Writing about salt

Salt was exterminated by everyone

Rockets flew in sky

Walking through the field about bread

We are thinking

-Ilya Erenburg

The great Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem wrote: “You can’t serve mankind differently than through my people.” His writing is tied with the real life of Jewish people. Those who have read his stories will understand me and forgive me for bringing up my family story.

It is only from passports that I know my father was born in the small village of Rozhev in the Kiev region, and Mama was born in the village Bishev, in the same Kievskiy region. They were neighboring villages.

In my grandfather's family from Papa’s side were five children. The oldest of the Novak children was Basya, who emigrated to the United States in the early 20th century, then my father - Josef (b.1893), Golda, Dvoyra and and Aron, the youngest brother.

In my grandfather's family from Mama’s side, the Elgorts, were four daughters: the oldest, my mama Marim (b. 1895), after her - Sonya, Rachel, and the youngest Ester. It was not an easy life they lived.
Before the October Revolution in 1917 the Jewish people in Ukraine as well as in Russia were not allowed to settle in big cities. Only a few of them got permission to settle, those who could be of help to the town people like builders, tailors, shoemakers and bricklayers. The Jewish people who lived in villages struggled, though, to find jobs. Those who did work were paid very little money. It did not do any good. The earnings they received by working through blood and sweat were not enough to support their families. Working the entire week to the “seventh sweat”, they got paid only enough to buy bread and salt. They had been eating bread with onions.

It was a famine which led to the illnesses. Parents buried their small children. The older population understood that they were facing death. With the death of parents the orphan population grew. The Jewish people faced inequality, outrage and tyranny from the czarist regime.

When my mama was 11 years old, she lost her mama. Four children between the ages of two and eleven were left with the father who was not very strong. Worried about his children, he came to a decision to marry another woman who would be of help to his children. He married a widow with three children.

From the first day of arriving at their home, the stepmother changed everything. She became a ruler of that house and was very cruel. She took advantage of her husband and was mean to his children. She accused him of not making enough money and demanded that his oldest daughter starts a job and brings home money. My mama started her first job when she was not 12 years old yet. Sitting for 10-12 hours a day with a needle in her hands, she sewed underwear for very little money. When she was 12 years old, her father died. The situation in the family got worse. Bread was kept
locked up for his children, but not for hers. The stepdaughters got their bread only once a day.

I am sorry that I can’t provide you with the name of the children's stepmother. I simply do not know her name. My mother never mentioned her name. It was too painful for her to stir up the memory about those difficult times. It was a wound that was never mended, one that could never heal.

The stepmother had a 14-year-old nephew who sometimes visited her. He was the only witness of the children's struggle. He was a fine looking boy, with dark curly hair and smiling eyes. Every time when he was visiting his aunt, he noticed that the bread was under lock and key. Hungry, emaciated girls’ faces looked at him as their rescuer. He understood why those girls were always in tears and took immediate action, jumping to the cupboard, breaking the lock, getting out the bread and dividing it between the girls. When he was 17, he lost his parents and was already on his own. He had worked at his papa's business since he was 12.

Years passed by. When Mama was 16 years old and that boy was 18 years old, he made a proposal to my mama and they got married. It was 1911. They left the stepmother's home, taking with them all Mama's sisters.

They lived as one family, and were very friendly. With each passing year Mama's sisters grew up. When next, after my mama, sister Sonya became 16, she married a man who was older than my papa. Then the other two sisters married. In spite of having their families, they always helped each other remembering their struggle. The sisters had a lovely relationship. In 1915, when my mama was 20 years old, she gave birth to their first child, a baby girl. The baby was very weak and at three years of age
she died. In the same year Mama gave birth to their second child, a baby boy named Misha. This year in their village, Petlura and his brotherhood of bandits rushed in, destroying homes of Jewish people and killing them. Some Ukrainian people came to help the Jews, offering them shelter. Mama and her sisters couldn’t ignore their proposal and rushed to Ukranian’s home.

I don’t know where my papa was at this time. No one told me about him, but later when I grew up and became a teenager, my mama told me a story about my papa. He escaped to the Revolutionaries and became a messenger. After the October Revolution, Mama and Papa left Rozhev and settled in Kiev, where Papa worked for the first time as a craftsman -- making furniture. He gained this knowledge from his father, having worked with him in his early years. Later, in the early 1920's Papa got a job at that newly built business, a furniture factory.

Part I

Between blooming chestnut and linden trees on a small street was located a building with three floors. It looked like a dormitory. There was one kitchen for nine families. My parents lived in one room of this apartment building without any communal services; however, in the backyard was a building used for communal service. Inside the building there was always a strong smell of kerosene from the primuses. A primuse was a portable stove using kerosene as a fuel for cooking in those days. Many children resided in this house. Strangers might think that a kindergarten was located in this building. My brother Shaya, my sister Roza and I were born in our literary one-room apartment.

When my sister Roza was three years old, somehow she got a coin that belonged to the Czarist time. My parents didn't know how Roza got this coin because along with the
new regime (after the Revolution) came new money. Roza was so happy and decided to share her happiness with her three-year-old friend, Genya. Staying near the window in our apartment located on the third floor, Roza climbed on the stool, opened the window and threw that coin down on the ground. Mama was in the kitchen and Roza was left under the supervision of our five-year-old brother. Little Genya didn’t see where the coin landed, so Roza tried to point to the spot with her finger, but couldn’t manage and fell out the window, on to the second floor window sill and from there on to the ground near a water pipe space paved by stones. My brother ran to the kitchen, shouting, "Roza fell down out of the window!!" At that time Mama was pregnant with me. She lost consciousness and fell down on the kitchen floor. Neighbors called the ambulance. When the doctors appeared, they didn’t know who should be helped first. On the way to the hospital, Rosa opened her eyes, asking for her coin. It was a happy ending.

I was born February 2nd, 1927. Even though life flowed through me, I was a very weak baby. It seemed that I had constant illnesses: Diphtheria, Chicken Pox, Measles, Scarlet Fever, Pneumonia and other less threatening ones. Everybody in our family paid a lot of attention to me. I was our family favorite, maybe because I was the youngest. When my parents were out, my brothers took care of me. They taught me to read and write. Because of them I learned to read and write at the age of five. Of course, some letters were written incorrectly; that made my brothers laugh.

I never had toys or a doll, but I had friends of my age. Often we gathered together and played all kinds of games. On rainy days we walked barefoot in the puddles, splashing each other, getting wet and, of course, at the end we were punished by our parents, but our punishment was not severe. Our parents never ever
hit the children.

Very often we attended public park with our group of children that lived in our yard, where other children came with their governesses, who taught them the German language (a good language to learn at that time). Listening to their conversation was fun for us.

In those times children, when they become seven years old, could start school from the class “zero” (today's preschool). Because I already knew how to read and write, my oldest brother Misha took the responsibility of placing me in class at school. He told me to go straight to the first class and told me what I had to do: “When the teacher finishes reading the list of pupils, raise your hand and say that your name was skipped. Then the teacher will write down your name.” I did what he told me to do, and the teacher fulfilled my brother's expectations. It was 1934.

In the year 1933-34 in Ukraine there was a terrible famine. It was a difficult time for everyone, and our family didn’t escape this. People were falling on the streets. Many of them died. I got sick with an abscess of my right lung. For three years, I was treated in a sanitarium. For many years I was under a doctor's supervision.

In the spring and autumn time I did not go to school because I was at the sanatorium near Kiev in Boyarka village. The sanitarium, which was surrounded by pine trees, was a good contribution to my recovery. When I came back home, my mama used other people's remedy: mix a glass of goat milk, one egg yolk and one tablespoon of honey for an early morning drink. Mama was not sure about my recovery. I had seen her crying when she visited my doctor. No matter how the doctor tried to console her, she couldn’t stop crying. And maybe my sickness was the reason for her delivery of another baby. In
In 1937, in the same month and week that I was born, my mama gave birth to a baby girl. It was a surprise for me. I got a lively doll. I was very happy when I first saw her.

In 1939, my youngest brother Shaya left us to continue his education in infantry school in Azerbaijan in Baku city. It was hard for our entire family to be apart. I spent more time with my little baby sister. Shaya always reminded us that he loved us very much by sending presents to both of us.

In May of 1941 I got sick with pneumonia again. I was taken to the hospital. I missed an examination at school. I was in the hospital one month. After I got home, we received a letter from Shaya. He informed us that he graduated and would be home on June 22. Everyone was happy. After two years of his absence we could finally see him. Our house was cleaned up and prepared for celebration. Mama cooked and baked. Our oldest brother Misha got tickets for the celebration of the opening of a new stadium.

On the morning of June 21st, Mama went to market to get some vegetables and fruits. On her way back home an accident happened. Our mama was struck by an ambulance. She had been taken to the hospital where it was discovered that she had fractures on both her thigh and hip and needed a cast.

The ambulance brought her home. It was an awful night. Mama was in pain, moaning. Suddenly we heard a strange noise. We were horrified when we heard it since we didn’t know what it could be. Then we could tell that noise was from moving heavy machines through the main street, which was very close to our street. At 4 a.m. the radio announcer from Moscow called for attention to all citizens of our country with these words: “Working all radio stations of the Soviet Union, our territory has been attacked by the enemy.”
The same day we received a telegram from our youngest brother Shaya in which he informed our family that he was on his way, to where he didn’t know. He promised that when he knows about his destination, he would let us know. This was his last connection with us. After all this happened, everything was turned upside down. Our happiness suddenly disappeared. We had been waiting anxiously for news, for letters from our brother, about the current situation, etc.

Every hour that Kiev was under bombing attacks, we were in a state of commotion. In our house was a shelter, but we couldn’t use it because of our mama's condition. Our apartment now was located on the fourth floor. My oldest brother Misha took Mama down the flights of stairs on a chair with all of us surrounding her.

Our apartment building was a unique building built in 1937 for special government employees and famous people. We only lived there because Papa was in charge of building the structure. He paid for a two-room apartment while others had three and four room apartments. We all had our own kitchen, bathroom and closets, as well as two balconies. It was the premiere building with a shelter in the basement and had been used during attacks and also as storage for perishable goods. Later it was learned that the Germans left this building untouched. They used it for their own purposes.

On June 25th, 1941 my brother Misha told us that he could not stay at home if our country was in danger. Early the next morning he left home, making his way to the military committee. We waited for him to return to say goodbye, but did not come. On Papa’s inquiry about his whereabouts, he got an answer that Misha was on the front lines. He couldn’t even come home to say goodbye to us. Our worry was about my brothers and every member of our big family, including our closest relatives and
friends, who were already on the front sacrificing their lives for the freedom of our country.

On July 2, 1941, the factory management required to hurry up for evacuation of all factory equipment with workers and their families in two lines. Each family was allowed to carry only two pieces of luggage. We couldn’t stay longer in Kiev because our family was listed on the first line for evacuation. The management requested the families to be at the landing by the River Dnepr early on the morning of July 3rd. Each family appeared on time and was placed on barges, destination Stalingrad city. Barges moved very slowly under endless bombing. We reached Cherkas city in three days. In good times we could reach that distance in three to four hours. The administration of our group waited for more directions. It took time and we were placed temporarily in a big hall of a school building. We stayed in school for almost 10 days, sleeping on the very crowded floor in a stinky hall, which made some people ill.

Once a day we were fed soup. In our hurry for evacuation people did not have money to get something else in addition to our daily ration, because no one had time to pick up their pay. Very few people had their savings with them. We could get hot water at the railroad station, so at evening time we could drink some tea. But it wasn’t enough. People were always hungry. Following direction all people had to go to Kremenchug city by cargo cars. We were standing in a long line of too many people. All were placed on the cargo cars and moved to Kremenchug city.

