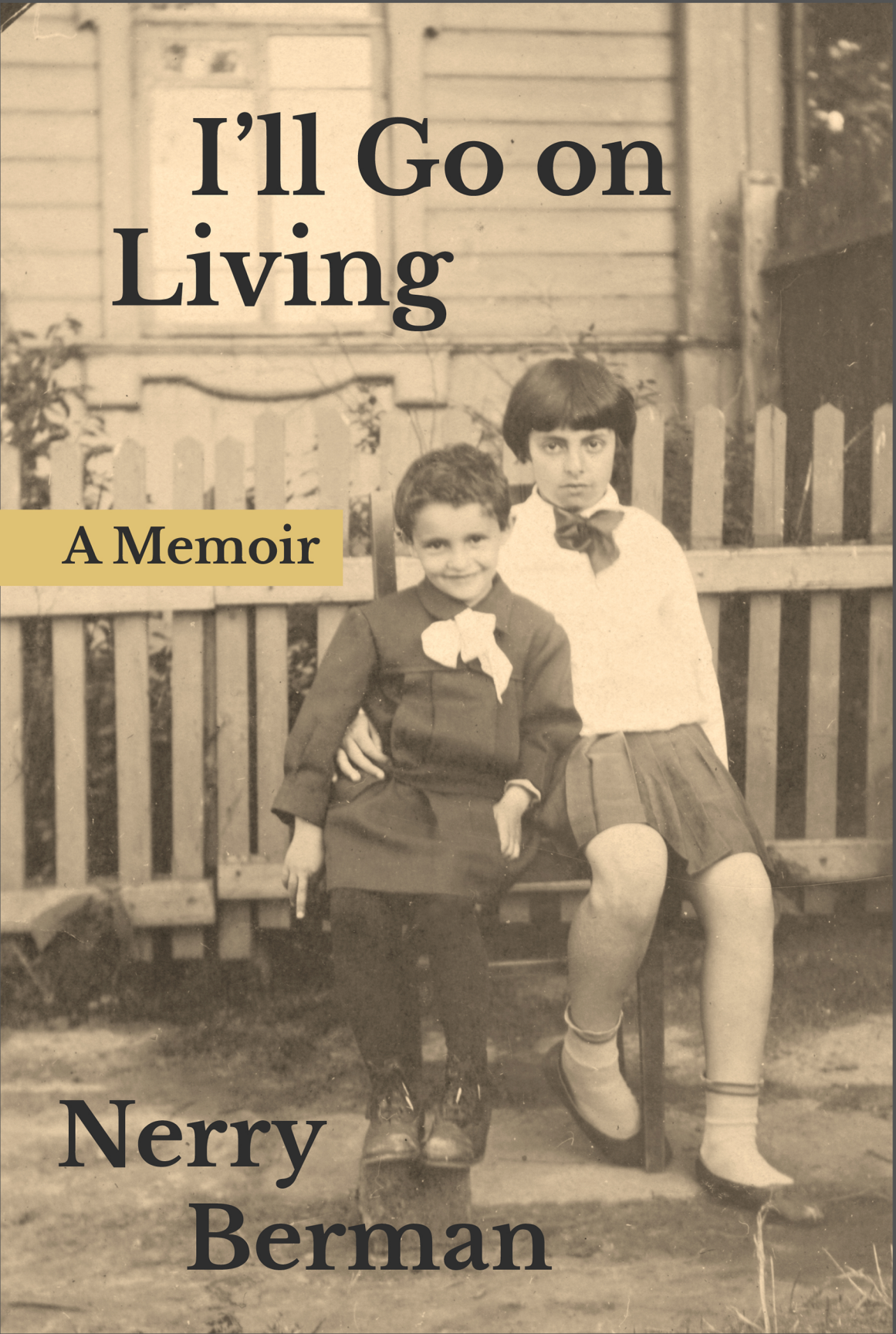
I'll Go on Living

A Memoir



Nerry Berman

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I’ll Go on Living

Nerry Berman

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“He was only 21. He had been through so much, but he had no one to share it with.

I could feel the war ending. The entire frontline of troops had already crossed the border. It was getting darker, and fireworks had started in honor of the latest victory.

Joseph’s main motivation was the following: ‘This is it. I am so physically tired, so emotionally tired, that whenever this horror ends, I am going to move very far away and marry a cow. I don’t want university, civilization, or loud city life; I want nothing.’

This shocked me. I started to hotly, and probably not very logically, tell him he could not forget about his duty to his parents or bury his talent.

...

Suddenly, he turned to me and said, “You are saying many good words. But could you marry me right now? As I have nothing, the war is going on, and the future is a complete uncertainty.”

I responded, ‘Yes.’

It was not love, or even infatuation. I did not even like him when we met. He was only a little taller than I was, a little slouchy, and not too athletic. He was in a plain soldier’s uniform with rubber boots, even though it was the end of July. Not a romantic hero. But intuitively, I felt that if I answered evasively or turned the conversation into a joke or an argument it would only convince him further that there was nothing holy left in the world, that there was only awfulness.

Absolutely calmly, he said, ‘Well then, I guess I’ll go on living to prove to you I’m still capable of something.’”

Nerry Berman

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FOREWORD

By the time my grandmother Nerry Berman recorded her memoirs, she was already in her 80s. I received a copy of her handwritten notes and browsed through them quickly. My father Mark eventually typed them in Russian, the language Nerry used to communicate. These recorded memories remained untouched for years because, after all, what could be that interesting about my grandmother: a quiet, introspective, and rather solitary person?

One day however, my curious son Benjamin said, "Let's translate these memories into English."

And then, something like a miracle happened. As Ben and I began translating and editing her work, Nerry's stories and the people in them came to life. It soon became impossible to put the memories away.

"This reads like a epic drama," said Ben, then barely finished with Nerry's first chapter.

And it did! Betrayal, murder, narrow escapes, illness, hardship, but also loyalty, friendship, humor, survival, and perseverance filled Nerry's pages. Each new story made me feel like I was present, even if merely as an observer, in the lives of long-gone family members totally unaware of my existence.

What I regret most is not getting to know my grandparents Nerry and Joseph a bit better. They met under the hardest of circumstances, in Russia in the middle of WWII. It was the point at which Joseph felt the most bleak and hopeless. They somehow found

the strength to build a life together, bound by profound love and friendship. They shared the crucial value of helping people who needed it, without being asked to. We, their descendants, are here because they chose love. They chose to go on living. For this, I am forever grateful and inspired. I hope you will join me in celebrating the journey of life imbued in these pages.

Elena Antonetti, 2025

PART ONE

The Ancestry of the Bermans

12/10/1999

For two days, I unsuccessfully tried to find my previous notes. It looks like I have to start over.

What am I trying to remember? Everything. Everything I witnessed in my family, and everything I heard from my relatives. Everything I was told by Joseph, his mother, Aunt Taniya, and Gisya and Olga Desyatnik.

The only thing we know for sure about the origin of our family is that one of the Berman ancestors was a cantonist[1] named Grigory. He served for twenty-five years, returned to his hometown, and got married. Because of this, Grigory earned the right to live outside the Jewish ghetto, and his descendants were gifted the right to an education and a trade. He had only one son, named Abraham, though Abraham might have been an adopted orphan who lost his parents. At any rate, Abraham too had the right to an education: he attended the Odessa Railway Academy.

Abraham Berman became the first Jewish train operator in the entirety of the southwest Russian railway system. For an exceptional dedication to his work (a.k.a. his lack of accidents), he received several medals and a Swiss watch with his initials. He was even

[1] Jewish boys conscripted into the military in 19th-century Czarist Russia. Their service often featured starvation, corporal punishment, and pressure to convert to Christianity.

instructed to conduct the Czar's train from Berzula to Odessa when the Czar's family traveled from St. Petersburg to visit Crimea. There was no railway directly to Crimea at that time.

Abraham's salary was 300 rubles in gold per year. For reference, a live chicken at the time sold for five kopeks.[2] He also received a conductor's uniform, a suit, a warm jacket, and a pair of boots.

Inside the conductor's cabin there were no side windows. The only unobstructed view was of the tracks in front of the train. While Abraham worked, he constantly felt the heat of a scalding hot furnace on his back.

Abraham never drank alcohol and observed Jewish customs. If he had to drive the train on Shabbat, which was prohibited in Judaism, he brought a flat metal box filled with water, which he stood on for the entire trip.[3]

The Berman family was respected in town, particularly Abraham. The houses were officially numbered, but unofficially named after their owners. After Abraham's death, the house was transferred to a young conductor by the name of Lutenko. However, the house continued to be called "Berman's House." Lutenko's son Grigory shared this with me, having been born in that house in 1915. When we moved to Odessa after WWII, Grigory Lutenko was head of the ministry of the Odessa-Kishinev Railway. It was a prestigious position, and Grigory helped our family because he remembered all the good things his dad told him about the late Abraham. Initially, he helped Abraham's son Moses Berman, and eventually my husband Joseph Berman and me.

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[2] There are 100 kopeks in a ruble, making Abraham's yearly salary the equivalent of 6,000 chickens.

[3] When faced with no choice but to violate Shabbat, a water barrier was a symbolic separation for observant Jews.

Abraham married a woman named Tuba Horovitz. She was taller than her husband, and plumper too. She loved to eat well. As Aunt Taniya recounted, Tuba shopped at the farmers' market on Wednesday and Friday. The procession home consisted of Madame Tuba Berman carrying two to three hens in each hand, followed by a young Ukrainian girl with a giant wicker basket filled to the brim with produce.

When they got home, they usually started a samovar for tea. While the samovar was coming to a boil, Tuba would manage to clean a herring, cut an onion, slice a piece of fresh bread, and eat the entire herring by herself.

We don't have any information on the dates of Tuba's birth or her death. It seems like she lived in Odessa before she got married, given her brother Anatoliy lived there after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Anatoliy's daughter Valentina Lvovna, now Valentina Mednikov, and Tuba's other brother Zahar Horovitz lived there too.

Abraham and Tuba had four sons and a daughter. In order of age, they were named Moses, David, Tsala, Zahar, and their youngest, Basheva.

Basheva was her dad's favorite, and Abraham left a large sum of money for her marriage dowry. Unfortunately, Basheva's life turned out to be a tragedy.

Basheva fell in love with a beautiful young pharmacist named Julius Bratslaver. He married her because of the dowry so he could buy an apothecary[4] in the large village of Razdolina (near Nikolaev). Their apartment was in the same building as the apothecary, separated by a foyer. In 1917 they had a son named Abraham Vov, later changed to "Vladimir" unofficially, as he remained Abraham Vov in official

[4] A historical term referring to a shop that sold medicine.

documents. In 1919, they had a daughter named Tuba, who went by Tatiana or Taniya.

Julius had an affair with his assistant. She decided to "get rid of" Basheva so she could marry Julius herself. So, she came up with the idea of poisoning Basheva.

One day, Julius's assistant jumped on a moment when Basheva left her kitchen while cooking borsch for dinner. The mistress added poison to the soup, thinking Basheva would try it before she poured some for her husband, as any "good wife" would do. However, upon returning to the kitchen, Basheva poured borsch into two bowls ready to be served. The husband and wife started eating together, shortly before falling dead.

There was a trial, and their children were sent to an orphanage. Not a single relative was present at the trial or the funeral. It was 1921, a very unstable time in Ukraine, and no one was able to make the trip.

Zahar was Abraham and Tuba's youngest son. He graduated from the operations division of the Odessa Railway Academy and then worked at the Odessa Railway Ministry across several positions. He stayed in Odessa his entire life and left only during the Nazi occupation. He married quite late (after 40), but always maintained the habits of a young bachelor. He was pedantic, loved reading, and collected an extensive library after the war. However, he hated lending his books out.

Zahar decided not to have any children of his own. Still, he loved kids and devoted a lot of attention to his brother David's children, Buma and Jenya. They also lived in Odessa. When his sister Basheva died, Zahar accompanied his older brother Moses's wife to take Basheva's kids from the orphanage. He initially took his nephew into his home, but after some time, Julius's parents took the boy to live with them in Nemirov. Zahar still supported his nephew financially. After finishing his required schooling, his nephew spent a significant

amount of time at Zahar's house before leaving Odessa to enroll in a military communications school.

After the war, Zahar worked as a dispatcher for commercial transportation in Odessa. He treated it as his categorical duty to visit his older brother Moses at least twice a week.

David's family also returned to Odessa after the war. Zahar and his wife were particularly close to them. They took part in nearly all of their family affairs and devoted special attention to Jenya and her five-year-old son Valya.

Zahar's pedantic and particular nature showed even in how he dressed. He often wore nothing besides his railway uniform. When I poured him a bowl of soup, I had to pour it all the way to the brim of the bowl, but I could never add more. The same was true for his tea.

As soon as we had my son Mark and my daughter Rina, Zahar visited us every day before and after work to check on them and make sure everything was okay. We could set our clocks to the schedule of his visits. He walked all the way to work, even though it was a far trip: from Babel Street to Tovarnoy Station at Moldavanka.

For the majority of his life, Zahar was never sick, aside from the occasional cold. That was until one day in 1950, when he came back from work, had dinner, laid down to rest, and never woke up again.

I met Zahar's wife Berta (also known as Betya) Moiseyevna Zinger in Odessa in 1946. She was the head of the daycare for the NKVD, the People's Committee for Internal Affairs. She likely worked there before the war. I believe that after it began, she evacuated the entire daycare and returned again with everyone safely. The daycare was in a residential house on the second floor of Building Number Two on Babel Street. Across from the daycare, there was a communal apartment with a single room where Zahar and Betya lived. That room had three big windows facing the street. Later on, Betya and Zahar separated out a portion of the room to turn it into a bedroom.

They eventually carved out another portion from the original room to form a hallway.

After Zahar passed, a woman named Klara moved in with Betya. She was the widow of Betya's only brother, who died during the war. Klara's son had just gotten married, so Klara gave the newlyweds her only room and moved in with Betya. Klara and her son were Betya's only remaining blood relatives.

Betya was a friendly face in the Berman family. She was particularly close to David and his family since they had known each other before the war.

Many Berman family members came to ask Betya for help and advice. She watched over Jenya's first son Valya in her daycare. When Jenya had her second son, he was named Sasha in honor of Betya's older brother. Betya also helped place my children Mark and Rina in a nursery. It was very hard to arrange, because I did not work at the time, but I still needed at least two hours per day to continue my studies at the university. Mark turned three that January, so we had to wait until then to leave him at daycare. By the end of the year, Betya placed Mark and later Rina in the daycare on Risheliyevskaya (Lenin) Street. It was on the second floor of the building, directly below a book and stationary store. This was the same daycare Aunt Betya recommended Taniya work for when she returned to Odessa after the evacuation.

We visited Aunt Betya often, until we moved to Gomel. She started getting ill near the end of her life and was forced to retire from work. Those years were also laden with heavy Jewish persecution.

There were many fights among the residents at Betya's communal apartment. Her communal kitchen was the backdrop for several "scandals."[5] Thus, she completely stopped using the kitchen and

[5] Rather than describe a shocking social incident, a "scandal" was a common way to describe a screaming fight.

relied on a tiny hot plate in her hall to cook. Klara too became ill and would not get up from her bed for months on end. Klara's son stopped by to bring her food periodically.

Betya's main helper and loyal friend was one of her neighbors. She lived down the hall and to the right from Aunt Betya in a two-room apartment. She was older and barely literate. She did not speak Russian well because she grew up in a rural Ukrainian village. Her husband, an officer in the NKVD, was the reason she ended up in Odessa. She had three grown children.

Betya talked her into working as a nanny at the daycare, where she would work until she retired. This neighbor was extremely dedicated to Aunt Betya. In the early 1960s, the government started granting separate apartments to some fortunate people. This allowed the neighbor's husband to receive a three-room apartment in the Tairov district in Odessa's outskirts. The neighbor categorically refused to move for two reasons: it was already hard for her to take the tram and to walk, and she could not leave Betya.

Betya was hospitalized with high blood pressure in the late 1960s. We visited her at the hospital, but when she passed, we heard word of the funeral too late. When we finally made it to Tairov cemetery to find where she was buried, the graveyard workers were so drunk that we never managed to find out where her grave was.

Tsala was the third boy in the family. Like his father, he graduated from the Odessa Railway Academy. He worked as an auditor at the railway, got married, and had a son and a younger daughter named Taniya. Tsala audited small services along the railway track. Over the period of Soviet Collectivization from 1932–1934 and the starvation that followed, he contracted typhus. By the time he returned home, he died. His wife passed before World War II, possibly by contracting the disease from him. His son also died during the war.

A young woman came to us one day after we settled in Odessa in 1945. She resembled Tsala's daughter Taniya. She was dressed more than humbly—actually quite poorly. I was absent from her first conversation with my mother-in-law. I only remember that we fed her and gave her some clothes before she left.

I remember that she said that her parents were dead, and she knew nothing about her brother's fate. She said that during the evacuation she lost track of her brother. She rented a corner of a room in the outskirts of Odessa. The woman desperately wanted to find work and was temporarily cleaning apartments, since there were no permanent jobs available. When she left, we discovered that something was missing from the house: one silver spoon. We did not pay much attention to it though and assumed it simply fell into the garbage.

The woman returned sometime later. When my mother-in-law left the room, I peered down the hall and saw her pocketing a children's toy. I alerted my mother-in-law. She asked the woman to return it and remarked that it was something she did not even need. The woman started crying and admitted she was a kleptomaniac. She said that was the reason she could not work anywhere. She never came over again, but we tried to find her. We did not know her address or last name, and on top of that, she likely took her mother's maiden name, even if she was the real Taniya. We never found her or heard from her again.

David Abramovich Berman was the second son of Abraham Berman. He was born in 1885 and died in 1963. Like all of the Berman boys of the time, David studied at the Odessa Railway Academy. He was a welder who specialized in welding the connections between train cars.

In 1907, he had to serve in the military. After his service, he returned to Odessa but was refused his previous job. It's possible he avoided even trying to get it back. He was married then and helping his father-in-law with his store. After the revolution, it became more

and more likely that the small shop would be expropriated. David became a belt craftsman and began dabbling in gold and foreign currency speculation.

Officers of the CheKa, or the Special Committee Egregious Crime Unit, searched David and his belongings twice by the end of the 1920s. The first time, they found gold hidden in the upper portion of his wood stove, took it, and left. The second time they found nothing but arrested him regardless. They told his wife that unless she delivered a ransom, he would never come back. She grabbed all the gold she could find in the hiding place, paid it, and he was released.

David's wife Leah, or Lisa Shaya, never worked. According to the family, she was a gorgeous woman with great posture. She had blue eyes and blonde hair. Aunt Lisa was born in 1891 and died in 1951 at sixty years of age. I met her for the first time in 1946, but even then, I could see the traces of her former beauty. Her hair was completely gray, but she was still trim and still had her bright blue eyes.

While David and Moses were close, their wives were distant. Their origins, upbringing, and attitudes towards life were far too different. Moses's wife, my Grandmother Katya, did not respect Lisa. This meant Lisa only came to our house when it was absolutely necessary.

One episode, from the winter of 1945, sticks out in my mind. We had just moved to a barely furnished apartment on Uspenskaya Street. I was utterly sick and seven months pregnant, so I barely left the house. Grandmother Katya kindly handled all the household chores. David, Lisa, their daughter Jenya, and Jenya's son Valya (born in 1941 during the evacuation) had returned to Odessa. They all lived together, as the apartment that Jenya was planning to occupy was not ready yet. Lisa, Jenya, and little Valya (resembling Lisa more than his brunette parent), came to our house. They asked to leave the boy for a couple of hours as they ran an errand.

I took Valya to the courtyard, fed him, and put him to sleep. When he woke up it was after three in the morning and his parents were nowhere to be found. We waited together for another two hours.

"They must have forgotten about me," he blurted out. "If they don't come, don't give them back their soup pot."

His parents had left a soup pot along with him when they dropped him off. I was surprised the little boy never cried or asked to go home. He simply decided that he must have been abandoned.

I learned from family stories that David's wife Lisa loved to go out, dance, and eat at restaurants, as long as it was at someone else's expense. She was rather frugal herself. My father-in-law, Moses Abramovich, similarly loved to eat well. He frequently came to Odessa on business and ate at a restaurant each time he visited his brother. This was because his brother and his wife were not particularly generous hosts. If they served cutlets, they were small. If they served potatoes, each guest would have a single medium-sized serving. The potato was quite an expensive, rare treat in Odessa at the time. Lisa also loved to dress well. She passed her taste for well-made clothes and shoes to her daughter. They made a point of only wearing Italian-made shoes bought directly from the city's sailors.

David and Lisa had another son in 1913 named Abraham (and known as Buma). The kids were raised in a relatively well-off household. They never heard the word "no," and none of their many whims were denied. They were not keen on studying, but there were other factors at play. They had little-to-no hope of getting accepted to a higher learning institution, primarily because they were Jewish. Worse yet, they did not come from a true proletariat upbringing. After Buma completed his mandatory seven years of school, he was accepted to a nursing program as a clinical lab assistant. He married before the war.

Buma was drafted to serve in the army as a "Junior Lieutenant" during the war. His wife and their baby, meanwhile, evacuated to Tashkent. Buma was in touch with her for some time, but after the war, he stopped trying to find her. The fate of the little baby and his wife are still unknown.

Buma lived with his parents and another woman in Odessa after his discharge. It is unclear if this woman, Sofa, was his official wife, but she was intelligent and lovely. She worked as a senior accountant at the university and ostensibly supported Buma and his parents. Buma had an adventurous, free-spirited personality which made it hard for him to hold down a job. Sometimes Buma disliked the work itself, and other times he disliked the compensation. One of these jobs involved fixing ballpoint pens, one of which we used for a long period of time, with special fonts.

Buma contracted tuberculosis from Jenya's husband around the mid-1950s. The disease deteriorated his bones. He was hospitalized repeatedly and endured multiple surgeries before he was classified with a "third degree" disability. This level netted only a tiny pension, and he was limited to jobs that involved light work. He started drinking heavily. With the additional burden of his drinking, he was fired.

After this ordeal, Buma entangled himself in a small speculation business. Sofa also unexpectedly died of a heart condition after we moved to Gomel. Buma exchanged his room in his dad's apartment for one in the Cheryomushky district. He sometimes visited to borrow money when we lived on Perekopskoy Division Street. From what I remember, he never paid us back. At least they were small sums.

One day, Buma came to borrow five-thousand rubles we simply did not have. When we refused, he became morbidly offended and started a fight. He screamed, "I will never come back!" and that he no longer had a brother.

A woman named Janna took care of Buma after Sofa's death. She visited Uncle David and Aunt Batiya in addition to helping Jenya. Buma chose not to make his relationship with Janna official and never married her. She would end up alone. Volodya Bratslaver often visited Janna, since he lived with his family in the Cheryomushky area.

Volodya's wife Raya constantly cooked and sent food to Buma. In spite of outside help, he was unable to take care of himself nor give up drinking. He died in 1983.

Buma asked Joseph to visit him just before his death. Joseph was heartbroken about their familial separation, as he tried to help each and every relative. Buma's deep feelings of insult were not truly justified, pushing him to ask Joseph to see him. After Moses died, this then-youngest member of the Berman clan emerged as its head. Many relatives would come to Joseph for advice and to resolve their intrafamily disputes, which David, his kids, and their respective spouses had in abundance.

I do not know what they talked about, but when he returned Joseph admitted, "I don't understand why Buma needed that meeting."

I wonder: what is the right way to narrate the lives of each Berman family member? How can I discern who is a part of the family, and who is merely a "close" person, a trusted companion, but not truly related by blood?

I should probably describe David's daughter Jenya, which means turning the narrative back to David. Better yet: why not trace their lives together?

Jenya was born in 1920. As the youngest child, and as a girl, she was spoiled. Her childhood coincided with the years of NEP,[6] so her

[6] The New Economic Policy, proposed by Lenin in 1921, led to the private ownership of previously public industries. It was intended as a temporary

household had plenty of money to go around. She married a man named Misha Braver the moment she finished school.

Misha was about two years her senior and entrepreneurial. People in Odessa knew him as a "maher".[7] His younger brother suffered from a hidden form of tuberculosis and died young. At the time of this writing, Misha is still alive somewhere in America.

When I met Misha in 1945, he and Jenya moved to a strange, Moorish-style house on Rishelyevskoy Street right above the Korolenko cinema. It featured a bizarre-looking hallway with a kitchen and a small attic room on one end, along with a window the size of a wall, which faced the street. Thanks to his work as a construction foreman, Misha had access to building materials that were in high demand on the black market. He took private requests "under the table." Almost daily, Misha and Jenya's friends gathered to smoke and play cards until morning. It helped that Jenya was a socialite who could afford to sleep until noon. Their son Valya, meanwhile, spent most of his time with his grandparents. He went to daycare with Aunt Betya and sometimes spent the night there when he was older.

Long before his death, Joseph often visited Odessa during school vacations. We visited Jenya and Misha a lot at first, but we eventually stopped. Joseph never played cards, and we had different interests. Eventually, he also had kids of his own who needed attention.

Misha's superiors eventually caught him "misplacing" a lot of building materials. His father covered some losses, but crucially, Misha bribed the right people. Misha faced only three years in jail.

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retreat from full socialism to revive the Soviet economy after the devastation of World War I and the Russian Revolution.

[7] From Yiddish, meaning a "wheeler-dealer". That is, one who is slick, street smart, and constantly coming up with new schemes.

After the first year, he lived outside the prison to help with his tuberculosis, settling somewhere in Siberia.

Jenya left her children to join her husband. Valya and his brother Shurik, born in 1948, lived with Jenya's parents. Jenya and Misha moved to Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, since Misha was barred from returning to Odessa.

Jenya worked as a receptionist at a tailor shop before switching to accounting. Misha disliked his new, more humble way of life and moved to Moscow to "get lost in the crowd". He promised Jenya that he would come back for her and their children as soon as he settled. She soon learned that he had another woman in Moscow.

Jenya returned to Odessa, and Misha's father helped her with money for a while. By that time, Uncle David, widowed from Aunt Lisa in 1960, had a stroke. He struggled to walk and move his leg, but still took exceptional care of Jenya's kids. Unfortunately, the boys grew up with little discipline. They were like street hooligans; in constant conflicts with their schoolteachers which were ultimately settled by Uncle David. Uncle David soon asked Joseph to convince Misha to return and take care of his family.

We eventually found Misha during one of our trips to Moscow with Joseph. His new unofficial wife, a good-looking, blonde divorcée, received us well. She had two boys of her own and lived with Misha in two rooms in a communal apartment.

They talked, but nothing Joseph said to Misha helped. Back in Odessa, Joseph told Jenya that it was no use. He said Misha was a scumbag she should rid herself of. However, the family soon decided that Misha had to return the valuables he took from Tbilisi. Joseph and Misha met one or two more times, but Misha never returned to Odessa. Soon, he filed a formal divorce from Jenya.

Joseph accompanied Jenya to Moscow to help recoup some of the money and valuables to support her children. At the time, Misha

relied on his new wife for support, only to leave the blonde to marry a Jewish woman later on. His final marriage was to a nurse he met after he left Russia for America. From there, I have no idea what he did.