Here we were in the same conditions as in Cherkas. We settled in the school's hall on the floor, and waited almost a week for our next move. Finally an announcement came that the cargo train was waiting. Everyone was transported to the railroad station.
The train was composed of open platforms and about 16 boxcars. We got on the train and in a few minutes the bombing started, which was repeated every 30-50 minutes all the way to Dnepropetrovsk city. We were covered with black coal dust everywhere, on our faces, hands and legs. The coal cars had been used as a bedroom and a toilet, an ambulance and a dining room, entire service in one car but without a food supply. We were placed sitting very close to each other. Being awfully close to each other and with the stench, many of us couldn’t stand this environment. Many were taken out from the cars because they were ill. Few people were left. On our way to Stalingrad our train was maneuvered constantly from one rail track to another, changing locomotives.

When we finally got to Stalingrad, it was the end of August 1941. It turned out that only two families from our factory reached Stalingrad. Where the others were no one knew. But it was a known fact that factory management and clerks who had been evacuated from Kiev in the second line were settled in Saratov city with money that belonged to hard working people who were evacuated to Stalingrad in the first line. Only a few of these evacuated workers turned out to be alive. Since they were not an organized group, had no help from management, and had no money, they couldn't even buy a piece of bread. The evacuation bureau assigned us to particular apartments and work places in the colony of Beketovka -- 20 km (12.4 miles) from Stalingrad. Papa and my seventeen-year-old sister worked at Beketovsky wood plant, which belonged to the department of ministry of railroad communication.

We had been placed in an apartment with a local family. At the same time one more family settled in this apartment. It appeared that we were 13 people in three small rooms without any communal service. The kitchen belonged to the owners who
kept fodder for the pigs there, so we weren’t allowed to use the kitchen. Our family was bigger than the other family, so we were placed in the room through which other people passed to their own rooms. There was no quiet time for us. People walked through our room for their needs. The toilet was outside in the backyard. We had to adjust our own schedule to take a bath, to change underwear, to do laundry, to take care of our own needs.

August was very hot, so it was hot inside the house. We were in need of fresh air. Mama was still very weak and in pain. Soon it was announced that Kiev was occupied by the Germans. Our mama became depressed. Papa and my sister weren’t allowed to stay home. For 24 hours a day they stayed in the plant territory. Wartime conditions restricted the workers' freedom to leave the plant when they wanted. Sometimes, though, they got permission to see their families. It was my responsibility to find something to eat. For hours I stood in lines to buy something to eat. Sometimes I was lucky, but mostly I came home with empty hands. Everything disappeared from the store shelves. To keep our family alive, I needed to have initiative and I needed to be creative.

My assignment was to steal potato skins from the neighbor's pigs. At nighttime, when everybody was sleeping, I carried out my job. In times like these when you didn’t have any choice to live or die, I would rather have become a pig and eaten the potato skins. We boiled the potato skins in the fireplace in our room. Salted boiled water was our soup.

A rationing system was established for bread and grocery distribution. Everyone received cards separately for bread and groceries with the approved quota listed on the
card. The workers' daily quota was 600 grams of bread (about 20 oz), the clerks received 400 grams, and all dependents received 300 grams (10 oz) of bread. At first we were able to get bread, but later the trains could not get through the traffic jam on the railroads. Cargo trucks couldn’t get to the station. The Beketovska’s wood plant was located near the Stalingrad tractor plant, which was of strategic national importance. The German Army was interested in ruining this plant that built tanks. That is why Beketovka was regularly attacked by the Germans. Heavy, powerful bombs were dropped every 15-20 minutes.

People couldn’t get any food, so hunger followed. Mama's whole body became swollen and she had headaches. In addition, she was wounded by shrapnel in the face while she was sitting beside an open window, getting fresh air. When people heard that train with food came to the station, immediately a line was created by taking numbers. Every hour the roll was called. If one was absent, his name was crossed off the list. Even so, we waited hours for our line to get inside the store, and when we entered, we could not get everything according to our cards. There was a shortage of delivery. Sugar was substituted with caramels, bread with flour - 120 grams (4 oz) per person. We had forgotten the taste of meat. Very seldom could we get an oil. Even salt was sold by the quota.

Once when I was in a line, in front of me was a woman with a baby in her hands. Suddenly bombing started. Splinters from the bomb's explosion struck the baby, then they traveled from the baby to the mother, who didn’t survive.

In winter time we looked for frozen potatoes left on the fields. Bread was our dream. Even now when I walk through a bread department, the smell of bread makes
me feel better and happy.

It was awfully tight and stuffy in our room. In addition to this hunger didn’t leave us without consequence. Mama was losing her consciousness and could no longer get out of bed. Next to our building was located a military base. We applied to them for help. A military doctor visited Mama, and after his visit the soldiers brought some soup for Mama from their dinner leftovers. We were very grateful to the doctor and soldiers for their enormous help and concern. Mama, however, did not eat all of the occasional small portions of food brought to her because she fed some of it to my baby sister who was only four.

In spite of this small amount of food, Mama never recovered and I got sick, as well. My body, hands and legs were covered by painful red swelling on the skin, formed by pus. The nurse counted 51 spots on my body that appeared suddenly along with very high fever. It was impossible to get medicine for treatment. By a miracle I survived. Even in my condition I was thinking about my responsibility. My mama and baby sister needed my help.

During winter time it was even worse. It was so bad that it couldn’t be worse. The bitter cold temperature was -40 degrees Celsius (-40 degrees Fahrenheit). We were starving. Somehow we had to find food. I tried very hard. I walked to the fields and looked for frozen potatoes left on the ground. My hands and feet were frozen and tired. Sometimes I was lucky to get some potatoes. I would come home with tears in my eyes, tears of pain and happiness.

Barely able to stay on her feet, Mama tried to help me out. She said, “Soon winter will be over, spring is coming, then after spring, summer. In summer time even the
duck can do the laundry.” With each coming day the situation grew far worse. Three of us were taken to isolation because we had been diagnosed as "cholerinka", the early stage of Cholera. Because delivery of food was impossible, we were fed with the herring delivered from Astrakhan city, located at the mouth of the Volga River which disembogues into the Caspian Sea.

It was early summer when we returned home. Again we waited hours in line to get anything to eat, to ease our hunger. Just getting food was a dream, the dream of hungry people. I kept as a souvenir some fabric that my brother Shaya sent me as a present before the war started. I took this piece of fabric and with three other adults went to the village to trade it for bread. Even half of a loaf could make me happy. For three meters of chintz (cotton) I got half a loaf of bread which I put into my net bag. I was satisfied with this trade and felt lucky going home. On our way back home through the forest suddenly a wolf appeared and jumped to my hand with the bread. I left with empty hands, crying and hopeless. Today I'm not sure it was a wolf. It might have been a coyote or a German shepherd.

On the next day I was lucky to get half of our day's quota of bread. On my way back home a huge bomb exploded. The explosion shook the entire colony. All people around me were falling. Next to me I saw an old man who was wounded in his leg. Lying in a puddle of blood, he held tightly onto his bag of bread. Another man walked straight toward us. When he came closer to us, he patted the man's wounded leg, telling him that everything would be okay. He grabbed the bag of bread from the hand of the wounded man and left, not even proposing to help.

His behavior stunned me. I didn't know what to do. It's almost as if I was glued to
the ground, only looking for help. No one was on the streets. Everyone was hiding. Suddenly I saw a woman coming toward us. She stopped, tore off the sleeve from the old man's shirt and made a tight bandage around his leg. That woman was familiar with this kind of situation. In my thoughts were my mama and baby sister. I told the woman what I saw. She listened and then told me, “Go to your mama and I will take care of that man.” For me, she was an angel. I will never forget the devil, who dared to take bread from a wounded old man and leave without helping him.

We experienced new trouble with every coming day. In late summer 1942, not far from our house farmers harvested the crops. Workers from the plant were there to help the farmers. Suddenly they saw troops landing by parachutes from the sky. These troops were Germans. The workers left the field immediately and informed the administration about it.

People were in a panic. It is very difficult to describe our feelings. It was a bitter and severe reality. In a week, management came to the decision to build temporary rafts immediately and to get old people, women with small children, and all the sick out of the city to the left bank of the Volga River. Everyone else had to stay inside the city. Workers couldn’t leave the plant property. At night we were placed on the just-built rafts and brought to the other river bank. Over there was a cargo train already waiting for the people on the holding track. This train, as the other trains that we used before, was composed of platforms and unheated boxcars.

We were placed on the train and driven away from the station but not too far. Once again, bombs dropped from German airplanes destroying part of the train. Some of the train was totally crushed. Those who were placed in the front and at the end of the train
did not survive. No one told where we were going. But we waited patiently for the train
to arrive. Every two to three hours there was a locomotive replacement, and the train
was placed on the holding track. Sometimes we waited at the holding track a short time,
sometimes it took several hours.

At the end of September 1942 finally we were brought to Tatarstan, an autonomous
soviet republic, to Vasilyevo, a workers' community village not far from Kazan city.
We settled in an apartment with other families. Our room was so small that we could
hardly put in two small hard beds and between them a bed stand which was also used as
a table and where we kept our belongings. Our hard beds were used also as chairs and
a table. Mama, who could barely stand on her feet, asked for any kind of job that she
could do sitting. The hiring people understood by her look who they had to deal with.
So she was turned down. Instead of Mama, I was hired. Somebody had to work and
bring home some money to pay for our living. I wasn’t 16 years old yet, so I had been
listed as a technical school student. I worked in the electric shop at the Vasilyersky
wood plant for a very small salary. It wasn’t enough for the three of us. My monthly
salary was 270 rubles. That amount in new comparable denomination after devaluation
in 1960 equaled 27 rubles, and a loaf of bread cost 100 rubles. We were starving again
as in Stalingrad.

But I was working with nice people. Sometimes they fed me with baked potatoes.
They helped me a lot and I felt like we were family. Our neighbor, who lived in the
same apartment with us, was working in a workers' dining room. Sometimes she
brought home dinner leftovers to her children, and they shared with us. I never heard
anti-Semitic comments from the people surrounding me. I felt only sympathy. In
spite of my limited time, I visited wounded soldiers at the hospital. I read books and newspapers to them. They were very happy to see people besides medical personnel. They were interested in each visitor. They needed to talk to people.

My sister became a nurse in Tatarstan. She worked at a field hospital not far from the village where we were living. Sometimes she visited us after her night shift. Papa was digging trenches in Stalingrad. In the middle of 1943 he came back from Stalingrad and worked for a while at the wood plant, where I was working.

When Kiev was liberated in 1944, Papa returned there to rebuild the plant where he had worked before the war. It was the same plant where he started his working career sometime in 1920. He couldn’t get back our apartment in Kiev, even though he had paid the total cost for it in early 1937. He had to live in the men’s dormitory. Somehow he had saved all the documents, the proof of his payments confirming his rights, but it didn’t help. During the occupation our building was occupied by Germans. Then after liberation it was occupied by the Communist Party of Ukraine. With the Communists there, it was a very difficult fight to try to get the apartment back. Papa was unsuccessful.

On May 9, 1945, the end of the war was announced. The entire population of the village gathered in the plaza in front of the factory. Everyone, children and adults, embraced each other crying with happiness. Smiling faces with tears in their eyes looked at each other with love. There were kisses between friends and strangers. It was a big celebration - a Day of Victory. Even though it meant the end of the people's struggles, at the same time it increased the trouble for those who had lost children, parents, brothers and sisters, their loved ones. Some soldiers returned home without
their legs, their hands, or their sight.

In our family our two brothers had been killed. Our cousins didn’t return home. Two of Mama's sisters and their children were brutally killed in Babi Yar. One of Mama's sisters and her husband were evacuated to Lugansk city with only one daughter. They had been captured by Germans and the parents died in gas chamber. The daughter survived.

When we learned all of this, Mama couldn’t stand it any more. She got sick and was placed on medical treatment in the first aid station owned by the factory. But the nurses working there were inexperienced and used the wrong treatment method. No doctors worked in that first aid station. Mama's condition worsened, and then turned critical. We took her back home, to take care of her around o’clock, but it was hopeless. She knew that she was dying. Turning her head toward the wall, Mama died of a stroke at 3 a.m. on September 26, 1945.

At 9 a.m. that day I informed the management about our tragedy. They sent two workers who, under our supervision, built the coffin and dug the grave.

It was a warm, sunny autumn day. The road to the cemetery was covered with yellow leaves. It was a long way for the three of us. Three daughters, who survived hunger and illnesses, accompanied by only a nurse, were seeing Mama for the last time. We were following the coffin with our mama inside, but where were we going? None of us knew that cemetery. It was an unknown place, neglected, without any maintenance or tombstones. Human bones were everywhere you dug. My baby sister ran away. She was scared. The nurse came to our help. She found my sister outside the cemetery in tears. After the simple ceremony was finished, my sister lay down on
that small freshly covered hill, refusing to go back home. We could not talk – we were crying. There was no one to say final words, to make a proper eulogy. We had tears, only tears. That day was like being in a fog in spite of being a warm sunny day.

With the death of our mama we lived in a different era. It became a time of humiliation, disappointment and discrimination. We couldn’t tell Papa about our loss. The letters we sent to him were lost. Later we got a letter from Papa with the return address of his relatives, who just returned from the evacuation. In our letter we informed him about Mama's death. After the war it was a problem for people to return home from the evacuation; some did not have a place to stay because their houses were destroyed. The city where you were born and had lived before the war turned you down and you became a stranger in your own birthplace.

Somehow we got an invitation from Papa to return home to Kiev. (After the war, relatives had to give you an official invitation to live with them – like a visa.) It took us a week to get a dismissal from our work. We packed one suitcase for all of us plus one herring and some bread and went back to our city. We traveled eight days from Vasilyevo to Kiev. In good times it would have taken about 15-16 hours. In a few days we ate all the food we had with us. The rest of the way we survived on just tea.

When we arrived in Kiev, we went to our relative’s house. The bowl of soup after our long hunger was for us the best dessert we ever had for the five years in our evacuation. We didn’t have anywhere to go, however. Staying with relatives was impossible because they only had a very small room in an apartment building.

Temporarily, my baby sister and I were invited to stay with another family who had also one room, but it was a little bigger than our relatives’ room. And their family also
was bigger. I helped them with housework: washing dishes, washing the floor and doing laundry. My older sister stayed with others; Papa stayed in the men’s dormitory. We couldn’t live all together as one family.

It was time for my baby sister to start school. She was already nine years old. It was a problem which school to take her to, because we didn’t know where we were going to stay. Papa asked management permission for all three of us to stay in the women’s dormitory. We got permission. The next day, after we were moved into the dormitory, our baby sister started school, the one not far from our location. A little bit later we moved to a small room in the same dormitory and we were invited to live with our papa in the same place.

One trouble out, but other is in (Russian proverb). The police visited our dormitory every day ordering my oldest sister to move out of Kiev in 24 hours saying that she did not have the right to live in Kiev, even though she had her family here. The police said she was old enough to get her own place to stay. Even if she didn’t have a dwelling, she should leave immediately. She no longer had the right to be registered as a citizen in this town, even though she arrived with a visa signed by Russian officials. The city where she was born and lived all her life before the war became a foreign land to her.

Where was their humanity? They were separating families whose sons and brothers sacrificed their lives for this country, and my sister was working in a hospital as a nurse, helping wounded soldiers. Our family had lost our mama, and our apartment was taken by the Communist party. Where was the humanity? Where was the truth? Who were those policemen who were ordering my sister to leave this city? Were they the people who during the war helped Germans discover the homes of the
Jewish people and hunt for them?

But the world is not without good people. Workers who knew our family and knew our situation came to our aid. Each time they saw the police coming, they informed my sister immediately and she jumped out the window which was facing the factory territory. She hid until the police left. This scenario continued for more than a year.

In September 1947 Papa married a widow with two sons from her first marriage. He left the dormitory and we were asked to give up our small room. His second wife accomplished a brave action. Despite our age she let us stay with them. She occupied a very small room in a municipal building. To get to her room we had to pass through the public kitchen. Her oldest son was my age - 20 years old; her youngest son was the same age as my baby sister. Seven people lived in our small room. Her children were really nicely brought up and were very friendly to us, but at evening time, at bed time, there was a problem for all of us. Two girls were sleeping on the folding bed, two boys on the one couch, one girl on the chairs, and the parents got the full-sized bed. If someone got sick, the healthy person slept on the floor, between the window and the door. This kind of environment created problems for the entire family.

My oldest sister and I came to the decision without telling Papa to ask the factory management for a place for the two of us in the women’s dormitory. He was really angry at us. The administration came to our aid and settled us in a small room in the family dormitory. We hurt Papa's feelings, but the other members of the family were unaffected by our leaving. The family dormitory was a long corridor with rooms on both sides. At the end of the corridor was a kitchen with a big stove. Rats ran everywhere: on the floor, on the stove, and on the tables. They probably thought that
we were occupying their building, and they just wanted us to leave. But this wasn’t a problem for us. The main thing was to find a job as soon as possible.

Anyway, soon I got a job in a military medical warehouse. My sister finally was registered as a permanent citizen and started her work as a secretary typist at the trade union of turf industry workers. We were working, but, in spite of this, we still had great needs. We didn’t have coats, shoes, or dresses. My foot size was 5 (35 in European size), and I had been wearing shoes size 10 (size 40, those that I wore during war time). My dress was sewed from a sack, as was my coat.

Because my sister was working as a clerk, it was our decision first of all to buy a coat for her with our first paycheck. When I was with people, I thought that they judged me by my outward appearance alone, that I was a beggar. I was frightened. At night time, just thinking about my conditions made me cry hiding my face in my pillow. No one could see my tears.

When we left stepmother’s family to live at the women’s dormitory, which belonged to a plant, where our papa was working, we didn’t take with us our food rationing cards. As I was writing before we left suddenly without telling anyone about our leaving. So we didn’t have not only rationing cards but also we had no money to buy something to eat.

The women in dormitory helped us with a little money to buy cabbage. It was our breakfast and our dinner. This situation continued almost a month until we got our salary on the beginning of the next month.

Our neighbors in the dormitory were very friendly and helpful. They were in the same situation we were. Our papa never lost his goal to get back our apartment, which our family had occupied before the war. But with the Communist party it was
impossible to get your rights.

As a parent who had lost his two sons in the war, Papa went to the military committee for help. Now a struggle began between those two powerful parties. Finally they came to a decision that instead of giving us our apartment, they would give us one room in a municipal building with three other families. They didn’t take any notice that Papa had seven members in his family. It was simply considered that he had lost three people from his pre-war family and his new family did not count. So Papa decided that this one room was going to be ours, for me and my oldest sister Roza. Soon, in 1949 my older sister got married. Her husband came to our apartment. It wasn’t comfortable for me to stay with them in one room, but I didn’t have a choice.

The work at the medical warehouse was not easy for me. It was beyond my strength. Once I was sent with three others girls to unload a cargo truck that came in with medical supplies. I was very weak at that time and fainted in this car. Working in the warehouse were pharmacists and doctors. I was lucky to get first aid immediately and was taken to the hospital, where the doctor sent me to the x-ray room and found that I had myocardium dystrophy and, in addition, a light concussion. I was forbidden to do hard work. When I returned to work, it was suggested to me by management to get an education. Then I would be able to find suitable job.

The medical warehouse agreed to pay for my education in Kharkov City Pharmaceutical College. I couldn’t take this offer because I didn’t have any documents about my previous education. Their offer of payment for my education was good, but I didn’t have any source of making a living. I still needed to work. Furthermore, at the pharmaceutical college, students could get scholarships with only fair marks and I
wasn’t sure if I would be a good student since it had been eight years since I was in school. So I decided first of all to go to evening school after work to pass an exam to prove my education. This would show that I had attended school for seven out of ten years, and I could then get my diploma and be able to choose a college wherever I could get a scholarship.

My choice was the mining and fuel college where every student was allowed to get a scholarship in spite of good or fair grades. To everybody’s surprise I passed the entrance tests with the highest marks. The newspaper people are always hungry for news. To my surprise, on the next day I got an interview with a newspaperman. One day later the college administration gave me the newspaper “Uchitelskaya” (newspaper for teachers) where on the first page there was an article about me.

I became a student of the industrial economics college, and a year later I graduated with highest marks. It wasn’t easy for me to be a student. Thanks to the Americans who sent packages to the Russian population during war time and a few years after the war. On my shoulders was an American coat that I got during the time I worked at the warehouse. I lived in a dormitory with 19 other girls in our room. There was one table for all of us, 10 bedside tables and our coat rack. I worked after class everywhere I could: cleaning houses, washing floors. I was paid 1 ruble for each washed floor. Compared to 1960 the year after devaluation, it was 10 kopeyek.

During summer time I worked at the pioneer camp. My earnings were enough to pay for my education and I was able to buy my first dress.

There was a privilege for those who graduated with highest marks. The top 5% of them could choose where to work or where to continue their education at the university
without passing entrance exams. Because I was in great financial need after the war 
and no one could help me out, my choice was to get a job in Ukraine. Even though I 
graduated with highest grades, I didn’t have the right to use this privilege established 
for students with great ability. I am a Jew. Every other student got the work they 
wanted, but not me. The director of the college was talking to the assignment 
committee and came out with bad news for me. Only one working place was offered 
to me in the camp for prisoners in Komi, an autonomous soviet republic. This wasn’t 
acceptable to me. It was like putting me in prison for my entire life. I was 
discriminated. It was a slap in my face. This fact brought me to the decision to 
continue my education at the University.

I entered University without needing to pass exams. But when I’ve returned back to 
my work (I’ve had been working in the pioneer camp during the summer time) my 
coworkers gave me piece of advice. At the University it will take 5 years to graduate, 
but in Financial Economical Institute it will take only 4 years. Taking into consideration 
my financial difficulties and other domestic circumstances, better for me would be to 
move my documents to Financial Economic Institute, and that is what I’ve done.

According to my application, I was listed as a student of “Economical Financial 
Institute on Economy Industrial Plants”. The faculty and I were informed about it by 
letter. But on the first day of the new school year, I couldn't find my name on the class 
list. I was on the list of agricultural economy. I was very disappointed. I wasn’t 
familiar with agricultural economy at all. For three years I had been studying economy 
and planning in the mining industry, and I wanted to get my master’s degree in this 
field. But who could argue if it was the government’s decree to increase graduates in the
agricultural industry. The institute’s administrative solution of this was to move all
Jewish students from the industrial department to the agricultural department. It was
the second slap in the face for me. The educational years passed, at the end of each I
passed the national tests with high marks.

A special committee assigned the students to different cities and different regions
after finishing Financial Economic Institute. The problem was that I was not Ukrainian, I
was Jewish, and I did not have any powerful relatives. Because of this I was called last
after all places were already taken. I wasn’t able to choose like others graduates. There
was only one place left still open, so my assignment was to a small village Novo-
Nokolaevka – 65 km (40.39 miles) from the regional center Zaporozhe city.

The village has one of the worst connections with the center, with only dirty road not
passable in bad weather. Before the war, road construction had begun, but after the war
the local government couldn’t finish that construction because there was no money and
workers. To reach Zaporozhe you could take a bus but only in dry weather. On rainy
days you could not go anywhere. Sometimes you could get to the main city using the
service of small airplanes called “Kukurusnik” but it could carry only a few people.

There was no drinking water, there were 3 wells in the village but water from
those wells could be used only for technical needs. The drinking water was delivered
from Zaporozhe city in barrels. One bucket cost 1 Ruble. People gathered rain water in
specially built wells for laundry, washing dishes and bathing. Sometimes when there
was a problem in delivering drinking water, people used rain water for drinking.

Because I worked in a rural location, my salary was very small. I had to pay for
drinking water, for rain water, for rent. I experienced a shortage with my budget. In that
village there was only one small stand where we could buy salt, matches, soap, bread, sunflower oil and kerosene. Everything else was only in the big city. So you had to pay for transportation to the big city also. After all your expenses were paid, you ended up with an empty purse, debt and master’s degree.