Jenya also remarried. Her new husband's name was Tolya, a divorcé from Nikolayev who had moved to Odessa for various reasons. Tolya gave Valya a small room just before he was about to be married himself and moved in with Jenya and Shurik.

Tolya helped Valya and Shurik with finding jobs, given his prestigious position in a ministry which oversaw local industries. Unfortunately, Jenya and Tolya's marriage was short-lived, as Tolya died unexpectedly while fishing with his superiors.

After Valya's wedding, he began working as a jeweler. Because he dealt with gold, Valya got into legal trouble and was arrested. His wife Luba invested all her efforts into helping him escape his trial, and Valya was let go on the condition that he never work with precious metals again.

After the U.S.S.R. began allowing Americans to visit their Russian relatives, Misha returned. He came back to bring his father with him to the States, but his father's severe illness halted his plans. Even though he promised to bring his sons back too, he never honored his word. Instead, Jenya discovered an opportunity for her and her sons to move to Israel.

Valya immediately started preparing to emigrate, but Jenya was worried and set against moving. Valya swore he would not leave without her, and with Joseph's help, they eventually left for Israel in 1978.

Shurik married a woman named Faina in 1970, on the day she turned eighteen. Soon thereafter, they had a daughter named Flora. By the time Flora was three or four, Shurik walked out on them to live alone. He said he wanted to "live for himself." Just before Valya

left for Israel, his friend married Faina and adopted her daughter. The three of them left for San Francisco. Sadly, Valya's friend died from lung cancer in the summer of 1999. By 1979, Shurik, his new wife Ira, and her parents emigrated to New York, where they had a son and a daughter.

Jenya and Valya eventually left Israel to come to America. They settled in Newark. Jenya found a boyfriend and spent a lot of time with him in Brooklyn for a number of years. This happened to be where Shurik lived in New York. Jenya also spent a lot of time with her grandkids. Each summer, she took her eldest grandkid to a place called "The Russian Resort." Today, she lives in Newark and has since split up with her boyfriend.

Thus far I have written about all of Abraham Berman's children except the oldest: Moses. Before I continue though, I want to write about Basheva's son.

Abraham Vov, born in 1916, used the nickname Volodya. He was orphaned before his fifth birthday and lived in the orphanage. After a year and a half, Uncle Zahar took him in. Volodya spent his childhood with Zahar or with his father Julius's parents in Nemirov. Uncle Zahar supported all of them financially.

Volodya moved to Odessa to study communications after finishing his required schooling. But by eighteen, he instead enrolled in military school, where his life began to completely revolve around the army. He married a Jewish girl before the war, and they had a child. Volodya served in the army for the entirety of World War II, jumping off of planes as a paratrooper countless time. He even continued to serve in the military after the war as a Lieutenant Colonel.

After the war, he visited his wife's hometown to find her. Her neighbors told him that everyone in the ghetto had perished. He met a Ukrainian school friend of his deceased wife while visiting her

hometown. They ended up marrying and moving across various army bases. They had two girls together.

Volodya and his second wife moved to Kyiv to complete special training for six months, beginning in the summer of 1958. At that time, he corresponded with his sister Taniya in Odessa, who gave him our address in Gomel. Since we visited Kyiv frequently, Joseph decided we should see him. We sent him my grandmother's former address on Uritskiy Street where Aunt Reva, Uncle Shika, his wife Ghenya, and their daughters Eda and Ilya lived. Volodya visited them more and more, in no small part because he did not know anyone else in Kyiv. Still, he could only leave the army base on Sundays. One Sunday, Joseph and I visited grandmother's former apartment, and I met Volodya for the first time. Volodya became a Lieutenant Colonel after his training and left for Penza, where he was granted a nice three-room apartment.

Soon enough, the army underwent massive layoffs, and the Jews were the first to go. Volodya was discharged. However, because he served for over twenty-five years (over thirty including World War II), he received a substantial pension. This did not save him from intrafamilial disagreements, which led his wife to file for divorce. The pair never argued over dividing their common property. Instead, Volodya took only a few of his personal belongings and moved in with his sister in Odessa.

His sister Taniya, her husband, and her sick mother-in-law occupied two connected rooms in a shared communal apartment. This meant Volodya had essentially nowhere to stay. He would spend nights at Uncle David's or at Buma's. His only solution was to marry someone with a proper, registered apartment and then find a job.

Buma introduced Volodya to a woman eleven years younger than him. She was long divorced and lived with her son Sasha. Buma knew her through some of his business contacts. She worked in the liquor department of a store.

Volodya married her. Her official name was Rayza, but she went by Raya. She was only fourteen when the war started, the oldest in a family with two other girls, Hannah and Bettya. Their father was drafted, and their mother did not manage to evacuate quickly enough. Raya's mother and the girls walked on foot to a small village where a Ukrainian woman hid them from the Nazis. When the Romanians came to the village, the Ukrainian woman said Raya's mother was her relative while she hid the girls. After Odessa was liberated, the family returned to find their apartment vandalized. Their house was on the brink of collapse.

After Raya's father was discharged, he returned with a new wife. He lived separately from them, but he still helped his old family. Her father worked as the head of the Odessa market's meat department. In Odessa, the job was both highly respected and highly profitable. Raya managed to finish her required schooling before the war and worked to help her mother and sisters. She married her first husband at nineteen and had a son named Sasha.

When Sasha was three or four, his father left Odessa under threat of imprisonment. He resurfaced in Tashkent after a few years and filed for divorce, sending child support irregularly.

When Volodya joined the family, Sasha immediately accepted him. They always maintained a strong relationship. Whenever Sasha and his mom fought, Volodya took Sasha's side. Sasha even called Volodya "Batia," the Ukrainian word for dad. Not long before Volodya joined his new family, it underwent two significant changes. Raya's sister Bettya got married, while her sister Hannah died. This led Raya's mother to fall ill with grief.

As a military veteran, Volodya led the Communist Party organization at the factory. The business was too small for his position to include a salary, so he worked as an electrician on the side. Raya continued working at the store, but during one routine audit, her department was accused of stealing products. She was pregnant during the

investigation but decided not to have an abortion. She spent a year and a half in jail, where she gave birth to her daughter Suzanna.

Raya worked at the rubber goods factory as an assembly-line shoe-cutter after returning home. Volodya forbade her from going back to retail. Sasha helped his parents raise his sister Suzanna by babysitting her frequently. After Suzanna got older, he began bringing her to daycare and picking her up each day. Eventually, the family managed to get a two-room apartment on Cheryomushky Street. I still have a photo of it, but the year it was taken is unclear. The apartment is likely Taniya's, since she is in some of the pictures, and I am standing to the side. Volodya, or Vova as I called him, was the one who took the picture.

Sasha was a poor student, barely finishing tenth grade and immediately leaving school to work. He married very early, and not very successfully. He married a woman named Rina when she was a second year in university. They were the same age and grew up in the same grade at school.

After their son was born, Sasha and Rina started fighting. Soon enough, they divorced. Sasha married a second time and immigrated to America with his wife's family. He was involved in some kind of business in America. It's unclear what exactly, but it allowed him to visit Odessa when he got the opportunity. He visited us and begged his parents to join him in the States, but they refused. He accepted their decision but asked them to at least not interfere with Suzanna's.

They agreed, and Sasha immediately sent for Suzanna, her husband, his parents, and her two sons to join him. Thus, their entire family immigrated to New York, where Suzanna gave birth to her third son. The family sent for Volodya and Raya one final time, but Volodya fell ill and passed away in 1993. Raya finally moved in with Suzanna in New York but died the following year.

It is hard for me to write objectively about my relatives without imposing my personal opinions. I also acknowledge I am not following any kind of chronological order by jumping between different time periods. This is a family history, but the people I remember best are the ones I spent the most time with. Frequently, these were not our closest blood relatives.

One great example is my memory of the Mednikov family, whom I felt the closest to out of everyone I knew in Odessa. Pavlik and Anushka Shteingolts were a close second. I would sometimes go months without seeing relatives like Joseph's cousin Jenya. While the two were close over their school years, the connection withered after that. This was why I chose to retell the Berman's family history for a third time. This iteration might not even be the last.

02/02/2000

My daughter Rina visited me today. My daughter-in-law Lucy called afterwards, and my son Mark called twice. Mark played two messages to me from Inessa, and I felt very touched. It is nine o'clock at night, and I have decided to continue writing. To avoid complete and utter confusion, I want to finish the Bermans' story before adding in the other relatives.

As I mentioned, I wrote about all of Abraham Berman's children and grandchildren except for his oldest son, Moses.

Moses Abramovich Berman was born in Odessa in 1883. I have a short, official biographical blurb on Moses from July 14th, 1952. I also have a list of his job titles from his personal work file.

Moses completed his general education at a village school at Berzula station that only taught two grades. Somehow, he studied there for five years. I still have the original completion certificate from 1899. That same year, Moses was accepted into the Odessa Railway Technical School and graduated in 1903. Moses then worked a two-year apprenticeship at the Berzula depot as a welder and assistant

locomotive engineer. He was licensed to drive trains by 1905, as his work and personal life quickly advanced.

At the railway school, Moses met Gitl Tribelskiy. She was born in Balta to a well-off family. Gitl was raised under a strictly Jewish education. She was 16 when she and Moses met.

Moses asked Gitl to marry him after he was promoted to locomotive engineer. However, Gitl's father objected because she was already engaged to someone else. When Gitl and her fiancé's wedding ceremony started, Moses called out Gitl's name and essentially kidnapped her from her own wedding. He came on a coach with three horses and took Gitl, in her wedding dress, to the railway station. They married in a small civil ceremony in Odessa in front of their closest friends. Later on, they had a full ceremony with a rabbi. This romantic story was reported to me by Gitl's cousin Taniya and by Gisya Desyatnik.

Now, a few words about Gitl and her family. Gitl's parents Joseph and Bassya Tribelskiy lived in Balta. Although it was a small town eighteen miles from Berzula, it was the center of Jewish social life and Jewish education in the area. They had a Yeshiva, a Cheder, and a Jewish school for men. Gitl's father Joseph Tribelskiy was respected among this community. He had three children: his oldest daughter Gitl, his son Meir, and his youngest daughter Hannah. Unfortunately, I do not have his other children's pictures.

Gitl knew Yiddish, and she could read and write. She even managed to teach herself Russian. When we met near the end of September 1944, she spoke Russian eloquently, despite being self-taught. She could also write with proper syntax, but her spelling was terrible. She read a lot and knew a lot about literature. In her youth, she sang beautifully.

Before the war, Gitl did not work. Instead, she spent a lot of time involved in the local community. She was a member of a women's committee for many years in Kyiv before becoming its head chair.

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a drive to recruit managers' wives to join the "community" to do unpaid volunteer work. The women's community group performed several functions; they organized daycares and summer camps, inspected the lower-level workers' homelife, collected money to help families with lots of kids, and even sewed clothes and bedding for those kids.

Gitl's brother Meir graduated from university, but I do not know what he did for work. He married a woman whose closest friends were die-hard Zionists and Jabotinsky followers. After Gitl and Moses married, her father refused to see her for many years. Meir, on the other hand, frequently visited her and maintained a friendship with Moses.

I remember one particularly sad episode from their lives. Moses and Meir were trying to please Gitl, swinging her in a hammock while she rested. The hammock broke and she fell on her back. She was pregnant at the time and miscarried from the fall.

In 1899, Meir, his wife Mania, and their eight-month-old daughter escaped to Palestine via Poland. I write about them later in the story.

Now, a few words about Gitl's younger sister Hannah. She was a beautiful and social girl, always surrounded by admirers. She participated in community theater, and she loved to dance. When she was eighteen, Hannah had an ice-cold beer while dancing at a party. She developed a severe sore throat and died two years later. This was potentially from pneumonia complications.

We started calling Gitl "Katya" at some point, but I am not sure exactly when. When we lived together that was what everyone called her, and her real name only ever appeared in official documents.

Katya, or Gitl, was surrounded by people in need from a young age. In fact, she met Moses over a long period of helping her friend Rosa in Odessa. Rosa was widowed at twenty-two, so Katya helped her

raise her four boys and run her tailor shop. Rosa and Katya stayed friends their entire lives. Rosa's oldest son played a big role in the life of Katya's youngest son, Joseph.

Katya was the "boss" of the family. Moses listened to her advice and never did anything against her wishes. She had a strong personality. She was also smart, held balanced views, and was capable of understanding others' motives. She never judged nor forcefully imposed her opinion on others, but she was convincing in her own way. Naturally, she was a big influence on Moses.

After Katya's dad passed away, her mom moved in with her and Moses. In 1915, Katya had a son, and she and Moses hired a nanny. The baby's name was Wolf, but everyone called him Valya. I have a picture of him from when he was two.

Over a turbulent time in 1918, Katya insisted that her family move to Kyiv. Moses soon transferred to the technical department of the southwest railroad ministry on December 1st, 1918. He advanced his career in the ministry and held various engineering and technical management roles. The family received an apartment that was considered more than respectable for those times. The apartment had three rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. It was on the second floor of a nice neighborhood on Lvovskiy Street. Back then, Katya, Moses, Katya's mother, and Valya all lived together.

After Basheva and her husband tragically died, Katya and Zahar found their children Abraham (Volodya) and Tuba (Taniya) in awful conditions in a Nikolaev orphanage. Zahar took the boy to Odessa, and Katya took a sick Taniya to the Kyiv apartment. Katya devoted all her energy to healing little Taniya and bringing her back to life. On February 2nd, 1923, Katya had a boy, named Joseph in memory of her father.

At Katya's insistence, Moses was sent to a special five-year training program for "sophisticated technologies" by the People's Committee for National Railway Systems. He completed the training without

pausing his primary work. In 1929, Moses was promoted to the position of technical specialist for railway systems of the first category, or the highest degree.

In one year, Moses finished his thesis work at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute and became a mechanical engineer of transportation. His career was progressing handsomely. He was a high-level manager of the railway systems, while concurrently leading research and development in construction materials. By the end of the 1930s, Moses led the construction of numerous railroad projects.

In the last years of his life, Moses worked as a technical consultant at the Odessa Railway System. He published seven written works in total. His family of six, including his wife, mother-in-law, two sons, and adopted daughter, did not lack for anything. At the same time, Moses was sweet, kind, and loving. He adored his children and his grandchildren. He took good care of his family, but he was humble with regards to his own needs and spending.

Moses brought home food from outside the city each time he traveled for work. His generous nature did not allow him to buy anything he could not at least share with others in small amounts. After the war, Moses consulted for some time, traveling around the Odessa region. He assisted in the region's restoration and development. Moses took part in building mechanical mills a few times.

Those years were tough, but under Moses' care the family had everything they needed. Moses returned from each business trip with a few twenty-five-kilogram plywood suitcases. They were filled with food, even though no one had refrigerators at the time. Moses was frequently paid with food products, but sometimes he bought them on his own. I once remember marinating and baking an entire ham in the oven with the family.

Moses would usually come home with either live or freshly killed chickens. Katya, the head of assuring everything got used, often scolded, “How will we get rid of all this food?”

Moses also took care of and supported many others outside his family. He was not religious and never received a Jewish education. Nevertheless, he respected others’ views and did not object when his wife and her mother went to the synagogue.

The quintessential Jewish tradition of giving and helping, of course, fostered under Katya’s influence, too. Katya grew up in a religious family and knew Jewish history well. Additionally, her brother Meir was one of the organizers of a Zionist organization in Balta. He was a big influence on Katya. While Katya never worked, she taught herself Russian, read a lot, but, as I mentioned, wrote with a lot of spelling errors. Katya spoke Russian in a sophisticated way, without any accent. Her community work and, before the revolution, charity work, took up a lot of her time. There were often people at the house, mostly women, coming to Katya for advice and support. Unfortunately, there are no pictures of Katya from the 20s or 30s.

During the evacuation, the state mandated that everyone have a job. Katya became a locomotive engineer’s assistant. Her boss was, naturally, Moses. They lived together on the train. I have a photo showing Katya in Odessa wearing a conductor’s uniform. The handwriting on the back is Moses’s.

I learned about Moses and Katya’s lives in Kyiv from Katya’s stories and from Aunt Taniya. I learned that Katya’s oldest son Valya grew into a bright and talented boy. He was the top student at his school. He asked philosophical questions and was the organizer and leader of any group he joined. He was, notably, the secretary of his school’s Komsomol organization. This was quite an impressive feat.

Sadly, Valya experienced a horrible tragedy. During Collectivization, the city’s Komsomol members were sent to the villages to organize Komsomol units. In the fall of 1934, Valya planned to go to one of

those villages with friends. He was not a physically strong person, and he felt sick. Because of this, Katya wanted Valya to see a doctor who could excuse him from the trip.

Valya refused and claimed it reflected poorly for the leader of Komsomol not to go. When they arrived in one of the villages, Valya and his friends slept on hay in a barn washed on its outside with icy water. Valya's condition deteriorated, and he was sent home with a high fever. His diagnosis was grim: an aggressive form of lung and kidney tuberculosis. It was a death sentence.

Valya died in agony and delirium. He called for his mother, screaming, "Why did you let me go?! You should not have let me go!" In and out of consciousness, he kept repeating, "You are my mother! Why didn't you keep me from going?!"

Katya remembered those exact words until her final days. She told me this story when I had planned to have an abortion, as I was pregnant again immediately after the war while Mark was still an infant. Katya begged me to keep the baby, Rina, and promised that she would do all the work necessary to take care of her. After Valya's death, Katya's mother started to get ill too and died a year later.

Katya said she survived Valya's death because she had eleven-year-old Joseph and fifteen-year-old Taniya in her life. Otherwise, she said she would have killed herself.

Katya was thoughtful in how she raised her kids. The children's discipline fell on her because her husband was unconditionally loving. Moses spoiled his kids and forgave every indiscretion.

Navigating life with Taniya was not easy. At some point, some "well-meaning soul" told Taniya she was adopted. From that moment on, Taniya looked at her family through a cynical lens. They often got into conflicts.

When Taniya was told she should be kinder to Joseph because he was a baby, she responded, “Of course, because he is YOUR baby.”

From then on, she called her adoptive parents “Aunt” and “Uncle.” She was not a good student, either. She ducked out of chores even though she knew how hard Katya worked to keep the house together.

The family feared Taniya’s downward spiral was the influence of bad friends at school. They decided she should get a profession instead of a higher education. In the 1930s, the Soviet Union went through two reforms of general school education. After the seventh grade, only students who excelled were allowed to achieve a ten-grade education. Completing the tenth grade gave them the right to apply to higher academic institutions.

After finishing the seventh grade, Taniya joined a paramedic midwife program. She eventually worked in Kirgizia in the town of Osh.

From the time he was a baby, Taniya’s younger brother Joseph wanted to be independent. He was stubborn, and his favorite expression was “Yosek sam!” or “Joseph alone!” He meant, “I’ll do it by myself.”

When he was a boy, Joseph’s friends asked him to join them on a trip to the cinema in the distant Kreschatik area. The trip took four hours on foot, there and back. The movie was a silent foreign action film titled “Poison.” Needless to say, there was a big hoopla when little Joseph could not be found in the courtyard where he was supposed to be playing. Taniya was blamed because she was playing with her friends on the other side of the courtyard instead of watching him.

The family looked for Joseph in their neighbors' apartments and courtyards, and even told the local militia, which acted as the police. When the gang of boys returned with a happy Joseph on his friend’s shoulders, his mother, for the first and last time, spanked him. She

told him he had to tell her beforehand if he ever wanted to leave again. Joseph remembered that lesson for the rest of his life.

Katya refused to use baby-talk or show extreme affection to her kids. She was respectful, treating them as if they were full-grown adults. She appeared cold from the outside because she guarded her emotions. She was the opposite of Moses. He gave his son big kisses even into old age, when Joseph had his own kids. Moses showed affection regardless of whether his baby-boy Joseph was alone or with other people.

Joseph had his own separate room growing up, which was a luxury in that time. It was considerably cozy. His room had a large desk, a couch, two armchairs, a small table, bookcases filled with classic literature, and many books about history and theater. There was a nice-looking cigar box on the table filled with expensive cigarettes. His parents never prohibited smoking, but Joseph still never smoked. He even persuaded his best friend Izak Guzman, who stole cigarettes from his older brother and started smoking, to quit.

Katya frequently asked Joseph for life advice as he matured. She always listened to his opinion.

Katya believed she and Moses made at least two serious errors of judgment in their lives, even though their circumstances forced the mistakes.

The first was just before the war in 1914, when Moses refused a chance to move to England. The second was at the end of 1939, when Moses was offered a more prestigious role in Tomsk. The city had a massive railway infrastructure. Katya thought it was unwise to move Joseph from the best school in Kyiv while he was in the ninth grade. She regretted her decision by the fall of that academic year, which marked the start of World War II. The Finnish war and the division of Poland soon followed.

Over a troubled May 1940, a month before Joseph finished his tenth and final year of school, Katya was sitting with her close acquaintance when the distraught mother of Izak Guzman came to seek her advice. On May 3rd, Izak had turned eighteen and received a notice of draft. Being drafted meant to losing three years (or more) of a boy's life. There was one way to escape: gain acceptance into a higher learning institution.

Katya had an acquaintance who was believed to have psychic abilities. Katya called Izak's mom, Aunt Dina, and offered for this acquaintance to read Dina's fortune with her cards.

"Dina," the fortune teller said. "Your son will not be drafted."

Her statement turned out to be true, as Izak suffered from colorblindness that exempted him from service.

However, the fortune teller also read Katya's future. The fortune teller told Katya that there would be extremely difficult times ahead, but that her son Joseph would live. Katya believed her, and those words helped her survive the challenging trials of wartime.

Katya also told me about Joseph's first love, Vera.[8] Katya considered her completely wrong for him. Nevertheless, Katya decided to exchange their nice apartment for two smaller ones if Joseph decided to marry. Katya and Joseph had a serious discussion. Even though he was only eighteen, he could have fulfilled his intention to marry Vera had the war not interfered with his plans.

Ultimately, it was Joseph and I who married in July of 1944. My father was a doctor in a Yaroslavl hospital at the time. My father used his position to send a request to the Odessa authorities, telling them he had a son in a hospital to let Katya visit Joseph. Without a special request and papers, no one was permitted to use the trains.

[8] Addressed in more detail in Part Two.

Unfortunately, while that request was being sent, Joseph's unit was sent to the first Baltic front.

Katya missed Joseph in Moscow by a single week. This meant that Katya and I met for the first time without Joseph's presence.

I went to the railroad station with my aunt Anyuta to meet Katya. We stood at the Kyiv station platform and looked at everyone exiting the train. It was unclear how, but Katya and I immediately recognized each other. We had never seen a single picture of one another.

During her week-long visit, we saw Gisya and Lyoma Desyatnik. Their kids Olga and Vova were in the military, too. Katya told us a lot about Joseph, especially his childhood. She told us about his school friends but held off on mentioning Vera. I remembered that she did not cry once. She just kept repeating that he would be fine and that he would come back.

Katya brought me a present from Moses. It was a small photograph with a warmly written note on the back. This was quintessential Moses. Over all the years we lived side-by-side, I felt like his daughter and never once like his daughter-in-law. Katya always took my side when I had disagreements with Joseph, too.

Katya and I spent a lot of time together, especially during my difficult pregnancy. All the neighbors on Chicherian Street were convinced that I was Katya's daughter, and that Joseph was her son-in-law.

Here are two pictures of us all together. Little Rina is wearing a dress made from my old prewar wool clothes. Katya sewed the pants Mark wore. Prior to meeting her, I hadn't learned how to thread a needle, let alone sew. Katya taught me how to sew and how to cook. This is a really nice picture, and it is the last photo of Katya before her death. Katya never complained about how she felt, but you could tell from the picture that she was unwell. She never wanted Moses to find out about her ailments.

One day, after Katya had an episode that mirrored a heart attack, I saw that she took heart medication. I mentioned it to Joseph, and he managed to arrange for her to have testing done at the cardiac hospital. However, Katya died three days later before all the testing was done.

Katya's passing was so quiet that the other patients in the hospital room with her did not even notice. Nurses only discovered her death while checking their patients' evening vitals. One nurse collected patient thermometers and noticed that one was missing. She asked everyone about it. When Katya did not turn around, the nurse came to her, took the thermometer, and saw that Katya was not breathing. Her autopsy showed blood clots in her arteries.

The house felt empty without Katya. She was the glue holding the family together. She did not often show her love outwardly, but she loved everyone. It was a big loss for us all.

During the summer, my kids stayed at a summer camp organized by their daycare. It was challenging to get from our street, Chicherin or Uspenskiy, to 12th Station in the Big Fountain Area where the camp was held. After Lenin Street, passengers had to take a tram to get to the railroad station. Then, they had to change to tram number 18 at Kulikov Field. Moreover, these public trams ran very irregularly and were extremely crowded. The cars were hot as there was no ventilation. However, Moses took this journey every Sunday and pampered his grandkids by bringing them fresh fruits.

A horrible period followed. In the middle of summer, 1952, Joseph lost his job and was forced to move away. Moses, Mark, Rina, and I were left behind. This was extremely hard on Moses. He knew I had no job and no savings, so he kept working in spite of frequently sickness.

His health was especially bad at the beginning of winter, 1953. Moses started having a lot of heart-related episodes. One night, he called for me to give him an injection to relieve his pain. Taniya

offered to spend the night at our place to help me, but Moses did not agree. He only trusted me with his care. When his condition worsened, his doctor told me to telegram Joseph. Moses did not want to bother him, and kept saying, “It will be okay.”

In the beginning of March, when Moses started to have heart episodes nightly, he allowed me to send Joseph a telegram. Moses stopped eating by that time and was frequently delirious. When he came to, he asked what time it was and how long he had to wait. He kept saying, “I have to wait for Yozik.”

We had to wait three days and three nights for Joseph to make it to us because there was no direct connection between Odessa and Chelyabinsk. Travelers had to go through Moscow, as there were no direct flights.

Moses did not sleep in the last night of his life. I sat near him. He had trouble talking but he kept repeating, “Live well, make friends. Do not forget that Suzanna is completely alone. Help her.”

He held my hand. I asked whether I should get the kids who were staying with Taniya. Moses said no. He said, “Let them remember me taking them out for ice cream. Do not let them come to the funeral.”

He lasted until his son Joseph arrived. They had three final hours together. Moses’s last words were, “Now I can go to Katya.”

Moses passed away on March 5th, 1953. He was buried at the same cemetery as his wife, but not directly next to her. We visited the grave site just before Mark and his family left for America. The memorial stone nice and stood next to a poplar tree.

Taniya went on to be a paramedic. At eighteen, without any guidance, she left to work in the town of Osh in Kirgizia. Taniya was immediately drafted to serve as a paramedic on the front lines once the war started. She became the Senior Lieutenant of the medical service and was a very qualified operating room nurse. Her unit

traveled around southern Ukraine and through Romania and Hungary. When the war finished, she was serving in Vienna. In 1943, Taniya married Captain Vashilov and took his last name. When they got married, the captain wrote a heartfelt letter thanking Taniya's aunt and uncle for raising such a kindhearted daughter.

When the war ended, thought, Vashilov said they needed to end their relationship because he was already married with two children. So, in the summer of 1946, Taniya came back to Odessa.