I brought my finished assignments to the center with projects that were not worth a dime. Control numbers were sent from the government, and my job was to distribute those numbers between the collective and Soviet farms. Despite my numbers, they did not have the conditions for growing corn or sugar beets, grain or buckwheat on their farms. It wasn’t possible for the farmers to grow what they thought was best.

I will never forget my trip to Zaporozhe to get an approval for my projects. It was February 15, but it was a warm day. The temperature was above 10C (50 degrees F). It was raining. On rainy days you couldn’t take a bus or airplane. But if you had an assignment and were scheduled for a certain day to come by your superiors, you had to go. The chairman of the Soviet district offered me a ride in his car. Somehow we got to the city of Zaporozhe. He finished his meeting early and left without waiting for me. It was a downpour. I spent the night in a hotel. On the next day I woke up very early, and at 6 a.m. I was already at the bus station. The bus trip to our village was cancelled. All airplane flights were cancelled. So I decided to take any bus in my direction and stay on until the end, and then do the rest of my trip on foot.

After the bus stopped on the driver's final stop, I found some company and we started our trip. It took me 13 hours to accomplish a distance of 23 km (14.3 miles). If the road was unpaved, we walked along the embankment. One leg was stuck in the mud and the other I had to get out from the claylike mud. Because of the pouring rain, my
coat was soaked through.

I was totally drenched by the time I reached my house. And because of the muddy road, I was totally covered by dirt, and I was so tired and dead on my feet. Villagers looked at me with astonishment and laughter, and I was about to cry. In my mind I wanted to get to my wooden couch, lie down and get some rest as soon as possible.

That miserable day did not leave me without consequences. I got a high fever and my gums were swollen. I didn’t know how I could be treated. Prescribed medicine didn’t work. The Russian proverb says: “Without calamity you can’t get happiness.” I got a telegram from my sister where she informed me that her husband was near death. She needed my help as soon as possible. Within one week I found a replacement for my position at work. I was discharged and moved to Kiev, back home. On the first day of my arrival I visited a doctor and was diagnosed with scurvy. I was given a shot. The cause of my illness - drinking rainwater.

After my arrival I was a big help to my brother-in-law and, of course, to my sister, who had a small child. She also needed to find any job to make money for living. She got a job working the night shift. When she came home, I went out to find a job for myself. Since many companies were in need of an economist, I thought that it would be easy for me to find a job.

But I was mistaken. Everywhere I was turned down. I went by reference of my best friend to one company that was in great need of an economist and was frankly told: “We need a person on this position, but not a Jew.” I was shocked, but I never gave up. Several months passed. There was a newly opened data center. The manager I talked to agreed to give me the position of senior statistician. At that time the personnel office
was closed, so I couldn’t fill out the application on that day. In spite of this, I was asked by the manager to start my job the next day.

On the next day I came to work and the manager told me that I had been called to the personnel office. When I came in, the officer told me that they did not have a permanent job, only a temporary one and not as a senior statistician, just a statistician. This meant less salary. I didn’t have any choice, so I agreed to take this job. When the manager found out my ability, she insisted on getting approval for me as senior statistician and for a permanent job. Then after one year I got a higher position as an economist. Years passed. I was promoted to the position of senior economist. In my new position, I analyzed data of statistical reports from all factories, plants, construction companies and others, delivered from all regions.

After 10 years of working in this company I was appointed to the position of manager of the department I was working in, but I was not approved by the Obkom (regional committee) of the Communist Party. Reason for this: I was not a member of Communist Party. To make me feel better, I was decorated with a medal for distinguished work. This medal recognized the 100th birthday of Lenin. It did not make me feel better. The manager's position was given to a young girl without any experience in this field. She also was not a member of the Communist Party. She was a Ukrainian girl, nice looking, very kind and it was a pleasure to work under her management in a very friendly surroundings until I left Russia for the United States of America.

I am proud to be an American citizen. I feel sadness for those who still experience anti-Semitism and discrimination in the former Soviet Union.
Part II

Every human being has his own problems. Those who don’t are very few. I think my husband’s family and I had probably not only “one” problem. We lived through grief, sorrow and many tragedies.

As I described earlier, since 1948 I lived with my sister in one room, in a seven-floor apartment building. This building with 20 apartments was built for a very rich man sometime in the early years of the 20th century by a project of the architect Alyoshin. In early days every apartment had one room for a housekeeper, a big hall, a waiting room, a dining room and three bedrooms. In addition, each had one big kitchen, two bathrooms and two toilets separated from the bathrooms, and two balconies; one of them was very big, the other one – a little smaller. Each apartment had two entrances, one from the front door, the other, used as a utility door and sometimes as an emergency exit, opened into the backyard. After the revolution, this building went through reconstruction. All the rooms were divided.

After World War II this building was under a second reconstruction. In our apartment were four rooms on one side of the hall. Each room housed a different sized family. Our room, the smallest at 16 sq. meters, was situated on the end of the long corridor with a neighboring common toilet. It was a problem for us and for our neighbors if our door and the door from the toilet were open at the same time. Across from our room was a common kitchen with two stoves. Twelve people occupied four rooms on our side of the long corridor. On the other side of our corridor was an entry for a family of three, who lived in much bigger space than ours with four rooms. Theirs had all the accommodations: big kitchen, three big rooms with a balcony, a
bathroom, a toilet room, an emergency door exit to the backyard. Also they had one more toilet in our corridor kept locked that only that family could use.

Our room was long, like a corridor. Our poor furniture was placed along the wall, a dresser and two beds on one side and on the other side - a small desk, side board and couch. The room was heated with a stove. Between the two walls a window was facing the street. In the middle of the room was a table with four chairs.

When my sister got married in 1949, her husband moved in with us. Then three years later my sister gave birth to a baby boy. A few years later, my brother-in-law became very ill. He had a couple heart attacks, and then he developed bronchitis and asthma. Almost every evening and even sometimes in the daytime an ambulance arrived to help. Doctor’s orders sent me to the pharmacy to get oxygen and leeches, which were used for sucking out blood from his vessels to decrease his blood pressure. Our pharmacy was located not far from our building, but at night time it was very scary for me to go there. Danger always looks bigger through the eyes of fear. But I didn’t have a choice. He needed these medical aids urgently while the doctors were trying to help him.

My time was divided between my studies at the institute and taking care of my little nephew, who was about three years old, and my brother-in-law. My sister worked night shifts, and sometimes when she came home very tired and needed some rest, I took my little nephew to the institute. I would seat him behind my desk at the end of the lecture room, give him a piece of paper and colored pencils and ask him to be quiet. He understood my situation and my request, but as a child sometimes he didn’t follow the rules.
I didn’t have the time for movies, reading art books or spending time with my friends. If I had some free time, I was visiting my relatives. I had a spiritual hunger.

Very seldom if it was a quiet night, I would lit up a night lamp and put my blanket over my head to read my textbook. I didn't want to disturb anyone with the light on.

Since I returned from Zaporozhe, I needed to help my aunt also. When she and her husband found out that their two sons were missing in war time, she had a stroke. In the beginning it was just a partial one that affected her face and she managed to do some light work. Later on things worsened. Her body became paralyzed on one side. With the help of others she could move using the other foot. But since 1963 she was bedridden. I visited her couple times a week and helped her husband with the cooking and cleaning.

Once during my visit, her husband’s friend came with his nephew to their home. I was introduced to them as a niece. We entered into a conversation. The time passed and it became dark outside. The young man asked if he might see me home. It was the end of 1963. I calmly replied to his proposal and I was glad, because it was a long walk to my house. In the area where we lived heavy transportation was prohibited. Driving through was permitted only for light cars, not heavy transportation.

After that day Matvey and I didn't meet again. Both of us experienced problems with our families. Our father got seriously ill and was taken to the hospital for observation and treatment. My youngest sister and I visited him every day after work. A few days after his arrival at the hospital, things worsened. He was in an intensive care room and developed deep sclerosis. He was mumbling something, but it was difficult for us to understand him.
When I came the next day after work, I found more problems. I heard him calling our mama’s name Marim. He asked me, "Why am I here?" Suddenly my father sprang out of bed, took off his hospital robe and, absolutely naked, ran to the door and out of his room. I couldn’t stop him. I was amazed by his strength. He was so ill that I didn't know where this strength came from. I cried for the nurse's help, but she told me, “Let him go.” She was beside him, watching what else he might do. By holding his hands on the wall, he walked through the long corridor straight to the door, trying to get outside. It was his last day of life, which ended at 11 p.m. on June 14, 1964. He was buried the next day.

At the beginning of 1965 I got an unexpected call to my office. It was Matvey Chudnovsky, the man I had met before in my aunt’s home. I was surprised. I didn’t expect him. He asked if he could see me after work. I couldn’t refuse him. When we met, we talked and walked in the direction of my home, which was located not very far from my work place. From our conversation I found out that he had gone through a lot of grief and probably needed help. I listened closely to him; Matvey’s story made a big impression on me.

Part III

“The story of my life should begin with description of my family tree. I feel constantly united with my ancestors. I am feeling devotion and love to them though 85 years passed since they died and were laid in peace,” Matvey said.

Feeling of dedication to his ancestors made him to tell first the story about all them and then - about himself. This desire to share his tight connections to his grandparents
and parents came to him consciously. He wants his children and grandchildren to know all about their lives, their struggle, tragedies and experiences.

His grandfather from his father’s side, Gershl-Bension, lived in a small village Tagancha, Kievsky region. He married his girlfriend Ida and they had together six sons (Yankel, Moyshe, Itzik, Duvid, Yosele, and Sruel) and two daughters (Matvey doesn’t remember the names of his aunts). His father Sruel was the youngest child.

From Tagancha village their family moved to a small town Korsun, Kievsky region, where a larger Jewish population lived. Over there his grandfather gradually acquired the mill where he was using the help of two draft horses. On this mill he produced buckwheat, millet and sunflower oil.

Two oldest sons of his grandfather, Yankel and Moyshe, were helping their father. When they got older and married, Yankel and Moyshe built two houses for their families next to their father’s house – it was friendly relationship. In 1917 their life was destroyed suddenly when the bandits came to their small town. Yankel and Moyshe were tied up to the tails of bandits’ horses and dragged through entire town to the ravine, shot and thrown into a ditch.

French writer Romen Rollan was writing in his story of Kola Brunion: “Gloomy times never take place, but there are gloomy people”. I prefer to tell it in other words: monstrous actions destroy human life.

After a while a woman was passing by the ravine and heard a moan. She looked over and saw two bodies on the bottom of the ravine. This woman turned out to be a very brave person. Without any delay this woman got down and found that Moyshe was dead and Yankel was still breathing. She carried out a wounded Yankel on the top and
rendered a first help to him, then she brought him to her house. From Yankel she learned who he was and immediately informed his parents about this horrible incident. Gershl ran to woman’s house and found Yankel unconscious from the massive bleeding. Yankel survived but lost hearing after all he went through.

Dead body of Moyshe was pulled out from ravine with the help of other relatives. This tragedy was a heavy blow to Moyshe’s wife. She couldn’t survive this loss. Six children lost their parents and became the orphans. The oldest child, the girl, was 17 years old, the youngest boy was only one year old. After death of their parents the children been guarded by grandparents and uncle Sruel – Matvey’s father.

Not after a long while, just one week later, the bandits returned to this town, broke into Gershl’s house and slaughtered his daughter.

After all this happened to their children, grandparents suffered emotional problems. They couldn’t stand this tragedy. Grandma Ida died in 1926, grandpa Gershl - three years later, in 1929.

After his parents’ death Yankel moved to Dnipropetrovsk city to be closer to his children who already lived there with their families.

In the beginning of 1930 third son of Gershl – Itzik moved from Korsun to Kiev. He died when he was evacuated during the war. In Korsun only two of grandparents’ sons left: Sruel – Matvey’s father and Duvid, who died in Dnipropetrovsk during his surgery in 1952.

Yankel, as we mentioned before, had a very bad hearing after he got wounded by bandits. Because of hearing loss he did not hear the car moving backward near his yard, he was hit and killed by this car in 1953.
We would like to mention that one of Yankel’s grandchildren, Boris, lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with his wife, Bella. Boris’ mother, Anna (the wife of Yankel’s son Abram) recently passed away. Their son, Yakov is married and lives with his wife in Boston, Massachusetts. Another Yankel’s grandson, Edward, lives with his family in Israel.