The apartment on Chicheran Street was full of Joseph, Mark, and me. We decided that Taniya would live with Aunt Taniya, her namesake, and Aunt Yeva. As previously mentioned, Aunt Betya helped Taniya find work at the daycare as a nurse. Taniya never had children of her own, but she adored ours. She spent a lot of time nannying her nephews and nieces.

Taniya later left her job at the daycare because the pay was so poor to work at the railway clinic. When Mark was in daycare at three, without his mom or grandmother, he always ran to his "Mama Taniya." He took his potty to her and went into Taniya's office to do his business. She was the only one who gave him his baths. Taniya also took Mark to his first beach outing.

I do not know at what point this picture was taken, where Taniya is wearing a railway uniform.

Taniya's personal life started deteriorating. She dated sometimes, but the men always disappeared. Living in a single room with two old aunties did not exactly help her dating life.

Later, Taniya met a man named Vova Gorodetskiy. I think his full name was Vladlen. He was three years younger than her, had fought in the war, had graduated from the polytechnic institute, and worked as an engineer. He lived with his mother, as his dad had passed away.

Vova's mother was against their marriage because Taniya was an older divorcée. His mother eventually made peace with the marriage and Taniya moved in with them at their communal apartment on Chkalov Street. There were two rooms for Vova and his mother. Vova's cousin and her family occupied another room, and a single woman lived in the fourth room.

The first few years of Taniya's life on Chkalov Street were turbulent. Taniya's mother-in-law treated her terribly and often complained about her. She was not above making up stories. Poor Taniya wanted to leave them, but she had absolutely nowhere else to go.

When the single woman neighboring them died, Vova's cousin took her room and the family decided to split their communal apartment into two separate ones. Taniya, Vova, and his mother moved to Vorovsky Street. They did some cosmetic repairs and made the apartment lovely, but there were new challenges. Taniya's mother-in-law had a stroke and lived for five more years without the ability to walk or recognize anyone. After her death, they repaired the apartment again.

Joseph and I left for Gomel then, and soon, Yeva and the older Aunt Taniya died. This picture was taken during what probably was the most peaceful period in their lives. However, I am not sure where this picture was taken, as the location looks unfamiliar.

Taniya and Vova traveled a lot. They sometimes went to Lvov to visit Taniya's uncle who lived with his daughter and granddaughter. His granddaughter often visited Taniya. Taniya and Vova maintained a busy social life as well and had friends over frequently. Vova was a great accordion player, and she sang all the pre-war Odessa folk songs for his guests.

Taniya's older brother Volodya Bratslaver eventually moved to Odessa, got married, and had a baby named Suzanna. Taniya and Vova were completely attached to her. Vova enjoyed photography, and often photographed Suzanna. Suzanna loved Tanya as well,

which sparked some jealousy from her mother Raya. This led to frequent fights between Taniya and Raya. Poor Volodya was consistently stuck between them.

Then, Vova got sick. The doctors could not diagnose his illness for a long time. Eventually, they determined he had a malignant brain tumor. Taniya took him to Leningrad to receive care, but the neurosurgical department refused to operate. They likely deemed his condition inoperable. After he passed, Taniya was once again left alone.

With age, it became difficult for Taniya to walk up to the third floor of her apartment building. She was not getting any healthier as time went by. Taniya tried to exchange her apartment for something on the lower level but was refused. Her uncle's granddaughter talked Taniya into selling her apartment and moving into a small resort town in the Donetsk region. For a few years, we did not know anything about her.

Kelya eventually found Taniya through the address service. We lived in America by that time. We did not write to each other very frequently, but we occasionally sent letters. Raya's son was the first to emigrate from Volodya's family. He sent for Suzanna and her husband and son. Suzanna then gave birth to her second son in New York.

Now, the most complex task remains describing Joseph Moiseyevich Berman. Or, as we all called him, Joz. Being strictly objective is nearly impossible, but I will try my best. In addition to living together for forty-three years, it's also difficult to objectively describe such a monumental, multi-talented, borderline genius.

PART TWO

Joz

7/28/2000

On February 2nd, 1923, Moses Abramovich and Gitl Yosifovny had their youngest son. He was named in memory of Gitl's grandfather, Joseph. He went by Yozik when he was a child. He was a surprise to his older parents, born when his mother was thirty-six and his father was forty-one.

As the youngest of the family, he was loved and spoiled. Because of this, no one could control him when he was little. He was used to getting everything he wanted too. He did, however, understand early on that raising his voice was not the most effective way to insist on a point. Instead, it was much more effective to be quietly stubborn. He exhibited an independent spirit early on.

When he started school, he did not love it. In his last year in school, Joseph's older brother frequently had to talk to him and his teacher to calm matters down in class.

His marks were not brilliant in fourth grade, and he even failed his Russian and Ukrainian classes. Still, he had a myriad of passions. Moses studied at the Industrial Academy and made blueprints while Joseph hung around him and watched. Thus, Jospeh, or Joz, started crafting blueprints and building from an early age. Joz also learned how to read early on and often tried reading his older brother Wolf's books. After Wolf passed, though, all of his books were burned. His family feared spreading his infection.

In the fifth grade, Joz found a new subject of focus: the French language. He hated it with a passion, and declared he would never return to school after a few lessons. With a lot of convincing, his family agreed that if he finished the fifth grade without any mediocre marks, he could transfer to a school that taught English instead of French.

With that, Joseph started to do his homework without being asked. He started seeing a private tutor for Russian. With the tutor's help, he achieved great results. He finally wrote with proper grammar in a stylistically beautiful way. He finished the fifth grade with excellent marks, aside from one average mark in French.

English was only taught in one area school called Obraztsova at that time. It was located on Pushkinskaya Street and across from the building where the Guzman family lived. The Guzmans were Aunt Dina, Uncle Aron, and their three sons Ama, Alik, and Yizik. Yizik was also a student at Obraztsova in Joz's grade. They met each other then and remained friends for their entire lives.

Joseph had to take multiple trams to get to the new school. Nobody accompanied him, but because Katya became a member of the parents' committee, Joz often went to Yizik's house to do homework. Katya would then come by to pick him up.

Joz's first meeting with his English teacher was pivotal. The teacher was a quite eccentric, but wonderful pedagogue. When he entered the classroom and noticed his new student, he asked for his name. The answer was "Yosif."

The teacher then said, "Therefore, you will be named Joseph. But for ease, Joz." From then on, no one in school called him anything other than Joz.

The atmosphere in his new school was very different from his last. Joz's teacher was of high quality, and his classmates were very

studious. It was considered shameful to get a mediocre grade and not correct it as soon as possible.

Twenty-nine people graduated from his school. Sixteen of them earned a special gold-bordered certificate, as they did not have standard medals back then. This gave them the right to attend university without completing any exams. I still have Joseph's certificate.

Joz was intrigued by history. When his class studied ancient civilizations like Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome (of course, they did not teach Israel), he started reading more sophisticated literature. He stumped his teachers with his questions. They often suggested that Joseph find an answer on his own and assigned special literature just for him. Joseph researched his own questions and wrote out his conclusions in the form of a report. He would then share his findings at the end of class. Nearly his entire class stayed to listen to his reports, and fascinating discussions followed. In the seventh grade, history class's focus switched from ancient times to the Middle-Ages and Russian history. Joz then found a new interest: theater.

Shumskiy, a leading actor in Ukrainian theater, came to work at his school. Shumskiy organized a theater club of upperclassmen from eighth through tenth grade. Even though Joseph was only in the seventh grade, he was the first to sign up. He played a number of episodic supporting roles. In the eighth grade he finally played the lead, Chatski, in "Woe from Wit." This new interest solidified, and he decided to become a theater director.

Suddenly, books on the Stanislavsky acting technique and other popular theatrical figures appeared in Joz's house. He quickly became Shumskiy's right-hand man. When Shumskiy produced his next play, Joseph did not act. Instead, he wrote every scene and decided who would act in each part. Shumskiy trusted Joz to rehearse with the actors. To the entire "cast," Joz became an

authority figure. The theater club demanded a lot of his time, and Joz took this new responsibility seriously.

Around this time, Joseph grew into the main authority figure within his own family. No serious decisions were determined without him. When Taniya left for Kirgizia following her paramedic degree, Joseph received his own separate room. It had a desk, bookcases, a couch, and a coffee table with a beautiful ashtray full of expensive cigarettes. Whenever the ashtray was depleted, it was immediately replenished. Joz never smoked himself, but his friends did. They were all young boys who finished school at the ages of seventeen or eighteen.

Joz soon discovered his first love, Vera. The two were in the ninth grade. Vera was beautiful, blue-eyed, and blonde. She was not very tall, and I might even call her stocky.

The majority of their class was already romantically paired-up. Yizik had an official girlfriend named Lyalya. She was friends with Vera, so they began going out as a group of four. Vera was the only daughter of two wealthy parents. Her dad was the director of a meat-production factory. Her mom, on the other hand, was completely dedicated to Vera. Unsurprisingly, she was a bit spoiled and a bit capricious. From a young age she was told that she was special and beautiful. In the context of Joseph's life, she did not play a positive role.

In either 1938 or 1939, Moses Abramovich was offered a great work opportunity in Tomsk. His family were leaning towards moving, but Joz declared that he would not leave. He decided that as soon as he finished school, he would marry Vera. Katya was not very fond of her. However, since she knew her, son would do what he said he would, she looked for opportunities to split their apartment. Katya tried to sell most of their furniture, from their grand piano to their armoire. The move never happened, and after the war started, all of the family's belongings were lost.

In case it is not clear yet, Joz felt like he was grown up from the age of fourteen. He knew what he wanted and strove to get it. Even his appearance was showy. You can imagine how he came to Odessa over school vacation in a dark-gray, three-piece suit with a felt hat. Meanwhile, all his classmates wore simple caps and jackets. This was an eighth-grade trip. Still, in spite of his showiness, Joz finished everything he started. He approached everything seriously.

Joz's first harsh life lesson emerged at seventeen. He finished school with top marks and left for Moscow. He wanted to gain admission to Gitis, The Institute of Theater Arts, on the theater director track. Gitis told Joz they would call him before August 1st for an academic interview. Soon though, instead of interviewing, Joseph was rejected. The institute told him he did not submit written director notes about a play, he did not have acting experience in a real theater, and he was simply too young to join the director track. Joz was wounded by the injustice of the rejection because he could have been told all of this when he submitted his application. He could have submitted his director notes, as he had several different copies. However, Joz did not have much time to brood, as he applied and was accepted into the Kyiv University. He was to study in the Department of Western Languages and Literature branch, concentrating in English, much to his parents' delight.

At that time, he met and befriended Wolf Buckhbinder. Wolf studied in the German department, but they had a few classes together. There were very few boys in the university, as most boys were immediately drafted after turning eighteen. Wolf was supposed to turn eighteen on December 23rd, after the school year's start.

Yizik was accepted to the polytechnic institute, and Lyalya and Vera were accepted to medical institutes. The group met only rarely at the time. Joz immediately became active in Kyiv University's student theater, in part because Shumskiy transferred to lead that theater and develop new plays.

Vera did not do well at the medical institute, and Joseph eventually insisted that she transfer to his university. He went to all of the relevant offices to ensure she was accepted in her second semester and given credit for the subjects she passed at the medical institute. Vera's mother was not crazy about their relationship, but Vera was flattered that university upperclassmen talked to Joz as their equal, and that all of his teachers respected him.

Over winter semester Joz received two "4s." The dean called him in and told him he had to correct them before the next semester. He said he never wanted to see this level of performance again. Joz finished the first semester with excellent marks and was granted an advanced student stipend.

One episode sticks out in my mind. Before eighth grade, Katiya took Joz and Taniya to Nemirov on summer vacation. Nemirov was the hometown of Taniya's father Julius, where her grandparents and cousins lived. It could be described as a big village, with fruits, berries, and vegetables for sale at a cheap price.

However, in eighth grade Joseph declared he would not go. He said he refused to spend his time unproductively. Joz's father Moses offered to take him to Mironovka Station, where he led construction for the railroad's water station. Joseph applied for a work permit and spent all summer as a foreman. He worked there with his father again after ninth grade. Vera's family did not understand how anyone could treat their "baby" that way, especially after Vera's mother offered him and Katiya a joint trip to Crimea. The Berman family always had free train tickets.

Back to summer, 1941. The first bombs fell on Kyiv in the evening of June 22nd. Vera and her mother immediately fled to somewhere near the Volga River. Vera's dad escaped soon thereafter. Joz left with a troop of students to build anti-tank defense systems somewhere East of the Dnepr River. His parents moved away using a repair train to Arched Station.

Soon, the student troop fell apart. Nobody knew what to do, where to find instruments, or where to find materials. As the bombing continued, Joz decided to leave to find his parents. He walked along the railroad tracks, and asked people at each station where the trains were going. He managed to catch a few rides sitting on the train steps.

To take an interim break, Joz asked for work at a local fire department. He told the firemen he lost his license, but he could still drive cars. While they were processing his paperwork there were no cars available to practice driving. Joz practiced switching gears and braking only by sitting on a chair by himself. After he started driving, he never made a single mistake. Joz did not have to worry about running anyone over because most of the fires were in broken buildings or in open fields after bombings. It was not too cold or too muddy then, either. He eventually continued on his train journey and reached Arched.

Joseph was shortly drafted and was sent to Minsk for artillery training. He became one of the army's own and was friendly with the division head. Joseph offered to organize an amateur military theater and actually succeeded. Some of the men he directed even became actors after the war. One of them, Dudnik, became a famous comedic actor and acted in scenes Joz directed. In the mid- 1970s the two reconnected in Moscow. Dudnik kept asking Joz to attend his show, but something always came up such that he could not go.

When Joz became an amateur theater director he gained a few extra perks. He would eat meals with the sergeant, and his rule-breaking was treated leniently. Often, he did not even sleep in the barracks.

Joz found Vera's address and they started to write to each other. Vera attended the local university in the town she evacuated to. Joz begged her to visit him, but Vera's mom would not allow it. Joseph was not faithful to her, as there were a lot of girls nearby who were available to spend time with. Regardless, he was offended when Vera refused to be listed as his significant other on his post-training

certificate. He needed to put someone down who would receive two-thirds of his monetary allowance.

Joz received a letter from Vera's mother that said, "You are not her husband. We do not need your money."

There was a handwritten note from Vera in the envelope, and it might have been dictated by her mother. It was short. All she wrote was, "We do not need to have a financial relationship. I love you."

I believe Joz sent his money to Aunt Taniya and Eva. Subsequently, he completely stopped corresponding with Vera.

Junior Lieutenant Joseph Berman was sent to the third Ukrainian front as the Germans encroached on Crimea. He joined the mortar division, the so-called "Katush," somewhere close to Sivash. Joz introduced himself to his commander upon arrival like he was taught over training. His name was General Erokhin, and he was a drunk.

Erokhin was an interesting figure. He was knowledgeable, an educated artillerist. Erokhin graduated from cadet school before the First World War, and he taught at the academy before the Second. He had a difficult, military personality. Erokhin did not get along with higher-ups. Still, he was valued as a brilliant specialist and got away with his eccentricities.

Junior Lieutenant Berman waltzed into Erokhin's tent, saluted, and said, "Junior Lieutenant Berman at your command!" He was greeted by a pistol shot centimeters from his head. It was so unexpected that Joz did not have time to flinch. He actually continued saluting the general. One of the soldiers in the tent wrestled the general, took his pistol, and forced him to sit down. The general then commanded Joseph to be at ease and to come closer.

Eventually, the general appointed Joz to lead the reconnaissance platoon. In his new position as commander, Joseph was responsible

for adjusting the fighting line. He had to be close enough to see the position of the enemy and keep watch of where the shells fell. Afterwards, Joz reported back to the command center.

The troop's mortars stood on Studebaker cars and frequently moved around to avoid enemy artillery. While fighting across Sivash, it was hard to maneuver. The troops suffered heavy casualties, and three of Joseph's drivers died. Even though Joseph was standing on the side of the car, he did not catch a scratch.

When the Russians took over Sevastopol, Joseph was awarded the medal of the "Red Star." Erokhin transferred him from his position as platoon commander to lead the entire regiment. Counter-intuitively, the new appointment was actually less dangerous. Keep in mind, though, there was no truly "safe" position in war.

While driving near Sevastopol, Joz's car ran over a mine and exploded. He flew off the car step, sustaining severe injuries. He could not hear anything for days. Joz stayed at the hospital until his hearing recovered, but the injury caused obliterating endarteritis later. His illness flared up two to three years later in Odessa, but he did not seek help until we lived in Gomel.

Erokhin was attached to Joz. Wherever he went, Joz was in tow. Erokhin likely missed human interactions, as he did not have a son. He had several wives but did not get along with any of them.

When Erokhin was drunk, no one but Joz influenced him. One day, the two were driving a Willis car from Sevastopol back to their division. The ordinary was driving the car, Erokhin was in the passenger seat, and Joz sat behind them. The road was windy and damaged. Suddenly, Erokhin attempted to take over the wheel and drive. Joz threw a coat, or possibly a tent, over him from the backseat. Erokhin let go and tried to free himself, but eventually just went to sleep. When the group arrived, the ordinary called for a soldier, and together they carried Erokhin to his house and put him in bed.

After Crimea was liberated in the beginning of July 1944, Joz's regiment was sent to Zelenograd in the Moscow region. They were sent to take over for the dead soldiers and to fix equipment. When Joz's family left Kyiv, all of his relatives kept Aunt Anyuta's address because they thought Moscow would remain stable. When Joz rested a bit and cleaned up, he visited Anyuta in Moscow.

I had recently returned to the university and lived with Aunt Anyuta. Aunt Dina evacuated to Moscow too. Ama gave Dina a special pass to reach Moscow, as the mother of an officer on the front lines. Anyuta was also visited by Klara, a former schoolmate of Joz and Yizik. Klara and her friend Ira Lahovskaya were admitted to Moscow University during the evacuation. They also lived in Moscow and had both lost their parents. Their parents were somehow connected to Aunt Dina, which is why Klara came to live with us.

To the apartment room, we had to pass through a communal kitchen. One day, I was doing laundry and warming water on the kerosene stove. I saw a young officer come in. He asked our neighbor about Anna Aronovna Fishman. She showed him where to go. Soon enough, Aunt Dina went out and asked me to meet Yizik's friend. Frankly, I was in no mood to meet anyone.

Shortly before that, I received a letter from one of my older friends who studied at the naval academy in Leningrad before the war. He and I met when the academy evacuated students to Yaroslavl at the beginning of the war. I left for Moscow at the end of 1943 while he was finishing up at the academy. My friend promised to come to Moscow after graduation but before his final appointment so we could get married. However, I received a letter that he went home to Kurgan first. His father was categorically against our marriage, possibly because of my ethnicity, but he wrote that it was because it was too early to get married. I was not too upset because it was not a particularly special love. Really, I was flattered that an older man had courted me.

When the young officer I'd come to know as Joz left to return to the train station he asked, "Girls, would you see me off?"

Aunt Dina replied in a stern tone, "Of course they will see you off."

Klara pouted, but he seemed pleased. We went to the tram stop before Yaroslavl Station. Klara and Joz walked and talked, remembering friends, but I was kind of bored. He turned me off with his pretentious attitude.

I walked them to the tram and said, "Goodbye. I have to get up early to go to university."

My aunt was furious at me when I returned home. She asked how I could leave them when they were not familiar with Moscow, and that Klara was supposed to spend the night with us because her dorm was far away. I thought she might not spend the night with us at all and might instead take the train with Joz to Zelenograd. She was obviously hanging on to him. My aunt reproached me even more.

Klara came back after two hours, but I was already in bed. Aunt Dina had a long conversation with Klara. It seemed like Klara and Joz planned to spend more time with each other, so Klara skipped university the next day. Instead, she stayed home and helped Aunt Dina pack. Our neighbors had promised to take Dina to Kyiv. They were train conductors and had to move some goods to the city. They were supposed to return home for a bit in the coming days. I had the keys to the neighbors' room, where Dina and Klara slept.

The next day, Joz returned. I assumed he longed to be with intelligent and friendly women, especially since one of us was friends with his mother. We were the girls from his pre-war past, the type of girls he could talk and joke with without thinking about sex. After all, he had plenty of girls for that in Zelenograd.

Joz visited with a clear desire to spend the night in Moscow. He asked us to go to the movies with him. He specifically invited me, as it was clear Klara was already coming. I did not want to be a third wheel, but I could not get out of the plans because of Aunt Dina.

Our trip was totally unsuccessful. We visited three theaters but could not get three tickets. Men with an officer's IDs were only allowed two tickets in total. So, we walked around the city and returned to Malovuzovskiy Street.

Joz's bed was made in the neighbor's room. I went straight to sleep on my little sofa, Anyuta had her bed, and Aunt Dina drank tea at the table. Klara left the room with a towel because we could only wash up in the kitchen. Aunt Dina quickly noticed Klara was gone and went looking for her. She knocked on the neighbor's room and told Klara to come out immediately. They must have had a big conversation in the hall, as Klara came back totally in tears and left for her dormitory. She was supposed to stay for another day.

The next day, Anyuta left for work. Dina ran some errands. I could not get up because I had an excruciating headache, as I did frequently at the time. Joz woke up late because he was not ready to leave just yet. His pass lasted for a few days to "help Aunty pack." As he described in later years, he saw me lying with my eyes closed and my face morbidly pale. He got scared, ran to call an ambulance, and knocked over a chair. I moaned in pain and Joz realized I was not dead yet. He asked me what was the matter.

Joz decided my pallor was from malnourishment. He was determined to save me by buying a bottle of kefir, cream cheese, two eggs, and a sweet roll at a specialty store. This was all quite expensive. We subsisted off of food tickets at the time, and the products tied to them were strictly controlled. The things he bought were never in our pantries.

I am glad I fell asleep before he returned. Joz sat quietly for two hours while I napped. I finally started to feel a little bit better after I

woke up. Joz immediately took care of me. He went to the kitchen, one of the neighbor's boiled eggs, and he made me eat everything he had bought. Why am I being so detailed about when we met? I want you to understand his character. He threw all of himself in to help, even when he was not asked to do so. That was Joz his whole life. He acted without anyone else asking for help and did so without waiting for anyone's acquiescence. If anyone did ask for help, though, he finished everything he started. I think his time in the army imparted a habit of taking responsibility for others. Instead of getting help in return, he often received other problems.

Aunt Dina left for Kyiv a few days later. Joz took her to the station. More specifically, he took her to some tracks where the train was being loaded, and Dina was put in a heated cart.

Before Dina left, she told Joz, "Don't even think about falling in love. You already have a girl, and Nerry should not be doing silly things. Her mother died, her sister is a baby, her dad is about to return to the front lines, and she needs to finish university."

In spite of this spiel, Joz came back a day later in a completely different mood. Anyuta was away visiting a friend who had contracted a chronic illness. I was preparing for a seminar. Joz sat on the sofa, quietly looking out of a window. I put away my notes and turned to him, planning to ask if he wanted to have snacks and tea. I did not like the expression on his face, nor his pose. He sat like a sad old man who could not see an escape out of his current circumstances. When Joz noticed me looking at him he shook himself up and tried to smile. I asked what the matter was. Of course, I cannot reproduce our entire conversation word for word, but we talked for a very long time and jumped from subject to subject. I think the hardship from years on the frontlines stored up inside him started to leak out. He was only 21. He had been through so much, but he had no one to share it with.

I could feel the war ending. The entire frontline of troops had already crossed the border. It was getting darker, and fireworks had started in honor of the victory.

Joseph's main motivation was the following: "This is it. I am so physically tired, so emotionally tired, that whenever this horror ends, I am going to move very far away and marry a cow. I don't want university, civilization, or loud city life; I want nothing."

This shocked me. I started to hotly, and probably not very logically, tell him he could not forget about his duty to his parents or bury his talent. I had no idea what his talent was since we had known each for less than a week and had only seen each other three times. But I knew from Aunt Dina that he was the only son of two older parents. I knew he had finished high school with a golden certificate, and that he was friends with Yizik. Finally, I knew he had a fiancé waiting for him.

He became angry when I mentioned his fiancé. "I crossed her out of my life the moment she betrayed me. It's been a year since I answered any of her letters."

I do not remember how I responded. I only remember a piercing feeling of compassion mixed with sadness. It was not just for him, but for all of my close friends, my peers, and for myself. My heart felt like it was being squeezed with physical pain. I tried saying something, but there was only one thought in my head. I thought he should be saved, that he should be convinced not to ruin his life. My aunt did not return that day, instead spending the night at Sadovo-Kudrinskiy Street. I kept talking and talking, and he remained quiet as he looked out the window.

Suddenly, he turned to me and said, "You are saying many good words. But could you marry me right now? As I have nothing, the war is going on, and the future is a complete uncertainty."

I responded, "Yes."

It was not love, or even infatuation. I did not even like him when we met. He was only a little taller than I was, a little slouchy, and not too athletic. He was in a plain soldier's uniform with rubber boots, even though it was the end of July. Not a romantic hero. But intuitively, I felt that if I answered evasively or turned the conversation into a joke or an argument it would only convince him further that there was nothing holy left in the world, that there was only awfulness.

Absolutely calmly, he said, "Well then, I guess I'll go on living to prove to you I'm still capable of something."

We did not even kiss. He left to sleep in the neighbor's room. I was lying on the sofa, thinking, "So, what happens now? What does getting married even mean?"

As a twenty-one-year-old, I was a naive fool. I may have kissed some boys, but I did not even take much pleasure in that.

He came by in the morning and woke me up. "Have you changed your mind?"

I answered, "No."

It was July 24th. Aunt Anyuta, the kind soul, said congratulations. But Ama, who came to the house after a few days, yelled at Joz. In response, he decided we had to sign the marriage certificate immediately and telegram our parents to let them know about our situation.[9] We could not sign anything, though, because my passport was still at the university. I had to wait to get it back.

My dad spent a few days in Yaroslavl. The hospital workers were packing everything up to move westward. He and Sanna came for a single day. My dad met Joz and they ended up talking for a long time.

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[9] Ama was protective of his little sister and wanted his friend to "do the right thing" by making the proposal official.

I took Sanna for a walk to watch the fireworks. By the time my dad left, he said he had a son.

My dad used his position at his hospital to send a request for Joz's mother to leave Odessa and visit her son. She indeed came to Moscow, but Joz left to go west while her papers were being prepared and missed her. His mother did not go to Yaroslavl to meet my father because the hospital was no longer there. Instead, Aunt Anyuta and I met Katya at the train station. Without seeing a single photograph, we recognized each other. Joz left her a long letter and told me to read it before she arrived. In it, he explained his decision and motives for the marriage in detail.

I finally got my passport in August, and on the 20th, we visited the wedding registrar. Joz and I found out that we had to pay 15 rubles we did not have. Luckily, the registrar was across from my university, so I could run over and borrow the money from some friends. Joz did not have any money with him because he had spontaneously decided to buy me flowers. Thankfully, we took public transportation for free because I had a special pass.

Joz returned to his regiment and then disappeared from his post again. He did not always disappear officially, either. His saving grace was the kindness of his commander and the loyalty of his ordinary.

I remember how Joz spent the night once and planned to leave via train at 5:30 AM. He wanted to return to his post by his 7:00 AM check-in. That morning, however, his senior military leaders decided to run a drill at 4:00 AM. The entire regiment, by division, stood in formation at the military plaza. The ordinaries gathered all the commanders, knowing who slept where, and quickly realized that Berman was not in place.

Joz's ordinary ran to General Erokhin and told him, "Berman is still in Moscow."

Erokhin told him to run to the train station, wait for Joseph, and take him back through a secret passage. Erokhin sat at his desk in his room while the entire division stood still for two-and-a-half hours. Joz then came out with Erokhin as if nothing had happened.

Joseph resolved all his problems by himself. He always found his way out of a situation. When he was appointed head of the division, he was told to join the Communist Party.[10]

Joz agreed, "Yes, I should, but I want a recommendation from someone who has known me since I was a child. It should be a respectable communist who participated in the civil war."

He wrote to Israel Mosyak, a general and political division director in a neighboring regiment. He got a response rapidly.

Mosyak sent two letters. One was labeled "Show to your commander," the other was labeled "Destroy."[11] The "commander" letter read, "You are still a boy of twenty. You are not worthy of becoming a member of our great party. You must earn it, and I will not give you a recommendation yet." After that, whenever joining the party came up, Joseph said he did not consider himself worthy.

About ten days into our courtship Joz walked into the apartment and said he received a letter from Vera. She asked to meet him in person so she could explain everything. Vera also included her Moscow address and phone number.

Joz asked me, "What should I do?"

I responded, "Whatever you feel you need to."

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[10] At the time, joining the Communist Party meant a higher likelihood of death. This is in part because party members were expected to lead attacking regiments on the front lines as a sign of patriotism.

[11] In all likelihood, the "Destroy" letter provided instructions for how to safely avoid induction into the Communist Party.

He said, “That’s what I thought you were going to say. I already asked her to meet me at the boulevard.”

He left. I sat on my sofa for two hours. I do not know what I did. I might have cried, thinking, “I had no right to him. I have only known him for two weeks, and we are not even officially married yet.”

When he returned, he warned that if I ran after him to check what he was doing, he would never come back to me.

He said he did not plan to stay with Vera. Nevertheless, he said, “You need to fight for the things you want in life. You should have told me not to go, and that you could not return to the past because you have a new family.”

I responded, “I guess it turns out I am not a fighter. I will always be your friend.” We never discussed it again.

Vera stayed in Moscow for some time. She wrote him letters, and he brought them to me. I did not want to read them, so he threw them away. Ama came to Moscow frequently then. If he happened to see Joz, he took him aside to talk. I have no idea what they discussed.

As I mentioned, we married officially on August 20th. Ama decided we had to celebrate. He brought a bottle of vodka, some snacks from his driver’s wife who ran a cafeteria in Dorogomilov, and the latest “object” of his affection. Anyuta boiled potatoes. My friend Rachel, whom I’ll discuss later, came too. The only ones really drinking were Ama and his acquaintance. We only drank symbolically, and Joz did not drink much in general. I was too shy to drink, even though I could drink 200 grams of alcohol without feeling much of a buzz back then. To conclude the celebration, Ama decided to break something. Anyuta was terribly worried, but Ama still threw a clay bowl out of the window. Anyuta almost had a heart attack, terrified it might hit someone in the courtyard. The day ended well because the bowl broke on the roof of a shed. Anyuta’s neighbors remembered that night for a long time.

Joz left for the Baltic frontlines at the start of September. He often wrote warm, long letters to me. The first picture he sent of himself was in Riga. He was with the commander of the firing squad and Misha Dubinskiy, a lieutenant from Kyiv. His parents were shocked. They thought Joz was drinking in the photo, even though he still did not know what vodka tasted like at the time. Joz is on the left of the picture. Lyonya Nissenboym from Odessa is the one with the accordion. We were friends with him after the war and attended his wedding. Lyonya graduated from Vodniy University and worked in Novorossiysk afterwards. Whenever he returned to visit his parents, he also visited us. At one point we took a cruise and visited him. We kept in touch later on through letters.

This is a professional picture taken in Riga. You can see the sadness in Joz's eyes. It was a terribly hard time. The commanding management in his regiment had changed. Erokhin was promoted to general and left to command the special army corps on the Ukrainian Front approaching Prague. Joz was left behind.

Joz's new commander was Polish. He was a horrible antisemite. He hated Joz with a passion because of his close relationship to Erokhin. He tore up Joz's award nominations twice. The commander also demoted Joz to reconnaissance. However, that was not enough to satisfy the commander. He even attempted to shoot Joz.

Joz was walking on a path between the trenches towards his squad's dugout. The commander followed him, saying he wanted to check how prepared Joz was for the next day's operation. The commander did not know that Joz's ordinary was walking behind him. The ordinary saw the commander raise his hand with a pistol and aim at Joz's head. The ordinary pushed the commander and started apologizing, saying he tripped. He was severely reprimanded and told he might be discharged by the war tribunal for his infraction. The commander, mad with fury, left them be.

The ordinary told Joz what he saw. That night, Joz sought advice from his comrades. They decided that Joz had to disappear. They

knew the incident would not end well. That night, the division's nurse wrote a special letter for him to be sent to the evacuation hospital. Joz really did have acute appendicitis, but those kinds of surgeries were not done in the field of battle.

Joz left in the first available car. He said he was summoned to army headquarters and made it to Vilnius. My dad worked at a hospital there at the time and, of course, managed to admit him.

Joz stayed in the hospital for a week. His condition improved and no operation was necessary. Joz asked to be sent to the central reserve near Moscow's suburbs, station Zelenogradskya, instead of the front reserve. He arrived in Moscow on March 12th, 1945.

A division formed to head towards Berlin on May 20th. Joz went to the central bureau almost daily to ask to be sent to General Erokhin in Czechoslovakia. He was finally granted traveling papers to go from Moscow to Odessa, and from Odessa to Ujegorod by train. Joz's parents resided in Odessa at this time, so Joz decided I would leave with him. Unfortunately, we could not just buy a ticket and go back then. We needed other special traveling papers, and we had no time to get them.

We went to the station on April 8th and found the officers' car of the train. I put on his uniform coat and hat, and we hid my coat in a bag. The conductor did not ask us a thing. We went to the communal sleeping coach and Joz found some young officers. He told them he had to bring his wife to Odessa. I went all the way to the third level and turned my face towards the wall. Joz lied next to me and covered me with his uniform overcoat.

At night we faced a checkpoint. Joz gave his documents, and thankfully no one noticed me. We arrived in Odessa in the early

morning of April 10th. It was the first anniversary of Odessa's liberation.[12]

We stayed with Joz's parents. They lived in Odessa and had a decent room in a communal apartment on Pushkinskaya Street. Soon enough, Joz registered in the city's military commandant office. The commandant there tried to talk him out of going any further. He said that the war was almost over, and that our troops were near Berlin. Plus, the commandant needed a competent assistant. He got his wish, as Joz's stomach pain returned, and he was sent to the hospital again instead of fighting. By then it was early May, and Joz insisted I return to Moscow to continue my studies. Moses managed to secure a train ticket for me this time, and I was cleared to leave when I showed the conductor my Moscow passport.

Joz was soon admitted to the hospital for an appendectomy. This was the second time he was saved from near-certain death. Erokhin was killed after victory was declared, along with the entirety of the headquarters' staff. One of the last remaining SS army regiments had tried breaking into the west to surrender to the Americans instead of the Soviets.

As soon as Joz recovered from surgery, he headed to Moscow to find me. Even in this instance his character shined. He took everything upon himself, and he was worried I was unable to manage all my papers and documents. I was in my first month of pregnancy, and I felt ill. We did not even know where we would live. Joz's parents' room was on the fourth floor of a building with no elevator and no running water. Worse yet, the family who lived there before the war returned to claim it for themselves.

The commandant in Odessa hired Joz as a foreman, giving him responsibility over a brigade of captured Germans. The Germans were supposed to restore a house on Pushkinskaya Street. In

[12] By 10 o'clock on April 10th, 1944, the city of Odessa was freed from Nazi occupation.

parallel, Joz gained permission to restore his own apartment on Chicherin Street. Since we also needed money, Joz and his brigade restored a hair salon, stores, and other buildings.[13] He hustled to get the construction materials. It was a big risk because Joz could end up in court for these unapproved actions.

The military demobilization began in September, and our apartment was ready by October. Joz did not ask to be demobilized. Instead, he stayed in the military and joined the Institute of Foreign Languages as an evening student. Joz entered as a third year even though his certificate showed only one complete year of studies at Kyiv University. Joz insisted he would pass the necessary outstanding subjects in one semester to the dean.

I am describing Joz over these years in the kind of close detail that only I observed in him. He was not only capable, but wildly talented. If Joz had been born in the right place and in the right time, he could have achieved a lot more. Even though he lived during an oppressive time for Jews in Russia, he still achieved a great deal.

Once he was finally demobilized, Joz had quite the family. He had not only a pregnant wife, but rather old parents too. Joz continued working as a foreman even after joining the institute as a third year.

To be admitted as an evening student, Joz had to show documentation that proved he worked with the subjects he studied. Thus, he took the initiative to become an English teacher at another evening school. He worked there for six months before he was even demobilized.

Keep in mind, I am evaluating a life that has already been lived. My memories are not necessarily sequential, but I hope to be as objective and neutral as possible. Overall, the key characteristics of Joz's personality were his goal-oriented nature, his responsibility for

[13] These construction jobs were one of the ways to make money illegally on the side.

those close to him, his loyalty to his family, his strives to help others, and his need for creativity. He made sure every goal he pursued worked out, even if he had to break through barriers to achieve them.

Joz could have remained in military construction. It was a decent salary for those times, and it could have led to the opportunity to become an engineer. But for Joz, that was too routine. He took a different path.

Joz left military construction and found a position as an English teacher at the Nautical Academy. His only experience was teaching at the evening school and attending classes at the institute. Within six months, though, he was the lead professor at the institute.

Joz was responsible for the skippers, the captains, and the mechanics, even though the academy had two much older professors with full diplomas and years of experience. Most of Joz's students were veterans, either his age or even older. Yet, Joz conducted himself confidently, without too much familiarity. He was actually quite demanding. He was friendly to some of his professor colleagues even with their age difference. Later after Joz left the institute and we left Odessa, we always visited Professor Fuchs. He was a charismatic, intelligent Jewish man who taught history. After the institute fired all of their Jewish professors, Fuchs taught at the women's school Tassya attended. Everyone at the school adored him.

One English teacher at the academy named Alperovich was born and raised in the U.S.A. He arrived in our country in the 1930s to support socialism and to "help the proletariat." He had no education. However, Alperovich knew English and was married to a Russian woman. This somehow granted him permission to teach. Alperovich taught at the academy before the war and evacuated with his students and the other professors. He did not understand how to teach and had no understanding of teaching methodology. Still, this did not necessarily mean he was stupid.

The academy did not have any books or manuals. Thus, Joz wrote them for his students, customizing the materials according to their contributions. Alperovich was helpful because he knew English terminology. He became a frequent guest in our house. We even had a picture with him with little Rina on his knee, which I later destroyed.

Soon, Joz started to be questioned by KGB agents. He somehow accidentally found out that Alperovich worked for them. Alperovich reported what we talked about in confidence. Joz and everyone we knew were, unsurprisingly, upset. However, Joz would not be Joz if he did not find a solution.

One time when Joz was called to the prosecutor's office he told him that he tended to speak out loudly in his sleep. He said his wife was a little careless, which is completely untrue. He said, sometimes she does not understand situations, and tells them to others. Therefore, Joz could not guarantee the secrecy of all the information he would be trusted with by the government. That was the end of our "cooperation," and the end of his friendship with Alperovich.

The third professor in the academy was a lady who was much older than us. She was elegant, and her husband was a big-shot businessman who used to be part of higher social circles. The two came to Odessa after his stint in jail. The couple received an apartment and the husband managed to get his wife a teaching position at the maritime academy. She was a weak professor who always asked Joz for help. We kept an amicable relationship for many years, even after we left Odessa. Joz also helped her daughter when she was left alone from her parents' passing.

In 1949, the academy students had manuals for their entire first year. In 1950, they had manuals for their second year. Finally, in 1951, they had them for their third. When Joz left the maritime academy, he combined his work into a comprehensive guide for studying nautical documentation. There were 300 to 350 copies. He did not list a price, which was standard for Soviet textbooks and

academic works, and each copy was printed in the Odessa book factory. I have no idea how he managed this. There were four textbooks published in total, but only two survived to this day. Joz did not end up including these books in a list of his published works. Regardless, the students in the institute used them for fifteen years.

Among his peers, Joz was the youngest teacher. Yet, he was the most respected. He had long discussions with the other faculty members as he walked home. He would walk from Kanatnaya Street to our apartment on Uspenskaya for about forty minutes with his colleagues.

Students also respected (and feared) him. They often prepared for his classes at the expense of preparing for their other subjects. In lectures on the history of the Communist Party, the history professor caught students preparing for English instead of listening to the lecture. Some professors even complained to the head of the institute about this issue.

I remember when Joz, Marik, and I visited the Shteingolts. I was pushing Marik in his stroller. The Shteingolts lived in a communal apartment behind the library on Paster Street. A young girl and a male student from the academy left the apartment. The moment the boy saw us he fell into a stupor. He could not even say "hello." Then, he told his girlfriend who the man in front of him was. This girl told Anushka that her boyfriend could not imagine his ironclad professor having a family like an ordinary mortal.

Joz finished studying at the Institute of Foreign Languages in 1949 after starting his work at the academy. He received a full diploma and the right to teach English at the highest educational institutions. Joz was granted this diploma despite the fact that he worked for 56 hours each week. The standard amount was closer to 24. Joz did this because he was paid hourly. On top of all this work, he often helped groups of students prepare to pass state English language exams. Joz had a friendly relationship with many of these students for a long

time. We still met with them years later, and some of them became captains or heads of shipping companies.

Looking back on those years now, I cannot understand how Joz managed everything. He had a heavy workload, academic studies, and two babies at home. He had so many sleepless nights, but he maintained a consistent drive for personal education. Joz was fond of studying western literature. The subject was his original focus back when he was accepted to Kyiv University.

Joz started to prepare for his Ph.D. thesis in western literature by attending seminars at Odessa University. He was accepted to the University of Marxism-Leninism as an evening student. The school was part of the Odessa Science Academy. Joz graduated in 1950. Concurrently, he took his exam in western literature before submitting his Ph.D. thesis. That same year, Joz even graduated with a degree in logic at the Odessa Teaching College and collected materials for another Ph.D. thesis on Sinclair Lewis. Lewis was popular in the Soviet Union in those years. All his major novels, from *Babbitt* to *It Can't Happen Here* to *Kingsblood Royal,* were translated into Russian and published in large circulation. Lewis later published a large article criticizing the politics of the Soviet Union and their human rights violations. He was quickly declared the enemy, and his books were taken out of the libraries. There was no hope of writing a dissertation on his work after that.[14]

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[14] Nerry's recollection of Sinclair Lewis and his novels appears to be an aberration of memory. The actual figure in question must be identified as Howard Fast: the American novelist and journalist who contributed to a U.S. Communist newspaper. Fast was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize and was widely published in the USSR until his break with the Communist Party in the early 1950s. After this rupture, his works were banned in the Soviet Union, and it became quite unsafe to keep his books in private possession. On the other hand, the Berman family maintained a large

In June 1951, Grandmother Katya passed away. We had cruise tickets to visit Sevastopol that month, so we gave them to Sanna and Taniya. All the housework following Katya's death was inevitably left to me. Moses continued to work and grieve his wife's passing.

After his most recent heart attack, my dad was stuck at home in Yaroslavl. Joz insisted that the four of us, Moses, the kids, and I, go visit him. This was in the autumn of 1951. We traveled for a couple of weeks with a short layover in Moscow to visit my Aunt Anyuta.

Joz's first students graduated in May. The drivers and mechanics achieved excellent grades, and no one had average state examination marks. By the order of the minister of the Odessa fleet, Joz was singled out as the best teacher in all eight sea academies.

And yet, the years of Jewish persecution still touched our family. The winter of 1951-1952 was severe. The persecution of "cosmopolitans," in other words Jews, meant endless firings and arrests. In June, Joz's boss received a call from city hall ordering him to "eliminate extra Jews" based on the percentage quotas of those allowed to work. He invited Joz to have an open conversation.

Joz's boss told him he would rather keep him out of the three English teachers, who were all Jews. However, Alperovich only had one year left until retirement, and the other teacher was a mom with a young daughter whose husband was under investigation. He said Joz was young, energetic, and could find something else easily. Joz's boss recommended he resign and claim that the Odessa climate was not suitable for our kids.

Later that month, Joz resigned. He was fully paid, and he left with complete uncertainty. At first, Joz went to Moscow to join the Ministry of Higher Education. The ministry offered him work at a

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collection of Sinclair Lewis's works in their home library (always in plain sight) which likely gave rise to this confusion.

newly opened institute in the city of Ufa. Joz took the train and arrived at Ufa to find a hotel room for the night. He walked towards the nearest cafe for breakfast, but the awful smell followed him. Joz thought everything in the cafe smelled unpleasant too. The waitress explained that whenever the wind came from the oil rigs, the city smelled. She said it happened mostly in the summer, and that the inhabitants stop noticing over time. Joz returned to the hotel, took his things, and left on the first train he could find. He planned to go to Alma-Ata, but the train only went to Chelyabinsk. The Alma-Ata train was supposed to arrive in 24 hours, so Joz put his things in storage and started to walk around Chelyabinsk.

Then, Joz saw a sign: Chelyabinsk Polytechnic Institute. The school was not mentioned in any books on Soviet institutes as it had only been founded two years prior. It had grown out of a Moscow city university over the evacuation period. Most of the university staff had moved back to Moscow, but a few of the professors remained. They were mostly Jews, as we would discover later.

Joz met with the head of human resources, an older Jewish man who worked for a number of years in the higher education system. He convinced Joz to stay and to begin working on September 1st. He said they had an opening for a senior professor. The dean offered our family a spot in a “family dormitory,” and he promised us an apartment in a building under construction soon. Joz returned to Odessa.

By September first, Joz left for Chelyabinsk alone. He did not think five people could really live together in a single room. The dormitory was essentially a barrack with a long hall in the middle and rooms on both sides. I believe there were sixteen in total. There was only one shared kitchen and two bathrooms. All of the residents were young families. There were kids running, playing, and riding bicycles across the hall.

Joz was not paid hourly, instead earning a salary. He looked for additional income to send us since I did not work. Joz successfully

managed to convince a high school director to let him teach logic and psychology as elective courses.

Fifteen female students enrolled, and with each lesson, the number of students increased. A number of girls fell in love with Joz and wrote him love notes. Sometimes, they followed him home after lessons, and some even fought each other over him. It is not that surprising, really, because most of the other teachers were older women who did not take care of themselves. They also dressed sloppily. Joz was a young, charming, twenty-nine-year-old man in a beautifully fitted gray cotton suit. He spoke in a well-delivered theater voice about vastly different matters than their everyday life. He was their "prince charming." But funding, and thus classes, stopped in the spring.

Once Joz received his first paycheck he stopped by the head of human resources to ask a question. The two chatted, and the director told Joz that since he was teaching in an institute, he should become a docent. If he completed his Ph.D. dissertation, he could earn twice as much for the same classes. Joz already had a Ph.D., but it was in western literature. Thus, Joz decided to delve deeper into linguistics. At the end of the semester, he left for Moscow for three weeks.

That winter the Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow, later named after Maurice Thorez, held a large conference-like "discussion." In reality, the leadership in academia were trying to destroy the teachings of Nikolai Marr and other young scientists. The Communist Party's leadership also wanted to undermine a man named Igor Vladimirovich Rahmanov. He had recently completed his Ph.D. and had developed a new method for teaching languages. Rahmanov was a student of an academic named Sherb, and he was educated in Germany.

The conference was brutal. Nobody let Rahmanov respond to any of the accusations he faced. Then, out of nowhere, a young professor from Chelyabinsk Polytechnic Institute asked to say a few words.

He spoke in front of a room of several hundred people. The young man in a nautical uniform, plastered with awards, went on to reject all of the accusations logically and convincingly. He proved that Rahmanov was not only right in his conclusions, but that far from a follower of Marr, he actually criticized all of the latter's assertions. The situation shifted radically from there. Afterwards, a lot of people tried to meet this young man over their break.

This was in the beginning of January 1953. Joz learned of and became interested in the Academy of Educational Science and its long-winded name for its department of foreign languages ("Methods and Practical Skills for Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools").

The following day, Joz visited the academy and talked the department into accepting him as a Ph.D. student. He decided to get his new Ph.D. in foreign languages. After spending a few days at the library, Joz took an examination proctored by the infamously difficult Zoya Mikhaylovna Tsvetkova. She was the author of seemingly every schoolbook on the English language.

She failed him. Tvestkova recognized Joz as the young man who spoke during that recent discussion. She advised him to leave immediately, lest he risk earning a stay at Lubyanka.[15] For his heretical speech, Joz could be arrested imminently. Luckily, Joz was not staying in a hotel, and no one knew his address. Yet, he did not leave.

Joz spent a few more days at the library and retook the exam with professor Arakin who also remembered him from the conference. They had a fantastic discussion over a few hours, and Arakin gave Joz an excellent grade. Afterwards, the two talked about Joz's plan for his Ph.D. dissertation.

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[15] Lubyanka was an infamous detention center. It was the headquarters of the KGB and housed a jail where "enemies of the state" were imprisoned, interrogated, and tortured.

Arakin became Joz's thesis advisor, but he could not give him any practical help because he was a pure linguist. Arakin specialized in publishing dictionaries, not only in English, but in Norwegian, Swiss German, and a few other languages.

Joz left for Chelyabinsk that same evening. After boarding the train, Joz realized he might have just avoided a more sinister fate.

Before his departure, Joz was formally listed as a co-author in an official document on foreign language teaching methodology. The document connected him to the middle school of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. This recognition gave him the opportunity to visit Moscow outside of just the summer, and it granted him access to the Leninsky Foreign Language libraries. Arakin, as his advisor, also received a small stipend.

The watershed moment of Stalin's death went unnoticed in our family, as we were dealing with a tragedy of our own. It was Moses's terminal illness and his inevitable death on March 6th, 1953. By some miracle, Joz made it to Odessa in the early morning of March 5th. He saw his dad while he was still alive and lucid. Moses died in his arms.[16]

Joz returned to Chelyabinsk immediately after the funeral, but he fully intended to move back to Odessa. He gave his notice of resignation on the grounds that the administration never fulfilled their promise to give him an apartment. The higher-ups tried to talk him out of it, telling him he could bring his family over the summer and that would be given another room. They said they would pay for the transfer in full and that we would receive the first available apartment. Joseph did not take them up on their offer.

So, that summer, Joz returned to Odessa. He applied and was quickly accepted as a senior professor at the polytechnic institute. The chair of Joz's department was named Vera Alexanderova Pyatigorskaya.

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[16] See Part One.

She was his professor back when he studied at the institute. She was very welcoming and regarded him as her helper.

Joz started to systematically organize his materials to prepare for his dissertation. He used all of the academic resources he collected at the nautical academy to his advantage. He hoped to defend his thesis at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, since his work centered on the methodology of teaching at the middle school level. His rough draft was ready in six months, but he needed to confirm a few things before submission.

Joz asked his superiors for three months of academic leave because his bibliography needed extra work. After confirming dates and quotes, Joz needed everything typed. Joz, Mark, and I went to Moscow. Rina stayed with Aunt Taniya, Eva, and Tanyga. Taniya was no longer working at the daycare, but she still took Rina there and picked her up at night. While in Moscow we visited Aunt Anyuta, but we could not stay with her.

My dad's third cousin Efim Subbotovskiy greatly aided our family. We stayed at his factory-provisioned apartment in Uhtomka. Joz left to work at the Leninsky library and other libraries nearby every morning. As for Mark, after summer vacation ended, he attended a local school.

Joz finished everything within three months. He turned in his thesis, made the arrangements for his thesis defense in March, and moved the family back home. A week before his scheduled defense, he went to Moscow alone.

Joz's dissertation was set to be held at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Based on resources from the Nautical Academy, his dissertation's final title was "The Methodology of Teaching Lexicology in the English Language." Thinking about that time, I cannot help but wonder how he managed to get permission for the one-time defense of his thesis at the academy. His subject was very narrowly focused on middle schools, after all. All of the votes for his

defense were "for," with only one "against." After defending his dissertation, Joz frequently worked with the Sector of Foreign Languages. He pushed to transform foreign language teaching methodology to further develop students' skills and to enhance teachers' knowledge base.

Joz's relationships with many of his colleagues were friendly and close-knit. Ph.D. candidates and co-authors often asked him for his consultation and advice. Their advisors frequently discussed the subject matter of their research with him. Joz was approached not only for academic advice, but also for life advice. He had an important character trait: the ability to listen to another person without interrupting, and to give feedback or point out mistakes inoffensively.

After completing his dissertation, Joz went back to the Odessa Polytechnic Institute. From the start of the 1954-1955 academic year, he was continually poached to chair the Department of Foreign Languages. Joz refused the offer and said he had to at least become a docent before becoming chair. In reality, he had other misgivings.

First, the chair of the department Vera Aleksandrovna Pyategorskaya was his former professor. It would have been reasonable for her to retire by that point in her life, but she continued working at the university anyways. He did not want to deal with rumors that he "ate" Vera Aleksandrovna.[17]

Second, the core department staff was made up of his former classmates. He was friendly with them, and some of the connections even seemed more-than-friendly. This created competition and an unprofessional environment. Later on, when Vera Aleksandrovna finally left, the department had a reputation as the most quarrelsome in the entire university.

[17] To "eat" an individual meant eliminating them through unorthodox means.

Thus, Joz accepted that he likely would not find any positions in Odessa. Most of his colleagues considered him too "self-serving" and too young to take charge. Moreover, he was the first to complete his Ph.D. without attending graduate school. In comparison, the majority of the university's professors went to graduate school and were only starting their dissertations after beginning to work. They were all older than him.

Joz started searching advertisements in the *Teacher's Gazette* for opportunities to head another department. The most acceptable option seemed to pop up at the Belarusian Institute of Railroad Engineers (BIIJT) in Gomel. It was a young institute, just two years old, meaning there were no conservative traditions in the department and the potential colleagues did not know each other well. Another important factor was that Gomel was a historically Jewish place. Until 1917, it was considered a place where Jews could live peacefully. It was part of "the Pale of Settlement."

Joz sent in his application documents and emphasized that getting an apartment was non-negotiable. Joz received a response that the school wanted him to move in August and start work on September first. His selection would be finalized at the end of September, and there was already an available apartment for us.

We went to assess the apartment together. Inexperienced as we were, we decided to combine the trip with a vacation and departed Kyiv in a small boat. It took us four days and four nights to reach Gomel, whereas it would have taken one night by train.

The steamboat was tiny. It only had two first-class cabins for two passengers. The rest of the space was a common area where people, luggage, and chickens were lumped together. There was no restaurant, or even a cafeteria on board. Whenever the steamboat docked, its passengers left to sit on the wooden piers. The boat came to shore frequently even though there were no real facilities to dock to. We did not have a proper dinner for the entirety of the trip.