Yosele in war time lived in Gorodiche, Cherkassky region. He and his family were not able to evacuate and his entire family was killed by Germans.

One story we would like to tell about Matvey’s grand grandma. Sruel brought his lovely young wife to Korsun, 4 years passed after they married and she still couldn’t give a birth to a baby. That worried his grandma and she was complaining that Luba’s sterile, and she was upset about her grandson’s heredity. But very soon Luba proved that her worry was baseless and in 1921 she gave birth to a first son, Boris. In 1923 the twins were born, it was Matvey and baby girl who died very soon after birth. Then in 1926 the other twins, Ida and Abram, were born. When Abrasha was 10 years old he died. Her last child Grisha was born in 1939 – two years before World War II started.

Matvey was born in Korsun and lived there until 1941 among Chudnovsky family and he knows a lot about his family tree, but he knows very little about his mother’s family, Pritzker. His grandpa Pritzker (Matvey doesn’t remember his name) was well-established, reputable, influential and well-known man in his city. His son Mordych married to Marim, Matvey’s grandma. Together they had four children; one of them was Matvey’s mama. In difficult times after revolution Mordych couldn’t survive. Grandma Marim lost her husband.
After grandma Marim lost her husband, there was no one to support the family. Soon after October Revolution she lived in great need with her children. Luba’s husband, Sruel, understood this family suffering very well and without any ceremony provided help by sending provision to them. In that time he already had his own business: mill, chicken, geese and two horses.

After the death of Matvey’s grandpa, Gershl, in 1929 his property was divided proportionally between his children. But Matvey’s father, Sruel, refused to accept his part of the inheritance in favor of Moysha’s children, who lost their parents and became the orphans.

In year 1931 in Korsun a Jewish collective farm was created. Sruel was forbidden to work in his own business. His brother Duvid gave up machinery of his father, which produced sunflower oil, as well as his own cow to newly created Jewish collective farm. Jewish schoolchildren were helping farmers by fishing out insects from sugar beets fields in order to save crop.

Matvey showed his big interest and ties to his birthplace, where he lived until war started in June 1941. After the war ended, Korsun was renamed to Korsun – Shevchenkovsky.

It was a gorgeous city, which beauty was emphasized surrounding nature. It had a lot of different kind of trees and flowers. In town there was a cultivated park with a health resort, which belonged to the warriors of railroad transportation. Green leaves in summer time and red - yellowish in fall, like a lace thrown over the park above the trees, added to the park special view.
River Ros was flowing by, its clear waters attracted many visitors. In the park three little foot bridges were built for convenient crossing to other parts of the park over the gulfs formed by overflow. In that park there were also several springs and people used spring water as a drink. In front of the entrance to this park high arch with dwellings above the arch was built. This dwelling was fit to live in for people providing park services. In front of park entrance there always were walking peacocks.

Before the war of 1941 – 1945 one teacher college and three educational schools, Ukranian, Russian and Jewish were functioning in Korsun. These schools provided general education. Matvey was 7 years old he was enrolled to Ukrainian school. It was a mistake made by his family. Jewish population was shocked. People complained. For religious Jewish father it was a shame to send his son to Ukrainian school. In two weeks Matvey was transferred to a Jewish school, where he studied for 8 years.

At Jewish school children learned about tools and how to use them. For Matvey those lessons helped very well in his future life. He was very interested in the crafting. His knowledge of mechanics helped him to find a job in USA and become a helpful employee for the company where he worked over 16 years.

Matvey also loves sports. From very early age, since he was four years old he loved to swim on the Ros River. At winter time he was skating and skiing down hills, in summer - riding horse. At school he played soccer as a defender. Matvey was passionate to lift heavy weights. Going home after school or other events, when he saw heavy stone in front of him on the road he lifted it over his head, checking his strength with pleasure.

He loved his oldest brother Boris very much and was amazed by his strength. His nickname was Boris the Bull. He always could stand for himself and didn’t let to offend
the others. Boris also was interested in drawing, sport games, music. Matvey was influenced by Boris personality. He missed Boris a lot, when his older brother left to continue his education at veterinary school in Dnipropetrovsk region in 1937. In 1941 Boris graduated from veterinary school, but he wasn’t able to unite with his family because the war started and straight from school he was drafted to the Red Army.

In his childhood Matvey lived in a very small town, they didn’t have electricity. He was reading under the light of kerosene lamp. When electricity was provided sometime in 1936, it was forbidden for homeowners to use more then one electric bulb inside a house. Only one bulb outside above the number of his house was allowed. The city wasn’t equipped with plumbing and water-supply system. There were only 3 or 4 water wells. One of them was located in his grandpa’s yard; the others were in different places. Special people – water carriers – delivered water from wells to homeowners in barrels, but it wasn’t enough and people used water from the river to do laundry.

Matvey’s life completely changed since the war started. Years of the war and all he went through took heavy toll on his own life. He lost three dearest people of his family: papa, oldest brother and sister. He lost connection with his family after he was drafted to army in 1942.

In 1942 he inquired about his family through information bureau of Kuibishev city. In a month after his inquiry he got an answer with the address of his mother. Not wasting time Matvey immediately sent a letter to this address and was overwhelmed with joy when he received a response from his mama. Reading her letter made him cry. From letter he found out about his papa’s death and the illness of his sister that killed her. It was very painful to him to learn about his mama’s struggling with raising a small child
without any help. This letter was the only letter he got in war time. Correspondence between them stopped after that.

In 1947, when Matvey was discharged from the army, he went straight to railroad station and bought a ticket to the place where his mama with his little brother was settled, in Kirghis Republic. It was a slow passenger train. He was sitting on the upper bench near the open window, next to him he placed his greatcoat decorated with his awards for outstanding service under enemy fire. He was looking at the passengers trying to find out when it would be his stop, and suddenly he saw that his greatcoat was filched away through the window by thieves, who were hiding on the roof of that train. Nothing he could do. He lost his greatcoat with all his war decorations attached, but it was nothing comparing to his joy to see his mama and little brother in that village.

And what a disappointment it was, when he arrived to that place and found his mama living in a very small cold clay shack attached to the main house, where the owners lived. There was enough room only for one bed and nothing else. The next day he was looking for a bigger place where they could to stay all together. With the help of other people he found a job at the hospital.

It was not easy to live between strangers in the unknown place. This place could not replace his birthplace. He was thinking about his small town. He went to bed and waked up thinking about returning back to his home.

When Matvey with his mother and little brother arrived to Kiev city, his mother and little brother got approval for living there from city management, but Matvey was ordered to leave city in 24 hours. It was time terrible time, his mother almost lost her sight because of all the tears she shed after loosing her husband and two children. Who would
take care about his mother and little brother who already lived long time with the strangers without any help?

The man who served in army during war time defending his country was ordered to leave his helpless mother and little brother and go away. People returned from war and they were not helped out. What kind of order was set up in Ukraine and who was in power? Who established those cruel and inhumane rules? In our opinion, we would not be able to get the answers to these questions even today.

We appreciate USA very much, the country which gave us opportunity to live and work everywhere, where we can be successful and helpful to others. Matvey proved it by working in maintenance service over 15 years. His working life lasted 56 years, out of which he worked 18 years in the USA and retired at 75.

But now we want to go back to the time when he was young. He was happily married but lost his lovely wife in June 1961 after a serious disease. He lived in love and happiness for almost seven years and became a widower with two lovely daughters, six-year-old Sofia and five-year-old Irina.

After the death of his wife he was in a great state of commotion and didn't want to think about any woman who could be bad to his children and they would become two Cinderellas. For a while his mama came to help him. She was a very nice woman and very kind, kind enough to help others, but she was in poor health. She almost lost her vision and suffered from high blood pressure. I was invited to his home. I was surprised by his invitation, but after all I agreed. In the morning of the next weekend I was thinking about the loss of our mama and how I was jealous of others who had their mamas. I was 18 years old and my youngest sister Sofia was eight years old when our
mama died. We were missing our mama a lot, even though I was already on my own.

His children lost their mama at a very young age. Since Matvey worked different shifts, including multiple shifts sometimes, he didn’t have enough time to spend with his children or to visit their school teachers at determined meeting times, etc.

When evening came, I told myself, “Go.” To my surprise, when I entered their home, his children smiled at me. When I looked at their shiny, happy faces, I thought: “These children could be mine.” The smile on their faces gave me a pleasant feeling. After my visit he made a proposal to me I couldn’t refuse. I knew how hard it was for him and his children at that time. In June 1965 we were officially married.

I continued to work in the same company. His mother took care of the children in our absence. After work I spent time with the children. After dinner time the kitchen was my place and my mother-in-law helped me with doing the dishes and giving me some advice.

She was a very nice intelligent woman. She was born August 23, 1901, in Odessa city to an intellectual couple. Her parents had four children - three girls and one boy, the oldest child. She was born second after him. The three oldest children got their education in gymnasium (college prep high school). The youngest daughter studied at high school and then graduated from the conservatory of music, as a pianist.

At the time of the October Revolution this family experienced some difficulties. The oldest daughter – Luba – visited her relatives in Korsun – Schevchenkovsky. Luba was a very attractive girl, tall with a beautiful figure, light eyes and very nice features. Her appearance in a small town made a big impression on one of the young men in that city by the name of Sruel. He was 27 years old. Luba was only 16 years
old. After their first meeting they dated for a while, then he married her. They were very much in love. He was very attractive and, besides this, he was a good manager of his own household. In his possession was a big house, a mill with a small farm, two horses, a lot of chickens, two goats, and rabbits. He kept himself busy from dawn to sunset.

In 1929, the time of collectivization, Sruel’s mill was confiscated by the government, but Sruel continued to work on his mill as a worker. He was a religious man. With other religious men they gathered at the synagogue regularly to pray. Then in 1929, the synagogue building went through remodeling after which it was used as a club house. Religious people lost the only synagogue in the city. Because Sruel’s house was the biggest, people came to his house to pray.

In the summer of 1941 Matvey was visiting his uncle in Kiev. Sruel and Luba were waiting for their oldest son Boris to come home and celebrate his graduation from veterinary school. The situation changed suddenly. On June 22, 1941, it was announced that the country was in a state of war with Germany. Matvey quickly came back home. Boris was mobilized to the army straight from school and his parents never saw him again. The family got notification about him being missed in the war.

When the Germans were bombing very intensely, this family of five moved out of the city. No one thought that the Germans would invade the city, yet just in case, Matvey dug a pit in his yard to hide the Torah.

In July, Matvey's family was evacuated from the Korsun-Schevchenkovsky area to the Ordzenikidze region – Novo-Vorontsovsky district, where Matvey and his father
worked at collective farm, taking care of cattle. The front was moving closer to that area. In order to save cattle, the central administration ordered people to get cattle out from that region and move them to Makhachkala as soon as possible. Between the two points it was approximately 200 km (124.27 miles). Matvey had just returned home from the hospital where he went through surgery and was still very weak. The time for evacuation was determined and he didn’t have a choice.

All men drove the cattle during the daytime. Women with their children were seated on horse-drawn carts, following their families. At nighttime they were able to get some rest. Some people were on duty, while others rested, with the help of the dogs. It was a long and hard way with many sacrifices. On their way to Makhachkala they experienced a shortage of drinking water. They used milk instead of water. It was like living in the wilderness, sleeping out in the open for almost one month. Cattle, like people, experienced thirst. If on their way they saw some water in the ravine, nothing could stop them. They jumped to quench their thirst. When the family finally arrived to Makhachkala 2 year old Matvey’s baby brother got ill. He was taken to hospital with his mother. In the same time Sruel with his two children, Matvey and Ida, had no place to stay, they slept out in the open on the ground of stadium field. On the first night in the stadium the family was robbed.