Instead, we ate the cookies we took with us and the berries we bought from women who sold them at local markets.

On our way back from Gomel, we did not risk traveling by boat. We took the train home after spending only one day there. Joz left for Gomel again on September first, traveling light. After his final consideration in the middle of October, he returned to get us.

We bought some new furniture with the money Joz received for the move. However, we decided not to get rid of the Odessa apartment. We only inevitably sold it in part after the death of Joz's parents. Thus, on September 1st, 1955, Joz became the head of the Department of Foreign Languages of BIIJT.

There were about twelve professors and two assistants in the department, and all of them were young. Most of the professors were graduates of the Minsk Institute of Foreign Languages. These teachers tended to work in lower schools and did not have much of an idea of how to teach at the institute level.

Joz began building the department from the ground up. Naturally, his process was not perfect. Nevertheless, his persistence held true in the face of strong opposition.

A few other department professors resisted change in general. Fortunately, this opposition was in the minority. It was only helmed by two men and one woman. The three acted passionately, but not cohesively. In the end, Joz was able to get rid of the male professors. The female professor quickly realized it would be better to just get along with Joz. She also began accepting that the past was in the past.

This professor was the daughter of the head of the human resources department. She worked with Petrukovich in Tashkent. When Petrukovich left for Gomel to start working at the institute, he took her with him as a favor to her mother. He sponsored her a lot. She was divorced and had a daughter Rina's age. Professionally, though, she was a pretty weak professor.

Initially, Joz tried to show her how she could improve. The professor would get offended and run off to complain. Joz did not have a lot of experience managing subordinates in this particular context at the time. At first, he was not adept at understanding his subordinates' personal motives. He made a lot of mistakes, and he paid for them. In one instance he convinced a professor named Vinguev to join his department. He thought that among a group of mostly women, the man would take his side. It turned out that Vinguev had ambitions of his own. The professor became the instigator of various incidents. The other member of the department, fittingly named Tupikov,[18] was also not above writing anonymous letters.

Over time the professors gradually got used to Joz's high standards. They understood that they could learn a lot from him. Eventually, the department's reputation improved. The higher-ups valued Joz's group more and more, especially after he gave a couple of lectures on television, organized a small theater, and started producing student festivals. Students at these festivals even performed in three different languages: English, German, and French. Joz also presented lectures to the public. I do not remember the exact subject, but it related to art history.

Joz rapidly transformed into the leader of the student body and the young professors. His leadership even spread beyond his own department. Other professors started trusting him with their personal business, from romantic to family affairs. Joz always managed to find a way to give meaningful advice.

Joz's first year of work coincided with a comical incident. One of the laboratory assistants who had just received a foreign language degree from Minsk University was a young woman. Her husband of only a couple of months came to the department one day to

[18] The word "Tupikov" belongs to the root "tupik," meaning dead-end, dull, and dumb. The suffix "ov" denotes "belonging to" or "originating from." The name likely came from a location, like a dead-end street known as "tupik."

introduce himself to Joz. During the meeting he decided the chair of this department was too young, and that his wife's constant talk about him at home was too much. He immediately requested for her to resign.

To fully understand why Joz's students were drawn to him, it is important to remember how BIIJT started. In 1953, high-ranking officials in the Belarusian government decided to organize an institute to raise Belarus' prestige.[19] The country did not have any technical higher education institutions at the time. Belarus' pre-war industry was destroyed, leading to a dire need for engineers. The formation of new industrial organizations was more intense and demanded a much higher technical skillset than before the war. Gomel was chosen for the location of these new organizations because it was the second largest city in Belarus. Still, it only had one pedagogical institute.

Another important factor in choosing Gomel was the existence of a large building nearby where the institute could potentially be housed. The building was home to a different school there before the revolution.

During Joz's tenure as the chair of his department, their seminars were completely full. Joz also maintained a full teaching load until he abdicated his chair in 1962. Thus, Joz was exposed to a large group of students. He was not only their favorite professor, but a chief advisor on their most significant questions. One such question was which theme to choose for their diploma projects.

When BIIJT celebrated the 25th anniversary of its first graduating class, the graduates themselves were the organizers. The class found Joz, and he was the only faculty invited to return who was not still working at the time. The organizers sent us an invitation for two and

[19]After the war, much of Belarus was laid to ruins. There were very few institutes or universities. Gomel itself was a small provincial town with only one institution of higher learning.

booked us a luxury suite in a hotel. They even sent us round trip tickets.

After the celebration's banquet, the name "Berman" came up more than the names of the then-current professors. When the graduates took the floor, each one thanked the institute for their education and personally thanked Joz for his advice on career development and their families.

The majority of those graduates became very successful. A few of them became heads of different railroads, and others even reached the level of vice president and other prestigious roles in the industry. Three of the graduates became professors in different universities. One, a man from Gomel who began his higher education at Minsk University, became both a doctor and a professor. This man's family belonged to the intelligentsia. I still remember his last name: "Rouge."

In Rouge's banquet toast he said his father worried that he was not truly a student at heart. Joseph was the first person to convince him to become an academic. Thanks to Joseph's guidance, he completed his diploma with excellent marks and gained acceptance to a Ph.D. program. Joseph even gave Rogue the subject of his dissertation. Thanks to Joz, Rouge became a professor at forty-five.

Clearly, Joseph had a special gift as a teacher and as a mentor. He felt it was his calling to give advice and to help others. He had a knack for finding who needed help the most at any particular moment.

In Gomel, Joz developed a professional friendship with a group of colleagues who worked in Moscow at the Research Institute. These ties lasted his entire life. The group specialized in the methods of teaching foreign languages in schools. Igor Vladimirovich Rahmanov was the group's head initially. He introduced Joz to the circle of young Ph.D. candidates. Joz soon became the main advisor on each dissertation subject while he lived in Gomel and Odessa. This was not particularly surprising because the methods themselves were an

emerging science without any definitive authorities at the time. This was an opportunity for him to shine.

Joz had a particularly entrepreneurial personality. It was not enough to work in his department with students and other professors. The department itself started from scratch and began with no resources or even a dedicated space. All they had was a small room underneath the staircase. The department did not have books, manuals, worksheets, or lesson plans. After building it from the ground up, Joz found the time to start another project: a community theater that competed with those in universities in much bigger cities.

A year after starting this project, builders finished the first student dormitory across the square from the main academic building. The department finally received their dedicated space. On the first floor, there were small study rooms for students to do work outside of their lectures. Joz convinced the administration to give him three rooms for the department. One was split to create the office for the department head, the teachers' lounge, and a space for the laboratory assistants. The two other rooms were divided and used as the main laboratory and as lecture halls. As a note, the majority of the institute's leading departments used one room for everything. The head of each department was typically only separated by bookshelves. Finally, the department added audio equipment and obtained typewriters which could write in Russian, Latin, English, German, and French.

Back to Joz's ambitiousness. Joz understood he would never make enough money from working at the institute alone. So, he made agreements with a number of businesses for his personal services. One such agreement was with a bakery named "Spartak."

Most of Spartak's products were exported, so the company needed documentation in languages other than Russian. Joseph helped them, and some of the money he earned went to the department itself to buy new equipment. One day, the bakery received a machine to sort caramel candies into plastic bags. The machine was ordered

by some government idiot, so came in arrived in parts and with assembly instructions in English and French. Many tried to translate the instructions, but they lacked an understanding of technical terms in these foreign languages. This led Joz to do most of the work himself. Once the machine's assembly started, the engineers asked Joz for a lot of help. After the machine was assembled, it worked for about a week. To work continuously, the machine needed a particular type of plastic that the government unsurprisingly forgot to buy.

Once Joz returned to Odessa he became the key authority among the large circle of people he helped find dissertation research subjects. This was when his brilliant talent of understanding technical problems shined. On top of helping these people find their topics, Joz came up with detailed plans on how to execute their research. This stretched to areas far beyond linguistics. I did not know about all of them, and I do not remember everything, but at least three examples stand out.

One was Gregory Prokopievich Lutenko, whom I already mentioned while talking about my dearest father-in-law, Moses Abramovich.[20] When we moved to Odessa G.P. was head of the directorate of the commercial Odessa-Kishinev railway train. He was already over fifty and he helped Moses and I find jobs. Once G.P. started having problems at work, Joz talked him into completing his Ph.D. dissertation to improve his professional value. G.P.'s dissertation focused on the effective utilization of railway resources. Joz introduced him to the leading professor of BIIJT. While G.P. worked on his dissertation, Joz edited the entire work and advised him on which opponents to invite to his defense.

A second example was Nikolay Vasilievich Ostapchuk, our fourth-floor neighbor. Joz helped him with his Ph.D. dissertation in food

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[20] See Part One.

industry technological processing. More specifically, it had to do with dehydration. N.V. came to our apartment, and we discussed his work for hours in great detail. Joz helped him with his publication and with the organization of his Ph.D. defense. These are the details I remember.

Finally, Joseph helped the dean by the name of Naremskiy at Rina's university. His Ph.D. dealt with automation. The two mainly met at work, so I was never fully aware of the details. Regardless, Naremskiy came to Joz with a finished plan for his dissertation. He mainly wanted advice on his writing style. Joz did not like his plan and advised him to restart the entire thing. He also told him how to do it. After this, Joz read each chapter from his old dissertation and made corrections until the narrative logically led to conclusions.

Now, back to the year 1955. Joz left to BIIJT at the end of August and retrieved us at the end of October. The majority of our things were shipped in a container. In Kyiv, we changed trains and arrived in Gomel early in the morning. From the train station we could see a wide street called Komsomolskaya, later renamed Lenin Prospect. Bizarrely, there was nobody to help move our luggage at the station, and no taxis or private cars. Joz went somewhere to find a cart. The whole family, like fire victims, walked up the road with our cart because there were no sidewalks. There were fences on both sides of the road. Past the fences, there were either ruins or areas cleared for future construction. We even saw a few dirt huts. On the left, there was one huge six-story house. On the right, there was the first non-broken home: ours.

The next morning, Joz showed me where to find a market and left for work. There was a grocery store on the first floor of the building.

A neighbor knocked on my door during the day, wanting to meet me. She was from Dnepropetrovsk and lived in Gomel the entire year. Her husband was a professor, she was not working, and her son was a student. This was the first family I met in Gomel.

This family introduced us to more people, as one of their good friends was a director of the most prestigious mechanical plant in the area. The wife of the director was a senior nurse at the railroad hospital. She was a socialite and had gatherings where all of Gomel's intelligencia gathered. We were invited to celebrate the New Year with them once, which is where we met the Barkan family. I do not remember the rest of the group because we never went there again. Why am I being so detailed? To express that Joz had a gift: attracting people.

Joseph Azarovich Barkan had a practical goal in meeting professors from the institute. His oldest daughter, Nina, was finishing high school. He was concerned about her fate. At the institute, he happened to meet the head of the department, who was Jewish. Nonetheless, Joseph's business dealings with Barkan sparked a true friendship that lasted many years.

Joz of course helped Nina get into the institute, along with her brother Sasha and her sister Natasha. He also helped Nina find a job after she finished school. Joseph Azarovich was ten years older than Joz and in a completely different field, law. Still, the two were somehow similar and loved talking for long periods of time.

Joz would often say "Let's see Azarovich" in the hyperplasiaAma's tevening. The two would go to the study while I spent time with his wife Sonya. She was the sweetest woman and was a pleasure to spend time with.

The beginning of our life in Gomel was not very pleasant. Rina became sick with diphtheria and was taken to the hospital. She didn't start school until spring because she also had heart complications. When we moved, we had to think about where our kids would study. Joz showed great foresight in this respect. Even though Mark finished the second grade in Odessa, Joz helped him

skip a year in order to keep him from serving in the army.[21] I still do not know how he managed to talk the director of the school to accept Mark into the fourth grade immediately.

Joz loved his children. He spent a lot of time with them in spite of how busy he was. Joz never put his responsibilities as a dad on anyone else. He did not spend a single vacation without our family. Wherever he went, we went together.

Mark might remember that it was nearly impossible to convince him to go outside. Whenever Joz asked Mark to go for a walk, Mark had a condition: he would only go if they talked. Joz also spent a lot of time tutoring Mark in math. He wasn't concerned about any other subjects because Mark proved to be a capable, precocious, and avid reader. The children always approached Joz with their problems, even after they grew up.

Joz only had a handful of close friends. During his school years he had Izik Guzman. After the war, Izik went back to Kyiv, and we went to Odessa. We did not get the chance to meet much. We stopped seeing each other the further we grew in different directions. However, whenever Joz visited Kyiv, he made sure to see Izik and Lyalya. I accompanied him sometimes, even though Lyalya and I had nothing in common. I was not that eager to spend time with her.

Inevitably, because Joz and Izik were only connected from their time in high school, their friendship went stale. Joz tried to talk Izik into growing his career further than his position as a regular engineer in construction management. However, the financial security that Izik

[21] Nerry's son Mark recalls: "When I started school, it was a ten-grade system, so without skipping I would graduate at seventeen and a half. If I was not accepted into university, I would have to serve that same year. Because I skipped a year, I graduated at sixteen and a half and had an additional year to try to get into university."

enjoyed from his parents instead of his own labor shaped his priorities.

As we settled in Gomel, Joz's scientific interests became tied to Moscow. No one in Gomel could be his professional ally. Joz decided to find Wolf Buckhbinder, a close friend from university. For some reason, Joz was convinced that Wolf survived the war.

Wolf was a student in the first days of the war and was likely deployed outside of Kyiv. One day while visiting Kyiv, Joz inquired the address bureau about Wolf's parents. To Joz's delight, he received their pre-war address. When he contacted them, the parents told Joz that Wolf was married and living with his wife in his father-in-law's apartment. Wolf beautifully described their first meeting since the war in his memoir. That was the moment after which their friendship really flourished.

Joz and Wolf cooperated in both the personal and the professional domain. Joz grew close to the Buckhbinders and Wolf's in-laws, the Kaplans. Their friendship was not always perfect though. Sometimes the two disagreed and hurt each other's feelings, but they never let these moments impact their overall relationship.

Joz never boasted about his academic superiority to Wolf in science. Instead, he appreciated Wolf's drive to learn deeply about the area they both pursued. Joz also valued Wolf's open-mindedness in listening to his advice.

Wolf's wife and I were not part of this friendship, but we were assigned the roles of hospitable and warm hosts. The one person most excited by Joz's visits was Basia's dad, Naum Efimovich.

Joz tried to see Naum every time he visited Kyiv. Joz had an interest in spending time with people who were older and had more life experience than he did, regardless of their occupation. That drive was usually mutual between him and the older friend. Professor

Rahmanov would even get offended if Joz visited Moscow without seeing him.

Even though Joz did not have a lot of close friends, his circle of acquaintances was in Gomel and Odessa was broad. I have difficulty even remembering all of them. In Gomel, those relationships started in vastly different ways.

For example, when we got a car, we needed professional servicing. Someone recommended a man named Boris Beilin. Boris drove a firetruck and was on call 24 hours of the day. He started working early on in his life, but still managed to help his younger brother get an education. Boris was thirty years old with a wife and a son. He lost most of his other family during the war.

Joz strongly encouraged Boris to start evening school to receive the equivalent of a high school diploma. Within a year Joz helped him gain admittance to the autorail institute in Saratov as a student.

Why the autorail institute? Joz once helped a man working at the department of foreign languages with his Ph.D. thesis. His name was Bilnov, and the two first met in Moscow at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Bilnov was inclined to return Joz's favor.

To me, Boris was the first person I helped with a German language exam. He graduated from the institute around the time we left Gomel. Boris soon became the director of a large mechanical garage. We kept a friendly relationship with him for a long time. He visited us a few times in Odessa.

In Gomel there was always someone turning to Joz for advice. Even his bosses came to value him and invite him to resolve business questions about their department. Unfortunately, these connections caused envy and animosity among Joz's peers.

During our first years in Gomel, the relationship between a director in Joz's department named Petrukovich and his deputy named Beliy

was steady. Over time however, the director lost ground in the institute because of his age. His subordinate was younger, driven, and craved power. Beliy and Petrukovich disagreed constantly. It became difficult for them to maintain their working relationship. However, taking one's side meant making an enemy of the other. The institute was divided into two camps, and there was frequent infighting. At the same time, we started to have problems at home with our children.

Mark had finished high school and was studying in Minsk. However, he had no scholarship or housing because he was considered to be the son of well-earning parents. Rina was about to finish high school, but she did not want to go to the railroad institute or the pedagogical school. Joz decided there was no longer a reason to stay, and that we should ultimately leave Gomel. The question was: where would we go?

In Moscow, a number of academics wanted Joz to run as department chair of foreign languages at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Yet, they could not secure our residential registration or our housing.

Instead, we nearly decided to move to Kyiv. We knew there was a university similar to the one in Moscow. We had almost settled everything and were offered an apartment in a new district. However, Joz inevitably did not want to move to the more provincial area of Ukraine. He also did not care for his potential co-workers, eighty percent of whom would be wives of the management. He used the apartment they offered as an excuse not to take the offer. The apartment was actually quite uncomfortable, since its biggest room was twelve square meters and there were only two other six square meter rooms.

Finally, we decided to move to Odessa. Odessa had a cultural center, fourteen universities, as well as our friends and family. In Gomel, our closest friends were the Barkans and Alexandra Samoilovna. Our other good friends Mark and Raya Buckhbinder had already left for

Kishinev. Mark was Wolf's brother, who was eleven years his junior. By the time we got to know the Buckhbinder family, Mark had already left Kyiv. In those years it was practically impossible for a Jew to be accepted into a Kyiv university. Thus, Mark left to study in Herson at an agricultural university. The school prepared specialists to work in southern areas of the Soviet Union. Mark was accepted into the department of irrigation.

When Mark was a junior, the entire department transferred to Kishinev. By the time he graduated, Mark was already married to his classmate. They had a two-year-old daughter named Mila. Raya's mother also lived with them.

Mark graduated with excellent marks. However, he was not allowed to stay at the university because he was not from Moldova. He was consequently sent to Dushanbe. No one was that excited to accept him there, either. Mark requested to have an apartment specially designed to suit the needs of a young specialist with a family. Unfortunately, his request was rejected.

Mark received a so-called "open choice diploma" which meant he could move anywhere he found a job. He left to join his parents in Kyiv. However, he faced the same challenge of finding somewhere to live and somewhere to work. Mark's parents lived in a twelve-square-meter room in a communal apartment. Wolf called Joz for advice and for help.

Joz told Mark to go to Gomel as he would find work there. Of course, he did end up finding a position with stellar employment conditions.

There was a construction company that worked on hydraulics for agricultural areas in Gomel. Mark was hired as a foreman. In less than a year, he had a three-room apartment in a new house near his work.

Joz also started to convert Mark to his "religion." That is, becoming a scientist and completing a Ph.D. dissertation. Mark talked to the

chair of the department of hydraulics at BIIJT to accept Mark as a Ph.D. candidate under his mentorship. Mark visited or met Joz at the institute almost every day. The two were seen together so often that a rumor started that Mark was Joz's son from his first marriage. One of our neighbors even sincerely asked me to confirm it.

And so, the Buckhbinders returned to Kishinev, and we returned to Odessa. We remained very close friends. Our family frequently saw them up until their immigration to Israel, and later to the United States.

Unfortunately, not everything went smoothly after we settled in Odessa. During the summer, Gene Braver introduced Joz to her old friend Iza Geyber. He taught English at a local institute named Gidormet. The chair of the department was an elderly woman who had no Ph.D. candidates. Iza introduced Joz to the institute higher-ups. Things seemed to go well at first, and Joz started to prepare his documents to apply to work there.

However, the school did not accept his documents under the excuse that he was not a member of the Communist Party. The truth, as we discovered later, was that Iza was afraid of competing against Joz. She had talked the president out of hiring him. Iza was very friendly with this president, like a clever Jewish advisor to the governor. Since the chair of the department was elderly, this president had a high level of influence over who was accepted into the organization.

Nevertheless, Joz and Iza did not become enemies. In fact, Joz actually helped Iza in her life. When Iza's son Petya finished studying at the Kyiv Institute of Foreign Languages, Joz hired him as a lecturer in his own department. Joz even started talking Petya into preparing a Ph.D. dissertation. However, Petya did not enjoy teaching. So, Joz introduced him to professor Leontiyev, a psycholinguist. By working together Petya started getting published in psycholinguistic brochures and books. Joz also helped Iza when she was preparing an English-Russian dictionary in hydrometeorology.

Regardless, when Joz did not get a job at Gidromet, he convinced himself could not rely on anyone else's help. He thought could only succeed on his own.

Joz decided he did not want to go to a polytechnic institute because the naval academy and the hydrological institute were firmly under the Soviet regime's control. Joz decided to try to work at the Technological Institute for the Production of Food.

The chair of the department was a senior man named Kats. He was over seventy years old by that time. Kats worked there from the first days of the organization's formation in the 1930s. It was known as the Institute for Agricultural Machinery and Grain Production back then. The institute's new president, named Platonov, was an energetic person who wanted to break the institute out of its niche specialization. Platonov succeeded in renaming the institute as "Technological." He organized a number of modern departments like automation, winemaking, and dehydration. Platonov was interested in attracting young, dynamic workers.

Platonov wanted a docent and a Ph.D. candidate to chair the department, but none of the lecturers had degrees. He accepted all of Joz's conditions, from housing to transferring his third-year son from Minsk to join the institute. The school actually did not have any available apartments, but Platonov personally directed the school to make three rooms with a private bathroom available at the new student dormitory. Joz was hired at the end of September.

At the end of October, we moved to Odessa. Our family received an apartment on Pioneerskaya two-and-a-half years before we moved to the apartment near the sixth station of the Big Fountain landmark. Joz enjoyed his work in his first years at the institute. He collected friends, allies, and… a lot of enemies.

Through the twenty years he served as chair, Joz built the department out of nothing. Before him, no one there had any familiarity with methodology or scientific approaches to teaching.

Joz convinced the ministry of education to allow him to open a department for Ph.D. candidates. In those years, it was the first and only department that did so. Joz's first candidate was named Katya Rijkova. She had studied at BIIGT. Katya was followed by other young lecturers like Lida and Nonna from the Ujgorod University, Eva from Yerevan, and many others. Their dissertations explored the same schools of thought in the methodology of teaching. Almost all of the candidates received their Ph.D.s from the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow. Under Joseph's leadership, ten students received doctoral degrees.

Joz's main scientific interest was in a completely underdeveloped area: the methodology of teaching foreign languages in a technical higher-education organization. Professor Berman's school was the only one available to the departments of foreign languages at technical institutes.

Joz was first published back while he was working at the Odessa Naval Academy. He eventually logged a total of seventy-four publications. However, a lot of them were co-authored. Most of Joz's co-authors were Ph.D. candidates whose participation simply involved collecting experimental data.

Joz's work was published not only in higher education textbooks, but also in journals and magazines such as "Questions of Learning Multiple Languages," "Foreign Languages at Schools," "The Bulletin of Higher Learning," and "Psychology Today." Joz was also published in "Zeitschrift fur Anglistic und Amerikanistik," and "Frencdsprachen-unterricht," the "Journal of English and American English" and "Teaching of Foreign Languages" in English.

Joz also wrote four grammar textbooks, the last of which was published after his death. Second pressings sold out quickly. In Moscow, his methodology of teaching foreign languages was published by the "Higher Education" publishing house. In Leipzig, it was published by "Encyclopedia," which also translated the work into German.

Joz was invited as a guest lecturer to several universities over his career. This included the Foreign Language Institute in Minsk, the Kyiv Foreign Language Institute, the Bakinskiy Institute of Languages, and Yerevanskiy Polytech.

There was even a famous professor named Lozinov who strongly pushed Joz to collaborate with him. Lozinov was from Bulgaria, and he was the author of a book about learning foreign languages while sleeping. However, the professor's invitation was held in the archive of the department at the institute, and Joz was never allowed to visit Bulgaria. There was once a conference about the newest methods of teaching the English language in England. Joz received an invitation but was blocked from attending due to the same constraints.

Now, back to the 1960s. Our family returned to Odessa, and Joz was hired into his new position and dedicated twenty years to building the department. Other aspects of our life stabilized as well. Our apartment was not bad, at least based on the standards of that time. Our family bought a car back when we were in Gomel and switched to a newer model in Odessa. Our children studied diligently. We had a support circle and we had friends. We spent our free time attending the theater and the philharmonic orchestra. We took trips to Moscow and Kyiv, and to Baku, Yerevan, Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk, and Sochi in the Caucasus. We even managed to vacation abroad once.

Our family was invited to Berlin. We took a river cruise from Izmail on the Danube River. We made a few hours-long stops in Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. The final stop was in Bratislava. We spent a few days with some friends and then took a small bus from Prague to Brno. We visited Karl Shtien, a former castle to the Czech kings, and then spent a week in Prague. We took a train to Berlin, where we stayed for two weeks. Finally, we returned to Brest by train and crossed Poland to go back to Odessa.

In life there are not only happy days, but also days of crisis.

When there are cracks in relationships, there is not usually a single guilty side. Instead, there is often a lack of understanding between two people. Joz and I had our own misunderstanding because of our stupid Soviet or "young pioneer" lack of sexual education.

Sexual relationships between husbands and wives were considered a duty and an essential component of a solid marriage. We had no idea there was actually a science of sexuality. No one had heard that men go through a period where their potential and robustness decline. Joz experienced this decline painfully. I did not understand it. Not only did I not help, I pushed him away somewhat. That was the moment when Tasya appeared. Tasya was a sexually experienced woman who had previously hung out at a club for sailors when she was a student. She married early, and later divorced. She was also fourteen years younger than me.

After Tasya became Joz's postgraduate student she frequently joined him at conferences and on trips. She showered Joz with myriad tokens of attention. One day, she came to our apartment as a guest. Tasya told Joz that a relationship with her could be useful to his well-being, and that she would not ask for anything else in return. These were, of course, just words. Her real goal was to marry him.

There were several examples of professors marrying their postgraduate students around us. Joz told me about them himself. He said it would be my decision to stay with him or to leave the relationship. He said that he loved me, that I was his wife and his friend, but that Tasya was a necessity to him at the same time. Joz could not tell me how long he needed her. However, he was confident he would never ask for a divorce, nor would he marry her under any conditions. If I had decided to separate from him, he would simply leave me alone and move to another town.

Of course, the news of Tasya and Joz spread in the department rapidly. Each party received it differently. Very few were accepting, and the majority disliked Tasya.

Some teachers started anonymous harassment campaigns. They sent letters to the head of human resources. At first, there were a few anonymous letters, and management did not react. When other letters came in, marked as a "copy," management finally had to do something about the situation.

Joz was not a member of the Communist Party, so he was asked to come to the human resources department. There were a number of investigators there, including a committee from the Ministry of Education. We never found out who exactly wrote the letters. They were clearly written by a person who not only knew the department from the inside, but also knew a lot of facts of our familial relationships. I read only one, and I was shocked how cleverly facts and lies were mixed with creativity and imagination. But, to some extent you had to believe everything written was true.

The department, once a connected and friendly team, was divided. Various groups emerged, each of whom behaved differently towards Joz. Some publicly stood by him, but the majority were passive. Joz's overt enemies were few and far between, and most of them gloated quietly.

At that time, Joz had planned to leave for Kyiv in the beginning of July to address a few issues with his most recent publication. He felt ill before he left.

Joz's doctor told him he had benign prostatic hyperplasia and told to plan for surgery. During his trip to Kyiv, Joz was hit with acidic rain that potentially had a radioactive component. He was soaked to the bone. When Joz returned the next day, he had a horrible cough and ran a high fever. Joz did not develop pneumonia, but his cough lingered. The surgery was postponed as he needed to be rid of the cough first. Joz stayed at the Kyiv institute of pulmonology, but his doctors did not find anything wrong, even after taking a CAT scan.

In October, we left for Baku. Our family received vouchers to go to a sanitorium on the seashore. Mesma and her husband, the head doctor for the railway hospital, gave them to us.

Baku had beautiful weather, clean air, and a complete disconnection from the outside world. Joz became stronger. His cough diminished and almost stopped by nightfall. At the same time, the in-fighting in his department continued. One of the warring groups finally pushed Tasya to leave for good. Her departure seemed to appease management, and things at the institute calmed down.

When we returned home Joz began to work. But, within one week, he ran another high fever and developed bronchitis. Our family doctor insisted that Joz needed blood work.

Joz went to the student infirmary because he knew he would not have to wait in a queue there for help. A lab assistant who had recently finished her continuing education courses decided to test her knowledge in practice. Joz seemed like the right subject for her, as he was sick but with an unclear diagnosis. In addition to his general blood work, the assistant did a complete microbiological analysis. It took about three hours. Joz, of course, did not stick around to wait for the results. He asked the assistant to give them to me.

The results of the test were so horrible that the lab assistant needed to confirm her findings. She called the place where she had studied and asked them to run the tests again. An experienced specialist looked at the samples and said everything was done correctly. She repeated the test again regardless. With great difficulty, I convinced Joz to go to that hospital. Unfortunately, everything was confirmed. Diagnosis: myeloid leukemia, a form of blood cancer.

Consulting with an experienced hematologist was necessary to confirm the diagnosis. The only one in our area resided in a suburban hospital in the Kotovskiy district. This specialist was an expert in leukemia. He advised that Joz undergo hospitalization for

myeloid leukemia. The only hospitals that treated this condition were in Kyiv, Lviv, and Moscow.

The doctor said that Joz needed to be observed constantly. Joz went to the office to do bloodwork and be examined every two weeks.

The disease developed slowly. Over time, the doctors saw a consistent increase in monocytes and blastomas. Joz continued to work, but he rarely visited the department.

In the fall, Joz faced another academic confirmation meeting for the following year. He made a deal with Mirolubov, the head of the science institute of psychology with the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. He was to take a six-month sabbatical.

So, in February 1986, we left for Moscow. We were lucky and found housing in the post-doctorate dormitory in the Lenin Gorki district.

There was a modern school in this woody, rustic area. There was also a new dormitory for postdoctoral students and apartments for professors. Each room had four beds, two tables, two chairs, a wardrobe, and a shared kitchen on the floor with one refrigerator and a handful of hot plates. There was also a shared shower and a shared toilet. To get food, I had to travel across the village and through the woods.

Joz worked on his paper to prove that he was actually on a sabbatical. He spent most of his time lecturing on how to correct grammar at the local school. Of course, we looked for someone to consult with about his medical condition above all.

We got help from the late Olga Zaharovna, may her memory be a blessing. She arranged for Joz to be seen at the hematology hospital Kassirskogo. A professor named Vorobiev and his assistant Serebrykova concluded that the cancer was slow-developing and treatable. They advised, as a preliminary step, to surgically remove the benign prostatic hyperplasia. This was because chemotherapy

would suppress Joz's immune system, and the doctors could not predict how his post-surgery recovery would go. Serebrykova strongly advised having an epidural before the surgery, but Joz had a prejudice against this and refused. Ultimately, we decided Joz would have his surgery and start chemotherapy a month later.

Joz underwent surgery on April 4th, 1986. It was a success. However, his recovery was slow.

Joz spent the entire month in the hospital. During this time, the Chernobyl tragedy occurred. As a result, Joz's main specialist, Professor Vorobievt, flew to Kyiv. The clinic had to be closed, and the practice's phones were disconnected from communicating. A week later, Joz was discharged.

Due to a urological infection, Joz ran another fever and his temperature rose to thirty-nine degrees Celsius. The attending physician prescribed antibiotics the day after his blood work was done. By that time, his sabbatical was over. The summer was approaching, so the dormitory we stayed in was about to close. All of the postdoctoral students were leaving, and we were required to leave too. So, we decided to move in with Rina.

Joz insisted we return to Odessa soon. I, with my personality, could not convince him to stay in Moscow and look for a different doctor to start chemotherapy. The entire time we lived together, Joz decided everything. I never objected. Now, Joz wanted to return home. He thought we would be inconveniencing Rina, whose children were very young.

At that time, we considered exchanging our Odessa apartment for an apartment in Moscow. We started to look at newspaper ads for openings. I eventually took a few trips to visit different apartments, but we could not decide on the right one.

Joz became increasingly anxious in insisting we leave for Odessa. He said that Olya and Dima had promised to start looking for an

apartment for us in the meantime. When they found one, he said I could look at it.

On the day of our departure from Moscow, I visited the exchange bureau to look at the latest ads. Near the Moscow-Odessa bulletin board, I met a young couple. They offered to exchange their apartment with us. I gave them Olya's phone number because I had no time to visit them. We left that very day, and Olya and Dima filled out all the necessary registrations in our place. Thus, at the end of October, we were able to move into a wonderful new place in Moscow.

From June to October, Joz was observed by our local physician Lubov Ivanovna Maloy. He had blood work done every month. His doctors found no critical changes, but Joz was generally fatigued and apathetic. He decided to resign from his department. He left the institute as a whole and continued to work on a new grammar textbook at home. Joz had a contract with the Higher Education publishing house to submit his final draft in spring, 1987.

In Moscow, we visited the clinic twice a month. There were no major changes. Joz continued to work on his publication and helped Mesme, a student who came from Baku a few times to consult him about her dissertation.

Things turned for the worse around the middle of February. Joz had sharp abdominal pain and started running a high fever. I called for a doctor, but since there was a flu epidemic at the time, the person who came to see Joz was a dentist. She promised to tell her management to send someone more qualified the following day.

Joz got worse in the middle of the night. I called the ambulance. A very attentive young doctor spent an hour with him. The doctor decided Joz needed emergency surgery, as it was possible, he had an internal obstruction.

I told the doctor Joz had hematological problems, so he called the hospital's hematology department. The doctor helped me get Joz dressed. He convinced Joz that if they did not operate immediately, he would not make it back home. I went with them. The first thing I did was tell the doctors that Joz was also an oncology patient.

The doctors did blood work that showed a massive amount of cancer cells. In the morning, the doctor on call in the GI department asked the head of hematology for a consultation. Joz was transferred to the hematology department immediately. The doctors assured me that Joz would get proper treatment, and that I could be with him day and night. Joz was put in a shared room with a younger man. The man had a sister near him who spent each night in the room, sleeping on a small couch.

That evening, at around 9:00 PM, the nurse administered Joz's necessary treatments and told me that I had to go home. She said Joz had taken sleeping medication and would fall asleep soon. I was going to come back the next morning and bring him his house shoes and some cranberry broth, as he was always very thirsty. Joz fell asleep in front of me. At three in the morning, I got a call that he died in his sleep.

The date was February 17th. On February 2nd, he turned sixty-four years old. Lida Panova finished the publication of Joz's grammar textbook with the assistance of Nonna Jilko. Ira Nikolskaya assisted Mesme in completing her dissertation. Mirolubov helped Mesme with defending her dissertation, at my request, Mirolubov said everything was done in the name of Joseph Berman's bright memory. He said he respected him as an outstanding scientist and loved him as a friend.

The science of the methodology of teaching foreign languages is still very young. It only started forming around the mid-twentieth century. Exploration into the field and extensive research were performed by Joseph and his students. His work culminated in his

co-workers from the Odessa Technological Institute inscribing an article about him into the Ukrainian Encyclopedia.

PART THREE

The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

In the nineteenth century, in the Pale of the Settlement of Ukraine (where Jews were permitted to live), there was a family called Pesach. When the Pesach's moved away, they were given the name "Belotserkovskiy."

The Belotserkovskiy family had four children. There were two sons named Baruch and Shluim and two daughters named Leiah and Basya. The family lived in the small village of Tagancha, not far from Kyiv. Over the revolution in around 1917, they moved to Kyiv.

I do not know anything about Baruch's family, as I never met his children. Balya, whom I'll write about later, only remembered their names. She could share anything more about their fate.

I met Aunt Leiah several times as a child, mostly while visiting my grandfather in Kyiv. She was short, plump, active, and kind. Throughout her life, Leiah offered a helping hand to her relatives.

Leiah married a rabbi and lived with him in the town of Lida. My father lived with her for some time. Leiah's family moved to Kyiv before the first world war.

Leiah had three sons. Her youngest died during the "Tripolskaya Tragedy."[22] Grisha and Vladimir, her two surviving sons, had

[22] In 1919, a regiment of mostly-Jewish Young Communist League members fought and destroyed a regiment of Ukrainian nationalists near the village of Tripolye.

children themselves. The only thing I knew about them was that they were educated and that they did not live in Kyiv. One of Vladimir's daughters eventually moved with her family to Israel.

The second son of the Belotserkovskiy family was my grandfather Shluim. My father wrote "Shluim" as "Shloma" in official documents and later changed his father's name to Solomon.

Shloma was born in 1867 and died in 1940. He received a traditional Jewish education and attended the yeshiva. Shloma taught at that same yeshiva later in his life.

Shloma married his rabbi's daughter, Gitl Miriam Subbotovskaya. They owned a small store in Tagancha, where their kids were born. The oldest was named Gershl, then came Meer, and then Leib.

Gershl was born in 1888. He studied Italian systems of accounting.[23] In 1911, he married a woman named Sarah Solomonovna Klapershan and moved to Kyiv. They had two children, Aron in 1913, and Balya in 1919. Balya now lives in Philadelphia).

In the 1920s, Gershl worked at a military organization as a bookkeeper and auditor. He went on a business trip once and his family received a postcard from him stating that he had finished his work and was on his way back. However, he never returned home. Someone later alerted them he was found in a hospital in the city of Tver.

Gershl's brother, Leib, traveled to Tver but could not find him in any of the city's hospitals. No one managed to uncover what happened to him or where he was buried. Years later, Leib moved his father, his mother, and his brother Meer to Kyiv. They lived in one large apartment on Saksaganskiy Street with Gerschl's widow Sarah and their two children.

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[23] The Italian double-entry three-book accounting system was popular in the Russian private sector.

Sarah returned to her original profession of nursing. She worked at the local children's hospital until her retirement. She often worked night shifts because she needed the extra money. It was Sarah who kept the house afloat.

Leib's sickly mother was particularly religious and observed all of the Jewish holidays. She died in 1930. I remember her vaguely. She came once to see our family in Yaroslavl. I was fascinated by her wig. Every morning she stood in the corner, covering her face with her hands, and mumbled things I could not hear. I never understood why she was punished and put in the corner.

When I was eight my sister Sanna and I caught a scarlet fever and were admitted to the infectious diseases' hospital with our mother. My Dad visited us every day until he stopped suddenly to travel to Kyiv to attend our grandmother's funeral.

I also remember Grandfather Shloma well. We visited Kyiv every summer to see our close relatives. We would often stay with grandmother at Solomenka, but we would also visit the Belotserkovskiy side of our family on Saksaganskiy Street. Tram number eight went from the university to Solomenka. Another tram stopped at the cross street connected to Saksaganskiy Street. From there, it was a five-minute walk to grandfather's house in the middle of the block.

Grandfather's house was big. His apartment was on the fifth floor of a building that had no elevator. I do not think grandfather could leave the apartment at that time, as he was over sixty. He sat in an armchair near a window. Books in velvet and leather bindings sat on a small table next to him. They were heavy, and none were written in Russian. Grandfather's hair was long and gray, and he had a large beard. I always thought that he looked cross. I was a little afraid of him, and I tended to approach him with apprehension. He would stroke my hair and say things in Yiddish. I always tried to escape to the neighboring room where Aunt Sarah and Balya lived. I do not remember much about seeing my grandmother in the apartment at

that time. When I returned to Kyiv at fourteen or seventeen without my parents, I did not like visiting my grandfather. It was too boring.

My dad's older brother Meir lived with my grandfather. He had bad eyesight from childhood on. He wore glasses with heavy lenses, which was one of the reasons he did not receive a civil education.

Naturally, he was required to work somewhere during Soviet times. I believe he worked at an organization for the blind and did manual labor at home. There were mountains of small medicine boxes in his room.

He married one of my grandmother's relatives late in life. Her name was Hava. The two evacuated Kyiv with Sarah's family during the war and ended up in Stalingrad. While the German troops approached the city, Meir was killed in the bombing campaign. Hava moved somewhere else, returned to Kyiv, and then died soon after.

Out of all of my dad's relatives, I spent the most time with Aunt Sarah, Balya, and with Aaron later on in life. My aunt was loved when we visited and fed us well. Her life was difficult. She was widowed early on and left to care for young children, a sick mother-in-law, and the disabled brother of her deceased husband. She had to earn a living and manage the household. Still, I always remember her with a kind smile on her face. She never complained when she talked to my mother. I think they sympathized strongly with each other. Sarah's son finished school and decided to study at the automotive institute in Moscow. He liked automobiles and worked for a year as a driver. There was no educational institution for that specialty in Kyiv. A few of my grandmother's relatives lived in Moscow, and there were several Subbatovskiy households. I will write about them later on.

While taking his university entrance exams, Aaron contracted dysentery. There were no hospitals available, so he stayed with a family with a lot of daughters he met through his relatives. I think the family had eight daughters in total. All the girls were a year apart,

and all of them were beautiful. One of the sisters, named Fira, was the same age as Aaron. She tended to him while he was sick. You could say that she saved him. The time he could take his exams passed, barring Aaron from university. However, Aaron's struggle was not all in vain. He and Fira fell in love, got married, and left for Kyiv. They moved into our grandfather's apartment. Sarah and Balya let them stay in the first room. The couple slept in a walk-through room that our grandfather used during the day. Grandfather spent his nights with Meyer and Hava.

Aaron and Fira were an attractive couple. They were both quite tall. Fira had jet-black hair and bright indigo eyes. When their daughter was born, they named her Galya. Fira went to work in the nursery and then in the daycare, assuring she was always with her daughter.

By the time the war started, grandfather had already passed away. He died in 1940. In the first days of the war, Aaron was drafted to serve along with the entire fleet company where he worked. They gave him three days to pack. He left his pregnant wife, his daughter, his mother, his sister, his disabled uncle, and his uncle's wife back home. Fira was exceptionally energetic, hardworking, and took on any jobs she needed to. She managed to evacuate everyone in the house.

The group stopped in Stalingrad so that Fira could give birth to her son. When the Germans approached the city, she took her kids and escaped to Sverdlovsk. It was where her sisters and mother were staying. Before she married Aaron, Fira finished two semesters at the pedagogical institute in Moscow. Galya grew older when the family lived in Kyiv and started to answer to the endearing nickname of Galochka. Fira started working as an elementary school teacher. That type of work did not make enough income to support a family in Sverdlovsk. Aaron, meanwhile, became an officer and later a Senior Lieutenant. He sent his officer attestation to his family to prove it. In all likelihood he received additional aid for his family.

Fira took any work that came her way. Still, her family did not starve, and her kids had all the basic necessities of life. Once Kyiv was liberated, Fira took her children to return immediately. Their apartment was occupied by new people by that time, but Fira managed to find a new room for herself and her children.

Aaron was mildly injured while fighting on the frontlines. After a stay at the evacuation hospital, he returned to his fleet as a commander. Aaron served until the last day of the war, finishing his service in Hungary.

Aaron's division went to Odessa in 1945. He found Joz, Joz's parents, and I. By then we had already moved into a semi-furnished apartment with three rooms. Joz talked Aaron into staying with us instead of sleeping in the army barracks. He lived with us until his demobilization in January 1946.

A New Year's party in 1946 sticks out in my mind. It was a warm winter without even a single snowfall. Joz and Aaron talked me into going to the party. They were careful walking me there, as I was nine months pregnant.[24] On the way back I was the one walking them. I was terrified that if someone stumbled, we would all fall down, which would be dire for me.

Aaron left for Kyiv after his discharge. He sent for his mother and for Balya immediately. By then, Aaron, Fira and their kids had a big room in a communal apartment in the center of Kyiv. This was likely a result of Fira's efforts. Sarah and Balya moved into the room on Saksaganskiy Street.

Joz always visited Aaron during his trips to Kyiv. We also visited them when we lived in Gomel. Aaron became sick and died in 1973 at sixty. I have their family picture in my photo album, with Aaron, Fira, and their kids.

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[24] With Mark, born January 24th, 1946.

Fira is still alive. She is over ninety years old. She lives with her daughter, who is already retired. Galya graduated from Kyiv University, and thanks to the help of Aunt Balya and her husband, she quickly got a job as a programmer. She never married. When she was middle aged, she gave birth to her daughter Alina. Fira helped raise her. Alina is grown up now. She is married and has a daughter of her own.

Aaron's son Alexander was not keen on his studies. He served in the army but decided not to go to university.

Alexander started working as a welder in auto body shops, and then as a taxi driver. He married early. I only saw his wife, Sasha, once. The pair have two daughters. One is just a year older than my granddaughter Lena. The other daughter was a year younger than her. I visited Kyiv with Lena during one of her school vacations. Balya invited both girls over to meet Lena. The older one seemed to be more like her mother. Even back then, she knew what she wanted to do and followed her passion to become a biologist.

Aaron's younger sister, Balya, was born in 1919 in Kyiv. Just before the war, Balya finished studying at the math and physics institute at Kyiv University. She took her last exam on the 18th of June but was unable to get her diploma due to the forced evacuations.

Instead, Balya got a completion certificate which she took into evacuation with her family. Their first stop was Stalingrad. Next, she moved with her mom, Sarah, to Ufa. Her mother worked at the children's hospital there. They lived in some sort of storage closet in ghastly conditions.

My mother was still alive back then, but she had already stopped working and was sick. Once my mother received the family's letter from Ufa, she used her connections to grant them permission to see us in Yaroslavl. They moved in with us and stayed until the liberation of Kyiv in 1943.

When Balya returned to Kyiv, she found out her friend Yasha was wounded in a battle near the Caucasus. She visited him and managed to get permission to transfer him to the Kyiv hospital. Shortly thereafter, the pair were married.

Balya and Yasha both worked as teachers. Balya taught physics and Yasha taught mathematics. Aunt Sarah moved in with them, returning to her old job at the children's hospital. Sarah worked there for forty-five years in total. After their daughter Maryana was born and Balya finished her maternity leave, Yasha and Balya worked different shifts to be able to care for their baby.

In time, they became formidable pedagogues. Yasha was well known throughout Kyiv. The students he tutored on university admission exams were admitted into the Physic-Technological Institute and other elite technical institutes. Balya and Yasha also co-published a study guide on university exam preparation.

Eventually, Yasha's wounds led to arthrosis in his right leg. It became hard for him to walk. He retired but continued to work from home. He had more than enough tutoring candidates visit the house. His tutoring income eased the family's financial burden. They could afford a decent apartment in a co-op building that was under construction.

Balya and Yasha's daughter Maryana graduated with a degree in mathematics. However, she became a programmer instead of a teacher. She married a man named Misha and had a daughter named Veronika. The entire family eventually moved to Philadelphia.

By the time Yasha arrived in the U.S. he was very sick. Thanks to medical help in the U.S., he was able to live almost four more years. He and Balya found an apartment in a subsidized housing development. Mariyana and Misha bought a house and were working at the time of writing, while Veronika was studying and spending her summers as a camp counselor.

Now I can share a little bit about what I remember of my grandmother's family, the Subbatovskiys. Before the revolution, all of the Subbatovskiys lived in a Ukrainian "shtetl" near Kyiv. At the end of 1918 the situation in Ukraine had become unstable. There were frequent changes in government, and ongoing Jewish pogroms. Many Jewish families moved to Russia. Two of the Subbatovskiy brothers ended up in Moscow. Two other families, possibly their cousins, joined them.

The brothers settled in the center of the city on a quiet street. They occupied spacious basements in neighboring apartment complexes. The windows in their rooms were at level with the pavement outside. Each apartment had several rooms, a kitchen with running water, a bathroom, and central heating. The building was five stories tall. I think most of the amenities were set up at the end of 1920.

My father was close to everyone on that side of the family. When we visited Moscow, my father would take me on his trips to see our cousins while my mom stayed home with Sanna who was too young to walk. We could only travel by tram, and we had to walk for a long time to get to the nearest stop.

During these visits, I grew very close to one of my grandmother's brothers. He was the head of the family, a tall, heavy, old man with a big beard. His wife was slight and short. They had four children, two older daughters, and two younger sons. I grew to know them well by the end of the 1930s.

At that time the family's older, unmarried daughter lived with her parents. The eldest brother, Yefim, also lived in the apartment with his child. The youngest daughter lived far away, somewhere around Mayakovsky Square. The youngest son served in the military and was married somewhere in Ukraine. He had two young children, and he served at the border. He and his family would still stay in his old room when they visited. I never saw them at the time.

While I was still in school, I only visited the family with my father. I spent most of my time with Yefim's young wife, who had recently joined the family. Yefim married late, after becoming deputy director at the Luberetsk mechanical facility. He was older than his wife by about ten or twelve years. Their apartment had modern furniture, a radio, a record player, and lots of records. The elder family members followed Jewish traditions and laws. There was a collection of books on their table, including a Torah written in Hebrew. The family members spoke to each other in Yiddish.

Within that side of the family, I loved visiting Aaron and Fira's daughter Galya's apartment. She had two daughters who were close to me in age. Manya was a year younger than me and Klara was four years older. A distant relative of my father lived in the same building. After his divorce, he married an actress. They had one son who was around ten years old when I visited. He was very sick and had Down syndrome. My dad visited them throughout his life, even after our other relatives stopped seeing them.

Before I finished school, an older son from a previous marriage visited us in Yaroslavl twice. His name was Isaac. He was already a grown man and was visiting over a business trip. In the evenings he would invite my girlfriend and I to see a movie or walk around the Volga shore for ice cream at a cafe. He also had a younger brother who lived with their mother in Moscow. He called my dad "uncle," and they had a warm relationship. However, I have no inkling of what happened to him after the war.

After I finished school and started attending university in Moscow, I grew close with Galya's daughter Manya. Our friendship continued until I left for the United States.

Returning to the 1930s, when the temporary allowance for private enterprises (NEP)[25] came to an end, prosecution against people in

[25] The New Economic Policy, proposed by Lenin in 1921, led to the private ownership of previously public industries. It was intended as a temporary

commerce began. Even independent craftsmen were targeted. Manya's dad, Semyon Tutunik, lived with us for some time. He worked far from home and could only visit his family once in a while. Later on, Manya's great uncle, the "old man Subbotovskiy," lived with us as well. He was the father of Aaron Belotserkovskiy's future wife.

I lived in a dormitory during my first year at university. I met with Manya frequently. She was finishing school and applying to the polytechnic institute to become an editor. Her dad was an administrator at a famous theater called "Satire." He could always secure tickets at a nearby cinema house. In addition to movies, he could also find tickets to music concerts. Manya often invited me to join her at the theaters. She introduced me to different museums, and I visited her campus a few times.

Despite the fact that Manya was younger than me, her influence in my life was profound. She was so well-read in contemporary western literature and could read German books in their original text. She would translate a number of literary works years on. Unfortunately, she never received credit for her work.

Regardless, Manya maintained outstanding grades at her university. Her thesis topic involved the collective works of Ilya Ehrenburg. She actually met him a number of times, and he even tried to get her a job in a publishing house. After some difficulty, she finally secured a position there related to the publishing of building materials. The work itself was utterly boring. It consisted of correcting grammar and style in publications and textbooks about the construction industry.

Manya was not terribly attractive, but she was exceptionally smart. Unfortunately, this did not attract many young suitors. She married late in life and had one daughter, named Genia. Her husband was

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retreat from full socialism to revive the Soviet economy after the devastation of World War I and the Russian Revolution.

also an editor, and he was younger than her. He was a spoiled single child, completely under his mother's thumb. His mother was against their marriage, but she came to adore her granddaughter later on.

When their daughter was three, Genia's husband had a stomach ulcer. He was admitted to a hospital. Manya took great care of him and stayed beside his bed day and night. While he was recuperating, she bought him a ticket to Essentuki to stay in a sanitorium. However, after he healed, he returned to Moscow with another woman. He left Manya after he arrived.

When their marriage fell apart, Manya's mother-in-law continued to support her in raising Genia. She was five at the time of the divorce. The basic level of child support was minimal, and Manya's parents could not help her. Her dad was sick, her mom did not work, and her younger sister had a severe type of rheumatism and a number of heart complications. Klara spent months in a clinic led by Professor Petrovskiy. She was one of his first heart surgery patients. Klara was the professor's patient for many years. Her mother was deeply devoted to her care.

Manya also worked a lot. She was an editor to many authors and translated German books into Russian. However, she continued not to receive credit as a translator. Throughout my life, I admired Manya's resiliency and her ability to conquer difficult situations without losing her spirit. She had more than her fair share of challenges, between ill relatives and a husband who betrayed her.

When Manya's daughter grew older, new issues surfaced. Genia attracted attention even as a schoolgirl. She was thin with a nice figure, blue eyes, golden hair, and she inherited her mother's personality. When she was sixteen, she met an artist and posed for his paintings. They started a serious love affair and had even planned to move in together.

Manya hid all of Genia's documents at her friend's home. Things could have ended badly, as the artist already had a family. He had

three kids, and his youngest was not even a year old. Not to mention that Genia was still a minor. Mercifully, the pair ended up separating.

A year after the affair, Genia graduated from a French school. She was admitted to university and was on track to become a French teacher. By that point, she started to be physically harassed by a few wealthy Georgian men. The men drove a Zhiguli.[26]

To rid herself of her unwanted suitors, Genia married a classmate who had dropped out of university and started work at a factory. They moved in together because Manya had managed to exchange her central room in Prospect Mira, House #7, for a two-room apartment in a newly developed district.

Before the end of the year, Genia kicked her husband out and filed for divorce. She had a new admirer on the horizon.

He was a student at the Moscow University of Foreign Affairs and was the son of a high-ranking government administrator. When Genia married him, she gave birth to a son and moved into a three-room apartment in an exorbitantly expensive condominium apartment near the university. The child and the housework became Manya's primary duties.

Due to her declining health, exemplified by her two thyroid gland surgeries, Genia decided not to teach and quit her job. Instead, she became a translator for businessmen who visited the city from France. She refused to accompany her husband to an African country to which he was appointed. At that time, she found a French lover. She visited France as a guest alone at first, and later went with her son.[27] However, she did not move to Paris until the end of the 1980s. After Genia's departure, Manya fell ill. One day, she crossed the

[26] The Lada 2100 was nicknamed "Zhiguli" after the Zhiguli Mountains by the Volga River.