When Luba with the child returned from the hospital, Matvey went to recruitment office and received an order to be in the office at the determined time next day. When he arrived the next day, recruiting officer told Matvey that he was a lucky man. Group of drafted young men who have been sent away on previous day all died because the entire echelon was derailed by diversionists. Matvey was sent to war on this day. Since then he
lost all connections with his family. Meanwhile, the Germans moved closer to Caucasus. To stay in that area was dangerous.

By the end of 1942 Matvey's family was evacuated to Kirghizyia. Moving in a caravan composed of cargo trains, their father, Sruel, got ill. Because he couldn’t get medical help inside the train, his condition worsened with every minute and he died on the train. When the train stopped, his body was taken out and who knows where he was buried.

The children lost their papa and Luba lost her husband – the feeder of the family. Matvey was lost. Luba was left with a 16-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son.

Two weeks later, when they reached Kirghizyia, they were settled in a mine area, far away from the city. Luba's daughter got sick with pneumonia. They could not get any medical help or medicine. They could not even get a glass of hot water. In her blooming age she died. Luba was left with only her three-year-old son. Suffering from hunger, weakness and grief from the loss of her loved ones, Luba lived in fear of death. Matvey shortly described this part of his life in his story.

Matvey found his mother’s whereabouts after the war was over through an inquiry office and soon he arrived to see her. The happiness of his mother knew no bounds when she saw him. He explained his absence. On his way to the evacuation station he was recruited to the army. He was sent for instruction training and from there back to Caucasus. Arriving in Kirghizyia, Matvey found a job in the hospital and with his help the family of three survived.

In 1950 they decided go back to their homeland. There is no place like home, but they received a notice from their former neighbor that their house was burned out by
the Germans. Anyway, they knew somewhere in Kiev they would find relatives who lived in Kiev before the war started who could be of help to them. It was the right decision. When they came to Kiev, they found out that Luba’s mother with her youngest daughter returned to Kiev where they had a small apartment. Then Luba with her little boy got permission from city management to stay with her mother in the apartment, but Matvey, now age 27, was ordered to leave the city in 24 hours. It was a terrible blow to his mother, who was dependent on him. It was a terrible blow to Matvey, as well. He was hiding in different houses, moving from one place to another until he managed to get permission to permanently stay out of the city, not far from Kiev (about 20 miles). Receiving this permission to stay near Kiev city, he was able to get a job.

My mother-in-law sometimes doubted God's existence. How could He allow her family, who believed in His power, to go through such tragedy and grief?

Part IV

After the death of my father in 1964 a tragic time came back to our family. My aunt, who was between life and death for 16 years, passed away in 1966. A year later my uncle died from a heart attack. This same year my other aunt died from cancer, and in 1968 we lost our brother-in-law.

But life has going on and happy things also happened to us. In March 1966 I gave birth to our daughter Marina. She was born in very delicate health which led to other diseases, so as a baby in her third month, Marina was placed in Children’s Hospital with stomach problems (dyspepsia).
For eight days and nights I stayed with her. During the daytime I sat on a chair near her cradle. At nighttime I rested mostly on the floor. By hospital policy, visitors were not allowed to stay after 8 p.m. If a child was in bad condition, the mother could stay longer but not later than 11 p.m. After 11 p.m. all chairs were removed from children’s rooms. At that time I hid in a restroom. After the nurses made their rounds and moved to the desks, I looked for a good chance to get out from my hiding place to be near my baby. Sometimes if a nice nurse was checking babies on the night shift and saw me sitting on the floor near the cradle, she would bring a chair back to the room for me and not say a word.

It was summer time. Our oldest children, Sofia and Irina, were in the pioneer camp. When we returned home from the hospital, we were consoled for a few days, and then a couple days later, Marina was crying again. Something was disturbing her; we couldn’t understand what was going on. In our thoughts – she was hungry, yet a bottle of milk did not make her calm down.

Early the next morning, the clinic was still closed, but there was a doctor on emergency duty. She checked Marina out and told us that she needs to be seen by an otolaryngologist. Marina had a complication after her recent illness. Without any delay, my husband’s aunt, a professor of otolaryngology, recommended her assistant who performed an operation on both of Marina's ears. It did not take a lot of time for the surgery, but hearing the baby’s crying made us cry. Therefore, it took more time for us to calm down.

Soon Sofia and Irina came back home from summer pioneer camp. They had missed their baby sister and spent a lot of time with her. The baby was like a doll to
them. Soon came the time to start school after summer vacation.

In spite of a shortage of time, Sofia and Irina played with Marina from time to time. When Marina was only three years old, they taught her to read the geography map of the world. They were happy to see her pointing to the right locations. It might be because of them Marina was successful in school.

Sofia and Irina took music classes for a while. When Marina was four years old, we took her to the same studio, just to find out if her ears were good enough to hear music after surgery. We were pleased to hear that she was eligible to be enrolled in that studio, but she could only study music grammar, because her hands were too small yet to play the piano. When she was five years old she started to take music classes.

In 1972 Sofia graduated from high school and passed entrance exams to accounting college. At the same time she was working with database as an operator on the big calculating machines.

Year later Irina graduated from the same high school. She also was working with database as an operator. This work was not easy because they were working for a statistical company; incoming reports were numerous and complicated by lines.

As our girls grew up, it became dating time. It was good time for them and a time of worry for their parents.

At the beginning of 1975 Sofia decided that she would not be able to reach her goal in the country she lived and there was not a good future for her. We were stunned by that decision. She was only 20 years of age and made up her mind without her parents’ consideration. At the same time it was a brave action. She did everything by herself. Even though she was going through difficult times, she calmly replied to all
questions. When she got her exit visa, she was ready to go. On June 25, 1975, with one suitcase and one briefcase she went through customs inspection, saying her last goodbye to us and giving us a nice hug. She walked to the airplane through the airport’s field without turning around, straight to the airplane’s ladder and, only then, turning around, waving to us from the stairs. She arrived to the USA at the end of December the same year.

On September 19, 1975, Irina married her boyfriend, his mother’s only child, who lost his father when he was 12 years old. In 1976 she gave birth to her son, Boris. In the same year in August my mother-in-law became seriously ill, but, in spite of that, on the day of her birthday, August 23, we decided to make her feel better by celebrating her 75th birthday with our small family. Her life that filled with grief, tragedies and suffering ended on the evening of September 13, 1976. She was very nice to all people and to her family. She was a very clever and unusually kind person. With her death we lost our aid when we were in need, we lost her love and family advice. She was a good consultant to us.

Time passed. Our grandson Boris was 18 months old. He revealed his boyish nature. His interests were cars and sticks, which he used as weapons, sometimes on Marina, his aunt. As Sofia and Irina spent their time with Marina, Marina did the same for Boris. She continued her music education and took part in chorus. At 11 years old, Marina, as Sofia had done before her, insisted on moving out of our country. She came to this idea after participating in the parade show with her choral group. She was listed, like the other children, as a prize winner, whose reward was a trip to Krakow, Poland. But she was rejected by the Labor Union on the day before departure. I questioned this
union decision. Even though I was told it was because Marina looked too young in the picture, I knew it was because she was Jewish. After that she suffered another blow. After passing the test to musical school with very good marks, she was not accepted as a student.

Anti-Semitism hand in hand with corruption was blooming in the former Soviet Union then as well as today. Our children made us change our life. They were clever in their young ages to leave the country we were born in, the country where we were treated like strangers. All doors were closed to us. This was the country, which our fathers and brothers had defended during war time, protecting us from the German invasion. This was the country where we worked on rebuilding our city, restoring devastated houses, plants and factories with the same vigor as other citizens.

We didn’t leave that country in pursuit for “greens”, like some people think. We were tired of feeling defeated, unequal, and tired of hearing Russians shouting: “Jews, are you still here? When will you be swept out from our country?” It was our country as well as theirs, but our rights were violated.

When my uncle returned home in 1945 from the hospital where he recovered from his war wound, with his greatcoat on his shoulders, decorated with orders (the higher honor, worn on the right side of the chest) and medals (worn on the left side), a boy of 10–12 years old came close to him, and asked:” How much did you pay for these decorations?” Yes, he paid, paid with his blood, risking his life, like many others Jews devoted to this country. Men and women had saved the life of that boy and many others, who were not Jews. I am just outspoken. Many families lost their loved ones to WWII. There was not a single family left without tragedy and grief. Our family lost almost
everybody.

In 1975 after Sofia, at 20, left for the USA, we were all considered traitors. Consequently, Matvey lost his job. There's a Russian slogan that says, “If you don’t work, you don’t eat.” So he was transferred to another job, as a load lifter. He now worked very hard for less pay. It was time to make up our minds. We got an invitation from our daughter, signed by the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, for permission to live in the USA. This invitation, however, wasn’t accepted by the Russian Department of Visa and Permission. In those times only invitations from Israel were accepted. When we got invitations from Israel, we would be accepted. When we got our invitation from Israel, our family had a new tragedy. My brother-in-law Sohir had a sudden stroke. He was now fighting for his life.

The family of my younger sister Sofia also got an invitation and we were thinking that we would immigrate together. Her husband Sohir was dreaming about emigration. Being born in Poland, he always thought that he would find somebody from his family in Israel or the United States. But it was only his dream. On April 1, 1978, he died, when he was only 52 years old. His death was a big shock, not only to his family, but to his friends also. He was a very nice person, with a great smile on his face. He had done a lot of good in his lifetime.

After his death we had much to think about. It took time for us to determine our situation. Matvey was working very hard lifting heavy loads which caused him back pain. I also lost my job. We couldn’t delay anymore. At the end of May we came to the Department of Visa and Permission with our invitation and with our credentials. In six weeks we got permission for our exit visas. But before getting our visas, we were
obligated to pay our duty, which was like buying government stamps; this cost us about $3,000.00. Their reasoning was that we had gotten an education there which was a privilege. In addition we had to turn over all our original documents to certain departments: all certificates of birth, marriage, death of our parents, his first wife, his military ticket to the military committee, diplomas to educational organizations, etc., statements from house management and from our last work about our debts (which we did not have). After we submitted all the requested papers to the different departments, we got our exit visas.

On September 19, 1978, we left the former Soviet Union, moving from Kiev, crossing Czechoslovakia border to Austria, from Austria to Italy, from Italy to the USA. At midnight on December 13, 1978, we landed in New York City. It was a great feeling. The next morning we flew from New York to Cincinnati. It was a nice sunny, warm day in spite of the winter month. We felt that even the weather welcomed us on USA soil. Our daughter with her friends gathered to greet us. Strangers smiled at us.

With help of Jewish Family Service and Jewish Vocational Service we were helped to get jobs. Our 12-year-old daughter was able to continue her education at Yavneh Day School. We were able to take English classes. We have great appreciation for all the Jewish organizations for helping us become independent, for their support and help.

Matvey started his job at a sewing factory in April 1979. I started my job in May 1979 at Fabric Distributor and Merchant Company. It was a pleasant environment, with lovely, friendly relationships between employees. In the beginning I had a problem with transportation, but with the help of our employees, my problem was discussed between them and I was helped by Gira Ginsburg and Sylvia Friedman who picked me up every
morning until I got a car and a driver's license. Thanks to all the people who helped me and my family. Every little bit helps.

People ask me if I have nostalgia. If I say that I don’t, no one would believe me. During our first years of our life in the USA, I did cry sometimes because I was missing part of family: our daughter, her family, and my sisters and their families. After they joined us on USA soil to live here permanently, my feelings changed. Now we are all here, united.

At last I would like to describe for you how I reached work on my first day. It was a very nice sunny morning and I was very hot. I asked our neighbor for a ride since he was going to his work via Cross County Highway, the same direction I needed to go. Our time to start work was different though. He had to start work at 8:00 a.m. I had to start work at 9 a.m. I asked him to stop his car near the Plainfield Road exit and from there I knew where I needed to go. He was speeding and forgot to stop his car for me to get out at the correct exit. And with this excuse, he stopped his car on the exit to Montgomery Road, telling me that he was late to work and he didn’t have time to take me back to Plainfield Road. Sitting in a car as a passenger, I couldn’t determine the distance from Montgomery Road to Plainfield Road. I told him not to worry since I still had a lot of time. It was only 7:15 a.m.

Turning by 180 degrees, I walked in the wrong direction on the I-71 highway. I walked more than an hour. Cars were passing by me. They created a loud noise. My head was in a whirl from the highway noise, I was dead on my feet, I didn’t see a police car on the highway, but I was in need of their help. I raised my hand up and down, like doing my exercises, but cars passed by without stopping. I sat near the border on the
edge of the highway, crying and frightened. To go farther in my high heel shoes was a big problem, and I didn’t know if I was going in the right direction.

Suddenly one car passed by me, then backed up and stopped in front of me. A black woman got out from her car and asked me if I needed help. She wondered where I was going and if she could be of help to me. Of course, I was glad to hear her proposal, but she did not know the location of the street I needed. She drove to the nearest gas station and asked for a map. According to the map’s indication, she was able to bring me straight to my work place. I didn’t know how to thank this woman. I didn’t have any money. I hugged and kissed her and invited her to my house. She told me not to worry and proposed to help by telling me that she drove her daughter every morning to the University of Cincinnati. It wouldn’t be a problem for her to pick me up every morning if I would go to the corner of Galbraith Road and Reading Road. But because of my co-workers’ help in that case, I didn’t use the help of that nice lady.

On August 17, 1984, we became United States citizens. After the ceremony I returned to my work and, as a symbol of being an American, found on my desk pictures of a Chevrolet, Mickey Mouse and apple pie. In this country we get freedom and a lovely welcome. Our grandchildren were able to get an education without any problem. We are able to get equal rights like all American people. Now no one will ask us: “Jew, you are still here?” Now, this is our country and we are very grateful to all the people who stretched their hands of friendship to us.

Three our grandsons: Benny, Jeffrey and Joshua were honored to celebrate their bar mitzvah. On October 16, 2010 our youngest grandson Joshua was honored to celebrate
his bar mitzvah. On this occasion we were united with our relatives who came from
different cities of the USA, family friends and Joshua friends. Our granddaughter Lina
celebrated her Bat mitzvah and was married under the hoopah.

We are proud to be able to learn our Jewish tradition here in the USA, traditions
which we weren’t allowed even to think about.

I will finish my writing with words written by Russian poet Sergey Yesenin with my
own version on the last line:

I want to be a singer
And a citizen
As pride and example
To everyone
And to be a real person
In United States of America

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Our dearest grandchildren,

This book was written for you to read. How far away the past of our family seems
for you now… But we, as your grandparents, want you to know how difficult our life
was, especially during WW II. We worked very hard, 12 hours a day, sometimes even
more. Being only 14-15 years of age, we experienced hunger and were happy to get a
small piece of bread with a cup of hot water in place of soup. We also experienced
discrimination being a Jew. We wish you peace. We want that what we went through
never will be repeated in the history of all people in the entire world. Living in the USA you should not have a stormy future. You should know that your future is in your hands.

Now when the entire world is facing terrorist attacks, not only in the USA, but in the other European countries, when Arab countries by their political actions threaten not only the Israeli people, but all peace-loving nations, when the entire universe faces the beginning of a third world war, something that could bring terrible consequences to our entire humanity, everyone should know about this and do everything they can to prevent this in the future. Let clear skies be above us all and the sun shine on the whole universe, and for you — our youngsters, let us bring peace to our world.

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Elizabeth and Matvey at the beginning of 2010.
Elizabeth’s father in 1940 at 47.

Elizabeth’s mother in 1940
Picture copied and enlarged from her passport.

Matvey’s parents: Luba at age 18 and Srue at age 29
after two years of marriage.
Elizabeth’s older brother Michael at age 23. Killed in 1941 at war.

Elizabeth’s youngest brother Shaya at age 18 before his graduation from infantry school in Baku City in June 1941. Shaya graduated with honors and won a prize to travel to Georgia, a neighboring republic. He never lived to go. Shaya was killed in the same year at war at age 19.

Elizabeth’s oldest sister Roza. This was the last picture taken of her. She died at age 66 in 1990. During wartime she served as a nurse at the field hospital.
Elizabeth (top right) with her two sisters, Roza (left) and Sofia (lower right), after returning to Kiev from evacuation. Elizabeth and Sofia are wearing dresses given them from packages received from the people of the United States of America.

Elizabeth’s mother’s youngest sister Ester with her husband Solomon and their 13-year-old daughter Tatyana (Tanya). Picture was taken in 1939. Family was murdered in 1941 in Babi Yar: Ester with her two children, Tanya and little boy Senya who was born after 1939 (not in this picture). Uncle Solomon was killed in Vienna on May 5, 1945 after four years participation in defending his country during the war.

Elizabeth’s Aunt Dvoyra—her father’s sister who lost two sons in war time and suffered for many years because of paralysis.
Elizabeth at age 22 before entering school of planning coal fields.

Elizabeth, as a student in 1953, 20 km from Kiev, near students’ college dormitory, dressed in a coat received from USA, a “care package.”

Matvey’s family photo taken in 1928. Back row: Srue (father) and Luba (mother), Matvey age 5 (on left), Abrasha, Matvey’s brother, age 2, Marim (maternal grandmother) Ida, Matvey’s sister, age 2, Boris, Matvey’s brother, age 7
Grandma Ida and Grandpa Gershel

Matvey’s uncle (Luba’s brother) Yefim And Matvey’s mama Luba (left photo) Matvey grandma Mirim, grandpa Sruel and grandaunt Rosa (right picture)
Matvey - 3 month old

Chudnovsky siblings in 1928: Ida and Abrasha in front, behind them – Matvey and Boris

Matvey’s sister Ida with Luba, granddaughter of Matvey’s uncle Yankel (photo taken in 1936)
Matvey's brother Boris

Matvey's sister Ida in 1940

Matvey's as a soldier in 1942
Matvey, Elizabeth’s husband, at age 28.

Elizabeth as a student at the Economy-Financial Institute, about age 28.

Sofia, age 6 1/2 and Irina, age 5.

Marina about age 2.
Elizabeth and Matvey’s youngest daughter, Marina, at home in Kiev at age 3

Marina at age 8 at home in Kiev.

Elizabeth, Irina, Luba (Matvey’s mother), Sofia, Matvey, and Marina (in front) right before Sofia left for America.
From left to right: Matvey’s aunt Rosa, mother Luba, uncle Yefim and his wife

Matvey’s mother Luba. Photo taken in 1975.
Relatives and friends gathered together to say goodbye to Sofia who was leaving Russia by herself for the USA at age 20 in June 1975.

Pictured from left to right: Great Uncle Sam (uncle of Matvey’s first wife; he introduced Matvey and Elizabeth), Aunt Manya (Matvey’s first wife’s sister), Uncle Lev (Manya’s husband), Tatyana (Manya’s daughter-in-law), Marina, Polina (friend), Sofia (Elizabeth’s youngest sister), cousin Vladimir (in front, second cousin), Irina, Alex (Sofia’s cousin, Manya and Lev’s son), Sofia, Alex (Elizabeth’s nephew, oldest sister’s son), Elizabeth’s oldest sister Roza, Elizabeth’s niece Ilona (in front), friend (face only), Sohir (Elizabeth’s youngest sister’s husband, father to Ilona), Luba (Matvey’s mother), Elizabeth, Sofia (Manya’s daughter), Adel (friend).
Matvey - veteran of WWII, photo taken in 2000

Matvey and Elizabeth in Indianapolis about 2007, moving on with life and enjoying a moment together.
Elizabeth and Matvey, known as Babushka and Dedushka to their grandchildren, pictured here from left to right: Lina (Krakovich) Goldberg, Benjamin Krakovich, Matvey, Joshua Tokman, Elizabeth, Jeffrey Tokman and Boris Mayzlik.

Picture taken on May 1, 2008, when the family was celebrating Matvey’s 85th birthday in the club house at Elizabeth and Matvey’s condo complex in Cincinnati.

The Chudnovsky women today: Sofia Krakovich, Marina Tokman, and Irina Mayzlik. This photo was taken at Marina’s son Jeffrey’s Bar Mitzvah in 2005 in Ithaca, New York.
Event: Jeffrey Tokman’s Bar Mitzvah in Ithaca, New York in 2005. Back row: Roza’s son Alex Novak, Irina, Benjamin Krakovich, Michael Tokman, Marina Tokman, Vladimir Krakovich (Sofia’s husband), Sofia, Lina Krakovich, Natasha (Alex’s wife). Front row: Matvey, Elizabeth and Alex Mayzlik (Irina’s husband).

Event: Rehearsal dinner for Lina’s wedding on September 6, 2009.
Back row: Michael Dinerman (1st cousin of Sofia and Irina), Isabelle Dinerman (1st cousin), Aigul (wife of Boris), Dan Goldberg (fiancé of Lina), Joshua Tokman (in front of Dan), Lina Krakovich (soon to be Goldberg), Jeffrey Tokman, Boris Mayzlik.
Front row: Benjamin Krakovich, Elizabeth and Matvey Chudnovsky.

Marriage celebration of Lina and Dan Goldberg on September 6, 2009.
The family legacy continues.
Another picture from rehearsal dinner for Lina’s wedding on September 6, 2009. From left to right: Boris Chudnovsky, Elizabeth, Bella Chudnovsky (Boris wife), Elizabeth and Matvey daughter Marina, and Matvey. Boris is the grandson of Marvey’s uncle Yankel.

Below are the pictures of the extended Chudnovsky family from Matvey’s uncle Yankel:

Son of Bella and Boris Chudnovsky, Yakov with wife Irina

Boris’ brother Eduard Chudnovsky with wife Asya and granddaugther Iris
Drawings and Authentic Russian Recipes
by
Elizabeth
This is one of Elizabeth’s watercolor paintings. It is a synagogue in a village in Czechoslovakia. Even though Elizabeth did not attend this synagogue and she did copy this painting, making only minor changes, it represents her artwork and symbolizes her faith.

Elizabeth drew this picture of a primus, the small portable kerosene stove they used for cooking and preparing meals during the early years. She said the apartment “always smelled of charcoal gas.”

This picture was drawn by Elizabeth to show how the water was delivered to the people of Korsun city.
Elizabeth created this map of the countries as she saw them years ago. You will recognize places from her story, including Odessa, the Dnepr River, the Volga River, Georgia, Kiev, Rosov city and Stalingrad.

Kiev is one of the largest cities in Ukraine. It lies on the hills, along the Dnepr River and stretches by 50 km (31 miles) in length and 40 km (24.8 miles) crosswise. The right and left banks of the Dnepr River are connected by bridges. The city occupies an area equal to that of Paris, but the population of Kiev is only one-fourth the population of Paris. Kiev is known as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Founded in 862, it was the ancient capitol of Russia, but was held by Moguls, Lithuanians and Poles at various times, and became a part of Russia again in 1668.

Kiev became a capitol of Ukraine in 1934, following Kharkov as the previous capitol. Kiev was heavily damaged by German forces during the years 1941-1944, the war years, and was rebuilt after the war ended.

Kiev was a very significant industrial city. Its numerous industrial plants created production of commodities well known beyond its borders. In addition, Kiev is known for much scientific research and cultural companies, as well as many educational schools and colleges.

Kiev has a glorious nature. It has unusually beautiful originality with many public gardens, parks and monuments in each park. Lime, chestnut and poplar trees line the paths along the city streets. Kiev is a garden city, one of the most glorious cities in the world with many historical treasures from the 17th and 18th centuries, architectural monuments, cathedrals, museums and one synagogue, rebuilt after the Soviet Union collapsed.
Elizabeth Chudnovsky’s Authentic Russian Recipes

Cooking has been a major cultural element that Elizabeth has brought to Cincinnati. Every day she prepares her meals from her repertoire of authentic Russian recipes. If she has an ingredient that needs to be used before it spoils, she may even create a new dish from available food items. Elizabeth has learned to use cheaper versions of more expensive cuts of meat and make them just as tasty or even tastier by the manner in which she prepares them. She knows the tricks. She understands food and she understands the economy. And she understands how to serve her guests a delicious, well-rounded Russian meal. After all, it is part of the Russian way to please friends and family by feeding them and feeding them well. Some of Elizabeth’s recipes are here to be passed down in the family. Even though her children and grandchildren may enjoy American foods more than Russian foods, Elizabeth is including these recipes so the Russian culture can perhaps carry on in some way.