[27] Obtaining a tourist visa was possible with the right connections and sufficient funds.

street without hearing an oncoming car's horn. She was hit and lost her leg.

Manya's younger sister became a widow by the end of the 1980s. The sister lived with her daughter, who was married with a son, but she was divorced soon after. A few years later, the daughter married again and moved out.

Returning to the 1940s, the Subbatovskiy family on Sretenka Street lived together before the war. The sole exception was Galya and their youngest son Alexander, who was serving the military in Ukraine.

I do not know about Yefim's level of education but he was the Director of Commerce at the Luberetskiy mechanical factory. His wife, Bella, was much younger than him. Before her marriage, Bella worked as a secretary and typist at Yefim's factory. They lived in the same apartment and found a nice cottage at Uhtomka station after the war. Yefim spent the night there when he stayed late at work. The family only lived in the cottage full-time over the summertime.

Other than Yefim, the Subbotovskiys had an older daughter who was unmarried. Yefim was the head of the house. Everyone in the family relied on him. During the difficult time when the Germans were advancing towards Moscow, Yefim evacuated everyone to the city of Penza. He then helped everyone return after Liberation Day. They were joined by Luda, Sasha's wife, and their two children.

From the time the war began, no one knew where Sasha was. He was considered missing in action. However, the family later received a letter stating that he had died. The older family members also passed away during the war. The eldest daughter, Hava, lived a long life. She did not work, but she helped her sisters-in-law run their households and watch over their kids. In 1946, Yefim and Bella had a second son. He was named Sasha, in honor of Yefim's deceased brother.

When I returned to Moscow after my mother's death, I stayed with Aunt Anyuta. She lived on Malovuzovskiy Street near Pokrovsky Boulevard. I visited the Subbotovskiys frequently. I loved visiting them because their house always had a kind and warm atmosphere.

One day my dad and Sanna visited for a few days to meet Joz. My father took us to the Subotovskiys so they could meet their new son-in-law. As I wrote before, Yefim helped us a great deal. During this time, we stayed at Yefim's cottage in Uhtomka while Joz was preparing to defend his Ph.D. dissertation. When Yefim retired, he exchanged his properties and moved into a three-room apartment in Moscow. The building was in the Leningrad highway area. By that time, Yefim's older son Daniel married and moved in with his new in-laws. Yefim's youngest son, Sasha, continued to live with him and Bella. Our family had already moved to Odessa, and I was rarely able to visit Moscow. After that time, I never saw Yefim again.

When I moved to Moscow, I visited Bella a few times. We talked about the war and the days when I used to visit the family with my dad. Sasha was married by then and lived in the same apartment with his mother. Bella helped Sasha's family a lot by helping to raise her three grandsons.

As of the time of writing, Daniel, and his family live in New York. Vitaly knew Daniel when he lived in Moscow. I believed they were still in touch, and I tried to learn what happened to Daniel's younger brother and his two cousins through Vitaly. I got the impression that after their mother passed away, they lost touch, but I may be wrong.

My father Belotserkovskiy Leib Shlomovich, or Lev Solomonovich, was born in 1892. He was the youngest son in the Shloma and Gitl-Miriam family in the small town of Tagancha. It was near Kyiv, in the Kanevskiy district. The town was only thirty miles from the Denpr river and about twelve miles from the nearest railroad station. The entire region had 700 Ukrainians and 300 Jews. The Ukrainian population was allowed to obtain an education at the school near the church, or to spend two years at the town school. These schools were

not available to Jewish children. Instead, Jewish boys started education from the age of four in Cheder, where all lessons were conducted in Hebrew. At home, everyone spoke Yiddish.

Leib had a sharp mind, even as a kid. He quickly learned conversational Ukrainian, even though his classes in Cheder dragged on for entire days. He also took evening Russian language classes one summer. A Jewish man with little education taught them Russian grammar.

By the age of twelve, Leib was adept at Hebrew and had taught himself how to read and write in Yiddish. This was good because our house had a lot of literary works and religious books in Yiddish. He wrote to his father in Hebrew until the day he died.[28]

Eventually, Leib could read and write in Russian as well. Unfortunately, there was nowhere in Tagancha where he could keep learning. His family wasn't particularly wealthy. By that time, Leib's older brothers already worked as store managers. However, Leib's dad permitted him to keep educating himself instead of looking for work. So, Leib read a lot, but with no real structure.

In order for Jews to get a proper education they had to move to a large city and find an educational institution that accepted Jews. In 1909, Leib left for Kyiv. He left illegally with Aunt Leah, whose husband was a Rabbi.[29] Leah's family had permission to live in Kyiv. Leib made a living by teaching Hebrew to rich Jewish families. He paid a student to tutor him to apply to a prep school, called Gymnasia. In 1911, he was accepted by the Vilnius gymnasium to start sixth grade. He finished this school in 1913 and went back to Kyiv. There, he studied on his own to apply to university.

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[28] While Hebrew was not a day-to-day language, it was used for more than just prayer.

[29] Jews were unable to leave the Pale of Settlement without special governmental permission at that time.

Around these circles of young Jewish people, Leib was surrounded by strong Zionist views. Even before then, Leib met Motel Levitskiy, the youngest son in a large family who would become his close friend. Motel's older sister had five daughters and two sons too. The older son was also named Leib. Leib had already finished his education and was working. He was a frequent guest in their Zionist circle. The daughters attended prep school.

In 1914, Leib and Motel both applied to Moscow University. Leib was accepted into the medicine program, but Motel was not accepted because the school's Jewish quota was full. Since he did not want to be drafted into the army, Motel left for Palestine. From the moment Leib was accepted to the university, his official documents listed his name as Lev Solomonovich Belotserkovskiy.

To pay for his education and stay in Moscow, Leib tutored students in not only Hebrew, but also mathematics, physics, and other prep school subjects. I remember that he tutored two brothers, the Pokras (who later became famous Soviet songwriters), for their prep school applications. He also taught Isaac Dunayevskiy (the famous composer) throughout the year. These families were somehow related, and they were not allowed to live in Moscow before the revolution. They lived in small towns near a train station, and Leib had to take a local train to reach them.

Leib did not receive financial support from his parents. Still, he studied dutifully, and returned to visit his family once he started his fifth year at the university. When he reached Tagancha, he was drafted and sent to work as a doctor at a local clinic. While the area was occupied by the Red Army, he was drafted again and sent to work at the infectious disease hospital in Kyiv. He eventually contracted typhus.

In 1920, a decree was passed that ordered students to return to their original place of study and finish their education. Thus, Leib graduated from Moscow University on January 1st, 1921, and was

sent on a six-month residency. He married on August 8th, 1921, at the age of twenty-nine.

After completing his residency, Leib became a doctor in the Moscow city clinic's surgical department. He left to work in Myshkin's city clinic as the head physician after his wedding. There was only one clinic in Myshkin, and it supported the population of the entire district. In addition to working as the head doctor, Leib was the only surgeon and general physician at the clinic.

The circle of intellectuals and educated people was limited in the small town of Myshkin. Leib and his wife were friendly with the only other Jewish family in the town. They were wealthy prior to the revolution, working in lumber and selling to foreign customers. The business's former owner employed their son-in-law as the manager, and his daughter worked as a dentist. They were around the same age as my parents, and they had a daughter and a son a little older than me. In contrast, my dad was used to big groups of friends and life in a big city. From fifteen onwards he lived in Kyiv and later in Moscow, which were both large, bustling places. That was the reason for my parents' departure from Myshkin.

In Saint Petersburg, radiology courses were open to surgeons. Leib managed to gain acceptance into the courses in larger-city Yaroslavl nearby. After completion, he started work again in Yaroslavl's city hospital. Leib also held a second job at the railroad clinic. During his second shift and in the evenings, he saw patients at the small clinic at NKVD, the People's Commission for Internal Affairs.

Radiologists were only supposed to work for four hours a day and were supposed to be paid full time. Eventually, this was extended to five hours a day. Without a private practice, it was impossible to support a family comfortably in these conditions. Because of this, most of Leib's time was spent working. In the 1920s, Leib only worked at one hospital. Beginning in the 1930s this wasn't enough. Leib found a second place to work, and then a third. This didn't leave him much time to dedicate to his family. My father, of course, loved

his daughters. But during my childhood, I rarely saw him. On rare evenings he'd have tea in the dining room and read a newspaper, while I would be sent to bed.

Leib was physically strong and almost never stayed home sick. As a child, I did not know that the typhus he contracted in 1918 had lingering effects. Suffered from strong migraines, but since I have the same symptoms, this could also be genetic.

Over our first few years in Yaroslavl, my dad acquired a new circle of friends. All of them were doctors, and most of them were Jews. In the summer they had picnics near the Volga River. Dad played poker at night with his close friends and many acquaintances. The group also took trips by riverboat, and my dad was a frequent participant. Since Sanna was too young, he would take me with him.

My aunts reminded me of the following: a large group was traveling by steamboat for several days. The children ran around the entire day, played in the salon, and were put to bed by their parents at night. The adults dined, with ample wine. One played the piano, while the others danced. One night, while dancing, I showed up barefoot in my nightgown. I directed my dad to not dance with some stranger, but with me instead. I was not taken on these trips often after that night.

When Leib returned from the war in 1946, he suffered a heart attack and developed gangrene in his right leg. His leg was amputated, and he returned to work with a prosthetic in the same hospital where he worked before. In the fall of 1946, he went to Odessa to see his first grandchild, Mark. He saw a Mark second time when he was three, while I visited Yaroslavl for a month. I visited to help Suzanna with her medical school exams. My lasting impression is of my dad working extremely long hours and spending little time with us, his kids. I did not feel his presence much as a child.

Throughout my childhood, I can only remember one occasion when my parents left on vacation. They visited Crimea and left Sanna and

I with grandmother and Aunt Rahel in Motovilovka. Motovilovka was a small station about twenty minutes from Kyiv. Aunt Rahel and Kelya lived with them over the summer. Aunt Rahel practiced medicine at a local hospital after she finished medical school.

My dad was one of the very first radiologists in Yaroslavl. He worked until retirement in the Soloviev City Hospital, aside from the years interrupted by the war. In 1940, the hospital celebrated his fifteen years of uninterrupted service. My father received a Lenin medal, even though he had zero career aspirations and was not a member of the Communist Party. He probably preserved some dedication to the Zionist movement in his soul, but he did not show it in any way. He never hid his Jewish identity, and even tried to teach me Yiddish. Maybe he did not have sufficient educational inclinations, or perhaps he understood that teaching Yiddish in the Stalin era could be dangerous.

I remember that our house had a lot of books, including a number of brightly illustrated children's books in Yiddish. These books disappeared at some point in the 1930s. I mentioned that my dad had a large circle of acquaintances, most of whom were doctors that he worked and played cards with. The only acquaintances who were not doctors were the Surit brothers. They owned a photography studio, and later worked solely as photographers.

My dad's closest friend in Yaroslavl was Semyon Samuilovich Shah-Karanyants. Until recently, I thought he was an Armenian from Tbilisi. It turned out he was actually Jewish. My dad was also close with Semyon's parents. He even visited them in Tbilisi. When Semyon's dad passed away and his mother moved in with him, my dad visited her. He did this often, as she was probably lonely. She did not get along with her Russian daughter-in-law.

Syoma or Semyon married late in life. He and my dad looked nothing alike because they had different backgrounds. Syoma's grandfather was a doctor, and his father owned a gynecological clinic. His brother studied at the Sorbonne University in Paris and married a French

woman. Syoma's wife was an educated otolaryngologist who came from a merchant family. Whenever Syoma and his wife had conflicts, they called my dad. Somehow, he fixed everything. I assumed my mom did not like Syoma's wife. Neither she nor Sanna and I ever visited their home. Syoma, however, was a frequent guest at our house. He was invited to all of our events. He came to the Jewish Pesach each year, whenever grandmother visited, and for Sanna's birthday. Her birthday was on March 6th, which very convenient as no one was on vacation.[30]

When I contracted diphtheria, Syoma gave me an IV injection and shots of medicine. Neither my dad nor my mom ever gave us any medical treatment. During the war, Syoma took me to work at his hospital as a freelancer. When the hospital was going to move and my mom was ill, Syoma managed to get me discharged. However, they marked my discharge documents a year ahead. I'll write more about that later.

My dad was also a close friend to Aleksey Aleksyevich Golosovoy, or A.A. Golosovoy, and his wife Maria Pavlovna. A.A. was older than my parents, worked a lot, and was not particularly healthy. However, he was an outstanding surgeon who became famous during the first world war. He returned from the frontlines with a wife who was his medical assistant. Their daughter was born in 1921, after which his wife stopped working.

My mother was friendly with Maria Pavlovna. She visited us frequently, especially after the family moved into an apartment near ours. Sometimes, Maria would run to our home late at night. She would ask our dad to either try to convince A.A. to get medical care or take his medicine, to sit down and limit drinking to one shot of vodka, or to drink some tea and talk.

[30] For reference, Nerry's birthday is June 19th, which is over school summer break.

A.A. was a quiet man. I don't remember him ever participating in communal table talk. When he talked with my dad one-on-one, though, they spent hours together.

I remember visiting to help Sanna prepare for her state mandated final exams in 1949. Mark was three at the time, and my dad was spending time at home after another heart attack. Maria Pavlovna came to visit him almost every day. On one visit, she talked me into visiting her home with Mark. Aleksey Alekseyevich was ill then and did not leave his apartment.

Mark and I were greeted by a beautiful terrier dog at their door. Mark immediately grabbed my dress and said he was not going any further. Maria Pavlovna came over, crouched, and gave the dog a hug. He licked her cheek. She started saying the dog was kind and polite and just wanted to say "hello" by kissing my hand. Mark was watching from the corner of his eye as Troll the dog licked my hand and left. We entered and Mark built up enough courage to pet Troll by his tail, and then by his head. From that day forward, he asked to see Troll every morning. He was the only dog I knew that did not frighten Mark.

There was another family we visited on Sundays and holidays. Papa visited I. Strashun and his wife Eva Markovna in the evenings when he played poker. I don't know whether he had a close connection with Strashun, but Eva was very friendly with my dad and my mother.

At the turn of the century, I. Strashun completed his education in Derpt. After that, he came to Yaroslavl and rented the entire floor of a building in the city center. There, he established his dental and denture practice.

Strashun was a specialist who worked with imported materials. I remembered that he filled one of my cavities when I was fifteen. That tooth was eventually pulled in the United States when I got dentures

over sixty years later. As far as I remember, Strashun worked at the NKVD clinic in addition to his private practice.

Eva was also very famous around town. Strashun brought his young wife from Vilno when she was seventeen years old. Meanwhile, he was around thirty. She was beautiful, from a well-off family, and had finished her education at a specialized school for girls. She never worked once in her entire life. Their family always had a housekeeper. Furthermore, her husband did not want her to have children because it would "ruin her figure."

Before the revolution, Strashun's home was also a salon. People came over to play poker in the evenings, and they always served a nice dinner. The visitors were mostly men. However, sometimes women with children came during the day. There were platters of homemade cookies and boxes of chocolate candy in the middle of their dining table. Eva, the lady of the house, was masterful in baking traditional Jewish teiglach and all kinds of cakes. She could make a delicious hvorost.[31]

This tradition of social visits lasted until the Second World War, even though Strashun died of cancer at the end of the 1930s. While he was alive, Eva went to various resorts over the summers. She went abroad and to Crimea when possible. Eva had a very large circle of friends outside Yaroslavl. Sometimes, they came to visit her. These were high-up government administrators, who conferred her certain advantages. In Caucasus, Eva always had a special travel package or "putevka" to health and wellness resorts.

Yet, Eva had a very kind personality, and she helped and took care of many people. She gave me a beautiful dining set in a pretty box for my wedding. When Mark was born, she sent my dad a Dutch-made tablecloth. She acquired all of these fancy goods from her sisters.

[31] Similar to Italian "angel wing" cookies. The word "hvorost" is a traditional name for these cookies, meaning "kindling."

One of her sisters was in Vilnius or Vilno, and the other had moved to the United States. Eva used to send her housekeeper to fetch my dad and check in on my mother when she was sick. There were no phones at the time.

With my mother's help Eva received a small pension and sold off her belongings after Strashun's death. Even in the hardest times, she kept a dish with teiglach on her dining table.

There was one more house my dad tended to visit, but I don't remember the owner's name. He was a dentist who lived with his second wife and young daughter. I was introduced to her the moment they moved nearby but we didn't become close friends. We kept in touch and Sanna visits her at times. I remember this family because Papa brought me to a celebration there in 1949. I didn't know most of the guests but that was when he introduced me to their daughter.

At eighteen I left my home in Yaroslavl. I never lived there again, and I only visited once for a month in 1949. after Mama's death, Sanna lived with Dad, aside from the years he spent in Birobidzhan over the war.

Dad returned to Yaroslavl with Syoma's help after Mama died. In the fall, he left with the rest of his hospital for the western front.

I was married in August of 1944. Papa and Sanna only visited for two days to meet their new relative. The most important thing to my dad was that Joz was Jewish. Upon meeting each other, they sat and talked for a long time. They seemed to like each other. Dad and Joz exchanged letters after that, but because they were exchanged from the front lines the correspondences didn't survive.

Papa grew to love Joz dearly. I think he would have wanted a son. My dad loved his daughters, and might have loved his youngest the most, but his eldest never felt the difference. Again, we spent only a little time together when I was young. Due to his intense work

schedule, my dad left the house when we were asleep and came back late at night. He came home for lunch on weekdays, but Sanna and I were always in daycare or at school around noon. Had usually traditional family dinner over the weekends. I remember that Papa would sit at the head of the table and read the newspaper. There were not many discussions at the table.

I never heard about his childhood or young adult years. Everything I learned emerged sporadically later on from Aunt Anyuta or Aunt Sonya, my mother's sisters.

Thinking back now, I cannot tell whether he was happy, or whether he achieved what he wanted in life. I am not sure one way or the other. He managed to get an education, but really, he never wanted to be a doctor. He wanted to be a mathematician. This path was not open to Jews then. Perhaps that is why he so willingly switched to radiology.

Zionist ideals remained his primary passion. Yet, his duty to his family and my mother's work did not allow him to follow the path his closest friend forged from Russia to Palestine.

Even my parents' marriage had its uncertainties. My dad was introduced to Mama in his school years. He met her entire family very early on. My mother, Raya, was the second daughter in her family. She was three years older than my dad. Despite how early they met, my dad did sign or personally dedicate a single photograph from those days to my mom. He usually signed his photos and mentioned all of her other sisters. He was also missing from the group photos of the sisters. Instead, there was some man with a mustache near my mom.

After their teen years, my parents did not see each other for years. They eventually married on the 8th of March 1921. They had a generally "even" relationship with few arguments or frictions. Still, their circles of friends were very different. My dad did not remarry after mom's death.

The biggest love of my father's life was his first grandson, but we lived so far, he did not see him much. In the spring of 1946 when he was discharged from the army, dad came to Yaroslavl. Soon after, he had a heart attack, and his leg was amputated due to infection. My dad ordered a prosthetic so he could go to Odessa and hold his grandson without waiting to recover. Dad wrote me warm letters. He was upset that I did not always answer or give him the details he wanted. He had a second heart attack and stayed in the hospital for a long time. Then, there was the happy month when I visited with Mark during Sanna's entrance exam studies.

Mark and I visited for the third time over two weeks in the autumn of 1946 with Moses Abramovich and Rina. Dad took a turn for the worse that January. He had more and more heart episodes. On the 24th of that month he had a fourth heart attack. Semi-conscious, he kept repeating, "I can't die today. Please do something." He died in the early morning of January 25th, 1947. With great difficulty, I managed to make it to his funeral in time.

In trying to remember my dad I discovered that I did not really know him. This was likely because I did not spend time with him as an adult. Even when he visited us in Odessa, I was preoccupied with Mark, who had not even turned one. Papa spent the evenings talking to Joz and Moses Abromovich instead. My personal desire to learn and discuss more about the ancestors came much later.

I know a lot more about my mother's family, the Fishmans. I kept in touch with many of them for years.

My grandfather, Aaron Fishman, died the year I was born. He never saw me because he lived in Kyiv. I do not know what he did exactly for a living, but he was a Kyiv native. My grandfather married a woman from Kyiv too. My grandmother's family lived on the same street as him. They had a two-story house, with a store for horse feed and farm animals on the first floor. There were cows and chickens in their courtyard.

My grandmother employed a Ukrainian girl who took care of the house while she ran the store. My grandfather, on the other hand, did not care for the secular world. He spent his time at the synagogue studying Torah. I do not know how many children they had, but I knew four of my mother's sisters and two of her brothers.

Everyone went barefoot in the summer because Solomenka or Mokraya Street was not paved. It stretched alongside the Batyeva Mountain, where water would drain into the Lebed River during rainstorms. My grandparents' house was the first on the street. It was adjacent to the platform of the railroad once it was constructed. The house was demolished after the railroad expanded. As compensation, the family was granted an apartment on Uritsky Street, the same street Iliya lives on today. This happened over the Soviet years, from around 1924 to 1925.

I do not know how my grandmother managed to give her children a secular education. Everyone but her youngest son, Shika, finished high school. I remember a picture from before the revolution with Grandmother in a beautiful fur hat and a coat with a large fur collar. She was standing with her daughter and her friends.

The family's house was always warm and full of guests. Grandmother took care of the house until she died. She was a great cook and homemaker, and she could even knit.

All of my grandmother's daughters attended high school, and her son Leva completed trade school. Her daughters' friends lived at her house for months, even while the family lived on Mokraya Street.

When my grandparents moved to the apartment on Uritsky Street, grandmother was left with Shika and Riva. Riva studied biology at the University. My grandmother's sister Basya continued to live on Solomenka Street with her older stepbrother Yakov.

Grandmother was the keeper of family traditions. The relatives gathered at her house during the holidays. She was not particularly

religious, but she kept Shabbat and observed the high holidays. Even on weekdays, guests would inevitably visit her. She knew the business of the entire family, and even neighbors would drop by regularly to borrow something, seek advice, or to just say hello.

Grandmother woke up early and went to the Solomenskiy market on Uritsky Street before any other daily tasks. She would visit the market more than once, as she preferred to buy produce from the farmers she knew. She would only buy bread, sugar, and salt at the grocery store. When the stores started selling meat, she had "her guy."

I never saw Grandmother in a wig. She did not go gray until very old age. Her hair was dark blonde, and she had gray blue eyes. I think she was the reason the family was so close knit. The kids rarely fought, and each of us seemed to help each other. The grandkids maintained the desire to know what was going on in each other's lives and to help each other. Of course, there were a few exceptions, of which I will write later.

Grandmother lost her mother early on. She was left with her father and her younger sister Basya. Grandmother and Basya were not too far apart in age, but as the older sister, grandmother took care of the entire house. Her father married again after some time and had four more kids: Yakov, Sonya (Surl), Motl, and Dina.

Grandmother married young. Her children, stepbrothers, and sisters were all raised together. The older stepbrother, Yakov, was only three years older than my mother's older sister Sonya. Surl was only one year older than my mom. Mama was a year older than her aunt Dina, and two-and-a-half years older than Motl. At their school, Sonya, Raya, Anyuta, and Dina were all in the same grade. Sonya became a nurse after school, while my mother finished medical school, and Anyuta finished her education degree. Finally, Dina became a dentist.

I do not know what education Yakov and Surl received. I recalled that Yakov was married and had a son named Misha who was three years older than me. He was probably a sickly child, as his mom was always worried about him. It was strange to my cousins and I at the time, because no one ever supervised us. Before the war, Yakov's family lived on the same street. Yakov was a butcher, and he always brought my grandmother nice cuts of meat when he visited. His wife did not work.

Misha finished aviation school and completed his dissertation under Joz's influence. He went on to be a professor at the Polygraph Institute.

Surl was an interesting young lady. She also married early. Her husband, Alya Guzman, was the owner of a construction company. He did masonry work, murals, and decorative wall finishing in Kyiv and abroad.

I remember a picture of Surl with her husband in London. Early on, she discovered that she had thyroid and immune issues that prevented her from having children. During the revolution, Surl and her husband lost their money. Alya started working as a foreman. His younger brother, who married Surl's sister Dina, was a mason as well. The two families lived together in a large apartment on Pushkin Street. Surl took care of the house, and practically raised her nephews herself because Dina worked a lot.

The younger Guzmans had three sons. The oldest was Ama or Abraham, then Alik, then Izik or Isaac, who was my age.

I never met Alya, but according to Ama's stories he had a lively, energetic personality. Alya Guzman and his brother became orphans at a young age. He never had a formal education, but advanced in his business regardless. He started his own company, and if he were alive today, he would be deemed a successful businessman. Ama resembled him in appearance and personality. They were both

exceptionally large men. In contrast, Ama's father Aron was very calm and did not possess any exceptional capabilities.

During the years of the NAP, Alya built a large company that maintained a lot of foreign contracts. Eventually, all of this disappeared. Alya continued working as a simple mason. After Alya's death, Dina became the head of the family.

When Ama finished middle school, it turned out that he could not continue studying in Kyiv. This was because he was a son of a former business owner.[32] So, Aunt Dina brought Ama Yaroslavl when he was sixteen. They rented a room across the street from us.

My mom helped Dina get a job at a clinic while Ama attended evening classes at an auto mechanic technical school. I do not remember how long Dina worked in Yaroslavl. When she left, my mother was supposed to take care of Ama. This was not easy. He was good looking, and successful with girls and women. He switched through them often. There were loud fights among the rivals for Ama's attention, and the poor old ladies who owned the house we lived in often complained to my mother.

I am not sure how my mother smoothed things over. I do not remember as I was only six or seven at the time. I was always around Ama because his move meant that I had an older brother to protect me. I have to add that Ama kept his word and was always there for me. Until his death, we remained close, kindred spirits.

Our landladies had a purebred red-haired dog who decided Ama would be his master. The dog followed him everywhere. I remember that Sanna became scared of him and developed a fear of dogs altogether for years.

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[32] The Soviet system treated being engaged in a private enterprise as a criminal offense.

Ama graduated from a technical institute in Yaroslavl and left for Kyiv. At that point, the persecution of "lishentsev" ended.[33] He managed to gain admission to the evening class program at the polytechnic institute. I do not know if Ama finished his education, but he got his diploma. Ama had the valuable ability to network and organize with important people, leading to success over the course of his career.

Once the war started, Ama was drafted as a captain. Soon after, he was promoted to a major. His official role was to be the director of the artillery repair shops.

Ama married an actress and had a daughter in 1938. The two fought constantly because Ama cheated and did bother to hide it. Over the war Ama's wife, daughter, and nanny evacuated to a village near Altay. He sent them his diploma so they could receive two-thirds of his salary and subsequently forgot about their existence.

The artillery repair shops were based near Moscow, which meant Ama could pay us frequent visits. He usually traveled in a truck with a driver and an orderly. They normally stopped along the way to dig for potatoes and gather the kindling to bring to Aunt Anyuta and I. Because of his care, we were saved from starving. While there was no central heating, our small furnace kept us warm. The wife of Ama's driver also ran a cafe near a factory which was always happy to host us.