RUSSIAN SALAD
Elizabeth serves this salad at many of her main meals. It may look like a typical American salad, but she uses an ingredient that enhances the flavor. Elizabeth says that Irina loves to add grape oil in place of olive oil, but Elizabeth prefers the olive oil along with tarragon vinegar, the magic ingredient.

**Ingredients:** Romaine lettuce plus a variety of greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, onion, basil leaves, a bit of salt, tarragon vinegar and olive oil.

Elizabeth tears up the lettuce, slices the cucumbers, tomatoes and onion, tears up the basil leaves, and assembles these vegetables. Next she tosses on a bit of salt, then sprinkles on tarragon vinegar and olive oil as the dressing.

**PICKLED MUSHROOMS**
These mushrooms can be served as an appetizer.

**Ingredients:** 2 packages of fresh whole mushrooms (8 or 12 oz.)

Wash mushrooms in cold water. Put in pot, pour on cold water, add 1 teaspoon salt and boil about two minutes. Pour off water and chill.

**Marinade:**
2.5 pints of water (5 cups)
0.5 cup vinegar (1/2 cup)
1 or 2 tablespoons sugar
4 teaspoons salt
2-3 bay leaves
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
4-5 clove pieces

In boiling water add all the above spices and boil for two minutes. After it boils, add the vinegar. Cool marinade. Put chilled mushrooms in a jar and pour marinade over them. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil. Cover jar and put in refrigerator for 2-3 days before eating them.
ELIZABETH'S AUTHENTIC RUSSIAN EGG ROLLS

One day when Elizabeth was expecting people for an early afternoon meal, she had a particularly difficult morning. Realizing she had an eggplant that needed to be used, she invented a new recipe that turned out to be delicious and pleased her guests immensely. They were amazed at her ingenuity on short notice. These egg rolls can be served as an hors d’oeuvre.

Ingredients:

1 eggplant, longer and narrower is better for this recipe

Filling:

2-3 hard boiled eggs (depends on eggplant size)
1 carrot
1 yellow onion, medium size
pepper to taste
salt, just a pinch
1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese, not quite full
olive oil
flour for dipping egg rolls
1 egg for dipping egg rolls

Peel eggplant. Slice lengthwise, very thin, about 1/8 inch. Soak eggplant slices in cold, salted water for 5-7 minutes. While slices soak, prepare filling. Dice carrot and onion. Sauté carrot and onion pieces in olive oil until soft. Chop hard boiled egg. Mix these three ingredients together.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lay eggplant slices on foil or parchment paper lining a 9x13 pan. Bake 7-10 minutes. Remove from oven. Let cool. While cooling, finish the filling by adding salt and pepper and Parmesan cheese. Mix together and place a heaping spoonful at end of each slice of eggplant. Roll up. Heat olive oil in skillet. Dip each roll into the beaten egg, then roll in flour and place in warm skillet and brown to a golden tone.
SALTED SALMON
This recipe creates a cheaper version of smoked salmon which can be expensive and can be served as an hors d’oeuvre.

**Ingredients:**  1 salmon fillet, maybe a pound; 1 1/2 tablespoons salt, 1 teaspoon sugar

Place salmon in long dish. Sprinkle mixture of salt and sugar over fillet. Cover and let stand about 8-9 hours in refrigerator. Remove from refrigerator and wash under cold water. Cut into small pieces. Put in a jar. Add olive oil or sunflower oil. Cover and place in refrigerator. Salmon can be eaten on the next day.

PIEROGIES
Pierogies can be served as part of a main meal. They are substantial and delicious, especially the way Elizabeth makes them. Lina likes these in the dairy version with mashed potatoes in place of meat. She enjoys them with fried onions and a little pepper and salt. In the top photo below are Elizabeth’s hands with her rolling pin from Russia and her “table” or “desk” which is a 19”x25” wooden tray with three raised edges so the dough won’t go off the edges. It is a beautiful set up.

**Ingredients for dough:**  3 cups flour, 1 teaspoon sugar, 1 package yeast (fast rise), 1 tablespoon flour, 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons butter or margarine

Dissolve yeast in warm water with the sugar and 2 tablespoons flour. Let yeast grow (rise) to double in size. In large bowl combine 3 cups flour with yeast mixture, 2 beaten eggs, 2 Tbsls. butter or margarine and a bit of salt. Mix by hand until dough is smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and put dish towel on top. (Plastic wrap prevents a dish towel from getting soiled.) Let rise to at least double in size. Turn out on wooden cutting board or countertop and knead. Roll by hand into a long narrow roll about 1 inch thick. Cut into 3/4 inch pieces. Take each one and roll out with pin into a circular shape.

**Ingredients for filling:** 2 pounds chicken or beef tenderloin (any kind of beef, just the soft part), onion, pepper, salt

Put meat in a pot and cover with water. Add one onion and salt for taste. Bring to boiling, then lower temperature and cook about 1 hour. Let cool. While cooling, sauté chopped onion. Grind meat. Mix with fried onion, pepper, and salt to taste. Can prepare meat one day in advance. Put some meat mixture in the center of each dough piece. Fold dough over filling and crimp two sides together. Line pan with parchment paper and grease paper. Place crimped pierogies seam side down on the lined pan.
**Coating for pierogis:** Beat one egg. With pastry brush, brush egg (for color) onto each pierogie.

Bake at 350 degrees until tops of pierogies become golden brown.

**STUFFED CABBAGE**
This dish can be served as the entrée for dinner. Elizabeth says it is very tasty. Even though Elizabeth likes to cook hers on the stove top, she says that some people like to bake theirs in the oven.

**Ingredients:**
- 0.5 pound uncooked meat (soft part of chicken or beef)
- About 2 pounds lightweight cabbage (not very tight head) When cabbage leaves are a little bit loose, they are easier to remove.
- 1/3 cup white rice
- One onion
- One carrot
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste or tomato ketchup
- Salt, black ground pepper, bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons sour cream (or any kind of dressing)

In a small pot cook rice. While it cooks, grind meat. Mix cool meat with rice.

In the frying pan put olive oil, shredded carrots and sliced small pieces of onion. Fry until slightly golden brown. Mix with ground beef and rice. Add salt, pepper, fresh basil leaf (or dried) and put this mixture aside.

Carefully separate cabbage leaves. Put them in a wide pot. Pour boiling water over the leaves. Cover and let stand about 7–8 minutes. Remove leaves and let cool. Carefully flatten stalk of each cabbage leaf to the thickness of the leaves.

On prepared leaves put already prepared meat mixture. Roll up as an envelope. Carefully place in frying pan. Fry them slightly.

In the sauce pan pour tomato paste or ketchup, 1 cup water, and (if you don’t keep Kosher), add 2 tablespoons sour cream or any kind of dressing (I prefer Vidalia sweet dressing). Boil mixture for a few minutes.

In a deep skillet or wide-sized pot, place previously fried stuffed cabbage leaves. Pour prepared sauce over them and simmer for about 40 minutes.
GOULASH - ELIZABETH’S GULYASH with meat and mushrooms
This is definitely a main dish item. Elizabeth says you can use sour cream in place of the Vidalia dressing, her preferred dressing. She says this is fast, tasty and easy to prepare.
Preparation time: 15 minutes. Cooking time: 35 minutes.

Ingredients:
1 pound chicken breast or beef brisket
8 ounces mushrooms
Salt and pepper by taste
1 medium yellow onion
bay leaf, basil
1 clove garlic
1 tablespoon flour
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons sour cream or any kind of dressing (I prefer Vidalia onion dressing)

Cut meat into chunks, 0.5 in. wide by 1 inch long. Combine flour, salt, and pepper. Dip meat chunks in flour mixture. Fry meat chunks about 5 – 7 minutes in olive oil. Remove meat. In the same pan, fry onion with mushrooms. Add 1/2 cup of water, Vidalia onion dressing, basil, bay leaf and bring to a boil. Combine meat mixture with mushroom mixture. Cook for about 10 -15 minutes. At the end of cooking, if you like garlic, add a clove to mixture. For garnish you can use mashed potatoes, vermicelli, or rice.

SWISS STRUDEL
This is a dessert recipe, one in which Elizabeth uses her favorite marmalade, orange. Occasionally, though, she sometimes uses apricot marmalade.

Ingredients for dough:
4 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup vegetable oil
3 3/4 cups flour

Ingredients for filling:
1 cup raisins
1/4 cup walnuts or pecans
6 tablespoons preserves or marmalade (orange or apricot)
cinnamon

dough

In a bowl beat eggs and sugar until creamy. Pour in oil, then add flour. Mix it and then put it in the refrigerator for one hour or more. It is easier to work the dough when it is cool. Before taking out the dough from the refrigerator, warm oven to 350 degrees. On well-floured area, divide dough into 3 parts and roll into rectangles 6x10 inches. For each rectangle, spread 2 tablespoons marmalade on dough. Add raisins or cranberries, orange or lemon zest (some skin shaved from the outer rind), nuts and cinnamon. Then roll it very delicately on “desk” or countertop because dough is very soft. Carefully place it on parchment lined cookie sheet that has been slightly greased with butter. Place in oven and bake until golden brown, about 35-40 minutes. Slice when ready to serve.
**SPONGE RULET**

*Elizabeth makes this recipe with less sugar than the recipe calls for because Matvey is diabetic. It works just as well with less sugar. Marina brought this recipe home from her French teacher at Walnut Hills High School and asked Elizabeth to make it for the family. Elizabeth says you can use either orange marmalade or apricot marmalade or a combination of the two if you don’t have enough of one kind.*

**Ingredients:**
8 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 heaping teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
orange marmalade (18 ounce jar)
powdered sugar (small amount)

Separate egg whites. In a glass bowl whip egg whites. A pinch of salt helps to make the consistency creamier. Add approximately 1/2 half cup sugar slowly. When egg whites do not drop from the spoon, then they are ready to use. It looks like cream.

In another bowl, whip egg yolks. Add remaining half the sugar in small amounts so mixture will become more capacious or fuller. When it gets slightly white in color, add flour, 1/4 heaping teaspoon baking powder and vanilla. Mix together until smooth. With spoon, add whipped egg white mixture very carefully into the yolk mixture.

Preheat over to 350 degrees.

Line large baking sheet with parchment paper and grease with butter. Pour prepared mix onto pan and spread evenly, then bake about 7-10 minutes. Remove from oven. Cool, then turn it upside down onto new parchment paper. Elizabeth uses her “desk” for this, the one pictured earlier with the rolling pin, covered with parchment paper. Remove parchment paper from bottom (now the top) of the sponge cake.

Optional: Occasionally Elizabeth spreads a thin layer of Cool Whip on the cake prior to adding the preserves. This layer looks like she is buttering toast. Her sister Sophia told her that the Extra Creamy Cool Whip adds something special. It makes the cake moister and richer. Spread with thin layer of marmalade or jam. Roll it up very delicately lengthwise. Don’t be surprised if you see some cracks in the sponge cake. Sprinkle powdered sugar on top of roll. Wrap rulet in the same parchment paper to keep the rulet in log/cylindrical shape. Cut pieces about 1/2 inch per slice. “Depends how stingy you are,” adds Elizabeth.

On the following page are photos of Elizabeth’s process of making Sponge Rulet step by step. First she breaks the eggs, whites in one bowl, yolks in another bowl. Next, flour waits in her metal bowl from Russia. Elizabeth shows how stiff the egg whites must be. Next is her “desk” or plywood board where she will place the baked sponge rulet. The third row shows the top of the baked cake, then the bottom of the cake. The last two photos show the rolled up cake with Elizabeth sprinkling on powdered sugar, then two pieces of the finished product.
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