I must share that Ama ruined my friendships with two of my close girlfriends. Both of them fell in love with him. I was unaware of one of the affairs for a long time and would have never guessed it.

Rachel was engaged to a student two years older than us. He served in the division of chemical defense near Moscow. Once in a while, Ama would see her. The affair was brief, but the breakup was

[33] Refers to those whose property was confiscated by Soviet authorities for being private business owners.

difficult. Rachel did not want to see me after the breakup and even transferred to another university. In a twist of irony, Ama's son ended up marrying Rachel's niece. The two saw each other again at the wedding.

My other friend from my school days was named Alla. She lived with Ama for almost an entire year, but I did not find out right away. One time when Ama visited, we had nothing to eat at home. Anyuta worked at a shop that served her dinner during evening hours. I had my dinner at the university. Ama decided to feed us and took me to his driver's house in Dragomilov. I saw Alla while she was setting the table.

Alla helped the hostess like a good friend. At the table, she sat next to Ama. Ama introduced me as his sister. When he noticed one of the lieutenants paying attention to me, he called him outside. Ama said no one had better dare touch me. After dinner I asked Alla to step outside. I started reproaching her, as Ama already had a wife and a daughter. She responded that it was not her issue, and she loved him the way he was. She said she was happy, and that no one knew what would happen after the war.

Ama rented her a room, and she left her dormitory. Alla never showed up for class but somehow still graduated. After the war, she married a man from Odessa. At some point Alla came to Odessa to visit her relatives. She stopped by our apartment, and by then, I had already given birth to my two kids. Alla and her husband had none. She said Ama gave her my address, and that they were still talking over the phone. She also said the year she lived with him was the happiest of her entire life.

Joz knew Ama well from when they met in the sixth grade. During his school years, Joz became friends with Ama's younger brother Izik. He visited their family a lot. When they met again in Moscow during the war, both of them were overjoyed. It was Ama who insisted that Joz and I get married. He even sent a message to Joz's parents in Odessa.

Ama decided to stay in Moscow while the war was ending. He sent his wife divorce papers and married a woman named Ira Lahovskaya. He was older than Ira by eleven years, and as mentioned, habitually cheated on her. I was always amazed how they spent so many years together. They were different in every way imaginable.

Ama's son Misha did not inherit his dad's personality. He was raised as a "momma's boy." A nanny took primary care of him until he was in the seventh grade.

Misha did not have a successful marriage. His wife, Taniya, was not bright. All of her decisions were dictated by her mother, which ultimately led to their divorce. Neither of them started a second family. Today, their daughter is married.

You could say Ama was born in the wrong country at the wrong time. Had he lived in the United States, he undoubtedly would have been successful. He was entrepreneurial, and he knew not to surrender to outside circumstances to get his way. Ama's numerous love affairs ended without fights, and he remained friends with most of his ex-girlfriends. His relatives knew they could count on him for help, and that they did not even need to ask. He would offer his help instinctively. Again, Ama helped me greatly throughout my life.

Another person Ama saved was named Alik Orlov. Ama saved Alik from enlistment by helping him gain acceptance into the Moscow Tank Division Artillery School in January 1942. Alik spent the worst of the war years at the school. He graduated with a class that followed Stalin's orders to Tehran. Then, his unit was put in the reserves. By 1945, Alik was again saved from the frontlines. He was sent to Moscow to the Military Institute of Foreign Languages. Ama, during the war, helped get his parents, his former wife with her daughter and husband, and some of his aunts back to Kyiv. Now I don't even remember all of his good deeds.

Eventually, Ama settled in Moscow. He moved apartments three times and traded up with each move. At some point he worked as an assistant to the Minister of the Food Industry. Later, he created a special laboratory at the Plekhanov Institute which designed vending kiosks. Ama employed around 300 people. His writing was published in science journals and magazines. A volume of his published works earned him a Ph.D. without the need to write a separate thesis.

In addition to Izik, Ama had another younger brother named Alik. I only saw him a few times when I visited Kyiv. He was a student, and he was estranged from his family. He disappeared during the war. Today, we are still in the dark regarding his post-war fate.

Ama's youngest brother Izik was older than me by a month and a half. Aunt Dina, Ama and Izak stayed with our family when Izak was still young. I was asked to take him to kindergarten and entertain him after school. I would not say I was happy about that. I was perfectly satisfied with his older brother Ama. I felt we did not need another guest.

One night, Izak, a girl who lived nearby and I were walking home from the daycare. This girl invited me to her house to try out the new swing her parents bought her. I agreed immediately before realizing Izik would get in the way. I helped him cross the street and told him to go home, saying, "I'll come back soon." Little Sanna and our nanny were home. The nanny was used to my behavior and did not bat an eye at Izik coming home alone. However, when my mother saw me return home at dusk, I received a serious scolding. My parents never hit me, but they forbade me from going outside to play for an entire month. No matter how much I cried, my mother did not go back on her word.

Still, Izik and I became close friends when we were sixteen. We lived together at our summer house or "dacha" in Zvonkovoye, near Kyiv,

for the entire season.[34] Aunt Dina stayed with Izik and I lived with Grandmother Genya and little Ada. I also spent time with Aunt Sonya and her children Lucy and Alik, cousin Kelya, Aunt Sonya's friend Leah, Leah's son Gosha, and Leah's sister. Misha Levtskiy and his mother lived nearby.

Misha and Lucy were students then. They tended to keep to themselves. The kids, Izik, Kelya, Alik, and I, spent entire days on the river or in the woods. On Sundays, Kelya's parents Aunt Rahil and Yasha would stop by. Kelya preferred to sleep late in the morning and disliked the river because she could not swim or row. This meant that for the most part Izik and I would go together. We would sometimes be joined by the boys of the neighborhood. I suspected that Kelya was slightly jealous of me because it was harder for her to make friends. The boys did not always accept her, and I always had a lot of friends and acquaintances around.

Izik unquestionably liked me. He did not hide his feelings, in spite of the fact he had an official girlfriend. This girl's parents and Aunt Dina were good friends, and they supported their children's romantic alliance. Since Izik and his girlfriend were spending the summers apart their relationship did not stop him from flirting with other girls.

When Aunt Dina noticed that Izik was paying extra attention to me and preferred spending time with me alone, she grew concerned. Aunt Dina decided to take measures into her own hands.

First, Aunt Dina talked Izik into going back to Kyiv for a few days. She wrote to his girlfriend Lyalya's parents announcing his visit. Lyalya missed him and wrote to him frequently, but Izik barely responded. I could tell that I was the reason, but I also sincerely

[34] A "dacha" was a country cottage, typically outside the city and used as a vacation home.

believed that at the end of the summer our friendship would come to an end.

When Izik received Lyalya's letter, he and Aunt Dina had an unpleasant conversation. Lyalya had written about how happy she was about his visit, and how she would get them tickets to a jazz concert in the big Dinamo sports arena.

Izik declared that he had no plans of going to Kyiv. He told his mother that she would not be the one to dictate who he could date. He told her that he was an adult, at sixteen years old. Izik then slammed their front door and left the house without dinner.

Izik asked me to walk in the woods with him as usual. Kelya refused to join, but Alik who was three years younger than me joined. Izik was quiet. We tried talking to him, but to no avail.

Izik finally said, "I really like you, but this will never develop into anything serious. You will be leaving soon, and it is uncertain when we can see each other again. I just want to say goodbye because I will leave tomorrow and return home."

That was that. Aunt Dina dominated Izik's life at that point, and well into the future. She did save him, however, from serving in the army. Izik was diagnosed with colorblindness in the tenth grade just before he was to appear in front of a military commission.[35] In addition to colorblindness, Izik was nearsighted and wore glasses.

During the evacuations, Izik lived alone and worked at a factory. Aunt Dina returned to Kyiv as soon as the city was liberated. Lyalya's dad arranged for Izik to also return to Kyiv after the war. There, Izik and Lyalya married. Izik continued his studies at the polytechnic institute where he was accepted before the war. Lyalya attended medical school for three years. She left her studies when their daughter Ella was born and worked as a school nurse for the rest of

[35] These were panels of inspectors who evaluated whether young men were fit to be drafted.

her life. Ella herself has a son now. She lives in Kyiv and keeps in touch with her family.

After the war, Joz tried to reestablish his friendship with Izik. The two were inseparable in their last years of high school. However, they never reached that level of intimacy again. The two saw each other every time Joz went to Kyiv, but over time they lost common interests. Joz tried to convince Izik to grow professionally and achieve something more with his life and contribute to the scientific field. Nonetheless, Izik did not want to make any major changes. He was perfectly satisfied with having a standard career as an engineer and as the head of operations at his work. I had no idea what this work actually involved.

Everything in Izik's life seemed to stem from the fact that he came from a well-off family. To them, earning a basic salary meant nothing. Lyalya's dad was the vice director of a meat factory. While he died relatively young, he had secured a beautiful apartment with nice furnishings for his family. Lyalya's mother never worked. Even as a widow, she went to resorts with the money she received from her late husband's pension.

Joz mentioned that Izik had become a copy of his dad at one point. Ama, on the other hand, grew much closer to Joz over time. They met many times to discuss life's many questions. Over the years, the difference in age between them became insignificant.

I never quite developed a relationship with Lyalya. I never felt a particular kinship with her. When I was young, I did not understand how she could leave medical school after three years of studying. Lyalya's mother was even taking care of her daughter and her house at the time. Lyalya also was close with Vera, Joz's first love. She even attempted to reunite after Joz and I had already given birth to two of our children. Back then, Lyalya had convinced Vera to come to Odessa following her divorce.

I could feel Lyalya's insincerity when we visited her home. She and Izik did not call me once, let alone visit Moscow after Joz passed away. This was despite the fact they visited Moscow often on vacation. I do not know what happened to them after that point. The pair kept in touch with Kelya, but after her death, they did not even visit to say "Hi" to Eda.

My grandmother also had a younger brother named Motl. He studied at the local preparatory school and had planned to apply to university. He was a die-hard Zionist who stayed true to his convictions until the end of his days.

As previously mentioned, I did not know how Motl became close to Leib Belotserkovskiy. Nonetheless, he invited Leib to his house and introduced him to his sister and nieces. After Motl finished preparatory school in 1912, both friends left for Moscow. They dreamt of being admitted to the university there. Leib aspired to study mathematics but was accepted into the biology department because of the school's Jewish quota. Motl Levitskiy was deferred and risked being drafted to the army.

In 1914, Motl illegally left Odessa on a cargo ship for Palestine. He was caught up in the war and volunteered for a Jewish division fighting the Germans with the Allies in Africa. In return, Motl was promised British citizenship and the right to settle in Palestine. However, that promise was only partially fulfilled.

Motl received British citizenship, but the right to return to Palestine only applied to those who already had families there. Motl was offered a choice: he could either go to England or to Egypt. He chose England, where he received an education. He then moved to America and taught at a Jewish school, eventually becoming its director.

Motl was active in the Zionist party. He knew pivotal figures like Ben Gurion and Golda Meir. He was also married and had two sons named Amitay and Nadav.

In 1936, Motl received permission to visit his family in Kyiv. He was supposed to stay at a hotel, but he spent every day with his sisters and brothers. Our entire family came to Kyiv, and I managed to see him twice. One at my grandmother's place, and again at a restaurant in the Continental Hotel. Two years prior to that trip, Motl had lost his wife. On the return boat he met a lady who was also visiting Russia to see her relatives. She was a widow living in Haifa. The two stayed in touch by exchanging letters and eventually married but kept their two separate households. Just before the Second World War started, Motl finally moved to Palestine.

Motl's older son Amatay joined the army as a pilot after his graduation. After the war, he remained in England to finish university. He specialized in physics and chemistry. He moved to Israel for work, married, and taught at the Tel Aviv Technion University. Today, Amatay is retired. He has a daughter and a son, but I do not know what they do for a living. They live somewhere in Israel, but not in Haifa. I met them when I came to Haifa.

Motl's younger son Nadav stayed in the United States to finish his education. Afterwards, he moved to Israel and became a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. We met him and his wife Kato. I also met Nadav's son who lives in the town of Hertsel, close to Jerusalem. His son has three children. The son's older daughter is serving in the army, his middle daughter is finishing school and set to serve in 2004, and the youngest son is still in school. Nadav's daughter Tal lives in New York and knows Lena.

Once Motl settled in Israel, he continued to work in education. He was also an Israeli delegate at the World Zionist Congress. In 1959, Motl received a visa while attending a conference in Stockholm. He got the opportunity to change planes in Kyiv to fly to Warsaw. These connecting flights did not leave every day, so Motl was able to spend a couple of days in Kyiv. By that time, his younger sister Dina was the only one in his immediate family still living.

In order to see him, Joz and I drove to Kyiv for a day. All of the Kyiv relatives met on Uritsky Street. At that time, Rivochka, Genya, Shika, Eda, and Ilyi all lived there. Joz talked with Motl for a long time. Motl was very happy that he could speak to Joz in English because he was already finding it hard to express himself in Russian.

Motl died in Haifa at the age of 92. Amatay showed me his old house. It is now protected as a historic landmark, and an example of colonial architecture.

Once immigration was permitted again, Valya Mednikov's cousin Genya Horovitz was the first to leave for Israel.[36] I gave Valya Motl's address, and she found him right away. They met with each other many times. When Motl moved into a nursing home in his twilight years, Genya visited and called often.

There is a little more to share about grandmother's family. Grandmother married young, and she was born in Kyiv. My grandfather was from a small village. The pair owned a two-story house on Mokraya Street. The family's fodder store was on the first floor, and there was a welding shop in the courtyard. Kelya's grandfather Haim owned the shop. I cannot remember how many children lived in the house in total, as only five daughters and two sons made it to adulthood.

My grandparents' older daughter Sonya was beautiful in her youth. She was of average height and wore a beautiful braid of dark hair down to her knees. She had vibrant blue eyes. Sonya was not fond of studying, but she completed her nursing course. She worked as a school nurse during the school year and as a camp nurse over the summer her entire life.

As the saying goes, "it is better to be lucky than to be beautiful." In spite of her beauty, Sonya did not have an easy life. A Russian boy

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[36] In the USSR, official government permission (an exit visa) was required to leave the country.

named Semyon Orlov fell in love with her in the beginning of the 20th century. He came to Kyiv from the town of Oryo to join a seminary. The men from his family traditionally became priests. However, Semyon decided to get secular education instead and joined a forestry institute. He met Leib Belotserkovskiy at one of the gatherings and became a regular in the "house of four pretty sisters" as it was known among the students. These sisters were Sonya, Raya, Anyuta, and Dina.

Before the first World War, the young people in their area shared an interest in politics. Some were anarchists, others were socialists, and a number were Zionists. The student circles were also ethnically diverse. I remember Semyon Orlov when he was no longer a young boy. He became a typical member of the Russian intelligentsia. Semyon was quite tall, with blonde hair and blue eyes. He was kind and soft-spoken. Even as a child I could tell how polite Uncle Senya was in how he treated my grandmother. Uncle Senya also retained a friendship with my dad throughout their lives. Uncle Senya loved his children, and his children loved him back. However, the Soviet system did not love Uncle Senya.

Before the war in 1914, Semyon officially became Sonya's groom. He had graduated from the forestry institute, and they planned on getting married. However, once the war started, Semyon was drafted. He was captured as a prisoner of war and was trapped in Germany until 1918.

When Semyon returned, he married Sonya. She began working as a nurse. The two had Lucy in 1920 and Alexander in 1924. I remember visiting them when I was only four with my dad. Soon thereafter, Sonya and Semyon moved to the city of Kineshma. We visited many times, and they visited us in Yaroslavl. After she finished eighth and ninth grade, Lucy came to visit us alone via boat.

Lucy was good friends with Briana's daughter Olga. Braina was a mutual friend of my mother and Aunt Sonya who moved to Kineshma. She lived on the second floor in the same house as Aunt

Sonya's family. We saw each other frequently in Kyiv while visiting my grandmother's family.

In the summer of 1938, Alexander visited by boat. Alexander and I then went to Kyiv and Moscow together to visit Aunt Anyuta. We stayed at her place for three days, but we were completely left to our own devices. We walked around the Moscow center and visited museums all day. On our last day, we gorged on ice cream to the point of both of us throwing up all night on the train. We arrived in Kyiv completely sick, but we revived ourselves quickly. Later, our entire group of cousins visited the summer house in the village of Zvonkovoye. As a consequence of that summer trip with Alexander, I could not even look at ice cream for years.

Semyon and Sonya lived frugally, as did everyone in the 1930s. Aunt Sonya was very caring. Like her sisters, Sonya was raised to help her relatives and those in need of support. Persecutions against religious leaders began around that time. Uncle Senya's father had a congregation in Oryo and continued holding services. He had a widowed daughter and a little grandson named Yura who was not allowed to attend school. Uncle Senya ended up taking Yura to live with his family in Kineshma. To arrange this, Yura was declared an orphan and Uncle Senya was appointed as his guardian. Yura lived with Uncle Senya's family until he finished school. He then left for the town of Ivanov and finished university there.

Uncle Senya's father's life ended tragically. He survived the religious persecutions but refused to abandon his congregation over World War II. He even hid Jewish families in his church. When the Germans ordered him to surrender to them, he refused. Thus, his church with everyone inside it was burned to the ground.

Aunt Sonya had two best friends from her childhood in Kyiv. Both friends attained the highest level of education available for women in completing medical school. Their names were Braina Orlov and Leah.

After the civil war, Braina ended up alone with a little daughter. Somehow, she made it to Kineshma and settled near Sonya. Her daughter, Olya, was older than Lucy by two years. Braina stayed in the apartment in Kineshma her entire life.

Today, it is hard to imagine the conditions people lived in back then. The building Briana and Olya lived in was a two-story wooden house with a wood-burning stove heater. There was no running tap, so buckets of water needed to be brought in from the courtyard or the street. Of course, there was no indoor plumbing either. The entryway had a "bathroom" behind a screen. It was a toilet with a bucket that needed to be periodically taken downstairs and poured into a sewage ditch.

The Orlov family had five members who shared two rooms and a kitchen. Braina only had one room and a pantry with a single-burner kerosine stove. Firewood needed to be brought upstairs from the shack in the courtyard, which was one of the children's duties. Uncle Senya brought water up for the families every day before work.

Sonya's other friend Leah lived in Perm. I do not know what her husband did as no one really spoke about him. Leah lived with her sister who was single, helped around the house, and took care of her son Gosha. They either came to Kineshma or saw our grandmother in Kyiv on their vacations. They lived with us in Zvonkovoye one summer.

During the war, Grandmother evacuated to Kineshma with Shika's family. Everyone lived together. Aunt Sonya worked at the young pioneer camp by the Volga River every summer. Grandmother moved in with us to Yaroslavl, but she returned to Kineshma after my mother died.

In the summer of 1942, Uncle Senya suddenly passed away. He went to visit Sonya and had a heart attack on the boat ride over. The captain called an ambulance, and the attendants declared him dead. He was taken to the morgue, but he left his passport and

identification at home. We had no idea what happened to him. Sonya thought there was an incident on the boat. Back home, everyone thought he was staying with Sonya for a few extra days because school was on summer recess.

Now, a few words about my cousins. After Lucy finished high school, she wanted to study in Leningrad. She attended film school but was admitted to the technician track. This proved to be an unfortunate decision.

In the fall, she suffered from severe angina which led to rheumatism. The doctors told her she had to leave the cold climate immediately. Aunt Sonya came with Lucy to Kyiv over the summer that we lived in Zvonkovoye. Lucy transferred to the technical institute in the consumer goods industry. She lived in a dormitory. She of course visited Grandmother, Kelya, and the other relatives. That was the dormitory where she met Vlad's parents. They had their little daughter with them.

When the war started, Lucy evacuated to Tashkent with her university, along with Kelya who was studying there. Both of them had suffered for the entire summer in Tashkent and then left for Kineshma. Once the university returned to Kyiv, they returned to their studies.

A year later, Lucy married a man in military school named Misha. She then finished university and had a son and a daughter five years apart. Lucy's husband was saved from the frontlines, but the couple had to move from post to post without staying in one place too long. With each move, their son was left with his grandmother in Kineshma.

Lucy never really made use of her education, other than to occasionally volunteer at her local library. Her son, Vadim, inherited Lucy's unfortunate predisposition to angina. He began having rheumatoid arthritis and heart complications in early childhood. He

was admitted to hospital on Morozov Street in Moscow several times.

Vadim was subject to constant moves as well. He once counted that he had attended twelve different schools. His longest post was in Poland. The family also suffered from a number of other misfortunes. Misha became sick with tuberculosis later on. He was subsequently discharged with captain status, a modest pension, and a paid stay for two months at a sanatorium in Crimea.

Lucy had to find somewhere to live with Vadim and her daughter Lena, so she moved to Gorkiy in Russia. This was where Misha's mother and sisters lived. She switched between staying with her mother-in-law and with Misha's sisters. The family eventually found a two-room apartment in a Khrushchevka.[37]

Since Misha contracted tuberculosis, he had to isolate in a separate room. Lucy and their children shared the remaining room. She was forced to work to support the family. As a young adult, Vadim finished high school and was accepted to medical school. He married and left the apartment to live with his wife in his third year of university.

Lucy's daughter Lena was still in high school when Vaid left. I do not know why, but Lucy and Vadim were unfriendly with each other while they were growing up. They were not close, and never helped each other as adults. They saw each other on only the rarest occasions, even though they lived in the same city. I found this extremely odd.

From our earliest days, Keyla and I were very friendly with Lucy and Alexander. Lucy and Keyla also studied at the same university. After Misha got the terrible news and their family ended up in Gorkiy, they

[37] Cheaply-made multi-story apartment buildings named after Nikita Khruschev, built during his time in office as Chairman of the Communist Party.

started receiving food parcels from Kyiv. No one ever questioned how much these parcels cost.

Even after the move, Lucy and I never stopped writing to each other. After some time, her family managed to find a nice three-room apartment in a newly constructed house with all of the conveniences of modern life. By that time, Lena had finished high school, married a soldier, and left for the Caucasus.

When the Azerbaijani and Armenian war over Karabakh began, military families were ordered to return to Russia. Lena and her daughter moved in with her parents, along with Aunt Sonya from Kineshma. She had started to become ill and no one else in the family could take care of her. Aunt Sonya's neighbor and close friend Braina had passed by that point, and her daughter had married and moved away. I believe Aunt Sonya and Uncle Misha passed in the same year. Eventually, after Lucy retired, she took a voyage to visit us in Odessa and in Kyiv.

Lena's husband was transferred from Karabakh to Rostov, but he did not send for her and their daughter. Instead, he sent her divorce papers. Lena returned to her professional life as a speech therapist at a daycare. Her daughter went to school while Lucy helped around the house.

Lena's older son Vadim finished medical school and worked for some time as a pediatrician in Petrozavodsk. However, his wife did not like it there. She insisted that they return to live in a nice apartment that her parents owned in Gorkiy. She did not have a good relationship with her mother-in-law Lena, either. Vadim's wife did what she could to prevent him from meeting with his mother and sister. Vadim was eventually completely estranged from his family. Even after Lucy grew ill and was homebound from a stroke, her son did not visit her.

I visited Lena once after our family moved to Moscow. She also visited us a few times. The last time was when we left for the United

States, and I gave her some of my remaining possessions. Once in a while, she exchanged letters with relatives in Yaroslavl. She eventually left her work at the daycare and traveled back and forth to Poland a number of times. She would buy clothes so she could resell them to make ends meet. I do not know what she is doing now, nor what has become of her daughter. Sanna once told me over the phone that Lena had called her out of nowhere. She said that Lena and her daughter were doing fine. She was working, and her daughter was attending university. She promised to keep in touch and passed her greetings on to everyone. Ultimately, she never called again.

Aunt Sonya's younger son Alexander (Alik) was younger than me and, we were friends in our childhood. I already mentioned how Ama helped him during the war after Alik's father died.

Alik was admitted to a military institute to study English and Chinese. He lived with Aunt Anyuta, especially since I already moved to Odessa. Still in the institute, Alik married his school sweetheart, at that time a student in the Moscow State University of Dentistry. She was a beautiful, striking blonde with blue eyes, and her name was Kalisa. She became very friendly with Aunt Anyuta and was taking care of the housekeeping duties.

Her elder sister began to visit Aunt Sonya (Kalisa's mother-in-law) in Kineshma, because everybody else returned Kyiv and Lena's family was already in Poland.

When the Soviet Union was close allies with China, Alik and his military group spent six months in Peking (Beijing). When he came back, he and Kalisa went to visit relatives in Kyiv.

Alik was then supposed to transfer to Baku, but he did not want to. He went on business trips with a general's niece who worked as his assistant. They two had an affair, she became pregnant, and she asked him to marry her. In exchange, he would be allowed to stay in Moscow and would be given a position at a military magazine

publisher. Alik divorced Kalisa and went to live with his new wife Alla.

By that time, Kalisa had already finished dental school. She started work and continued living with Anyuta. When Anyuta decided to move to Kyiv, Kalisa needed to switch apartments. She moved in with Anyuta's old friends and became their guardian. They were a rather sick elderly couple. The husband was a veteran of the 1917 Revolution, possibly an aging Bolshevik.

Kalisa took great care of the couple and did all of their household chores. After they passed, their apartment in the center of Sadovoy Street became hers. I met Kalisa while I was studying remotely in Moscow. She kept in touch with Alik's sister and her nephews. Her only regret in life was that she could not have children after an unfortunate abortion. Kalisa later married a discharged soldier. They switched apartments and we lost touch.

Kelya became friends with Alla, but I found Alla completely unsympathetic. I knew she did not visit her mother-in-law a single time over the course of her marriage. Alla did not allow her son to visit Aunt Sonya in Kineshma with his dad. Aunt Sonya lived there alone until she moved in with Lucy in Gorkiy.

Since Alik was a military journalist and knew English, he often traveled abroad with different Soviet delegations. He made a lot of money writing memoirs for various marshals. He published under his own name a number of times too. I even saw him on television after I moved to Moscow.

After her wedding, Alla stopped working for the General Headquarters. She kept herself busy with from English to French and with raising her son. Her son studied foreign languages in university, married a classmate, and had a daughter. Her son left his daughter with Alla while they lived abroad. I know nothing else about them.

Alik retired under the rank of colonel. He barely maintained a connection with his sister. After her death, he had even less correspondence with his niece. I do not think he met his nephew. As the Russian proverb goes, he neither took after his mom, nor his dad. [38]

My mother was the second daughter of her family. Her official name was Reizel. Her name changed to Raisa Aronovna in her official documents later on. Her maiden's name was Fishman, and her married name was Belotserkovskaya.

My mother died on June 13th, 1942, a week before my twentieth birthday. I never knew her as an adult. Her image in my memories is marked by sporadic recollections, with some stemming from stories her sisters Anyuta and Aunt Rahele told me.

We did not have any photos from my mother's childhood in our home. Our earliest picture of her is from her last years of high school. As previously mentioned, her family lived in a suburb of Kyiv named Solomenka. It stood at the foot of the Batiyev Mountain. Grandmother's relatives lived nearby and had children the same age as my mother.

My mother Reizel, or Raya, was the leader among her sisters. Her advice and help were demanded by many, and not just within her family. She seemed like the smartest of the bunch, while the oldest, Sonya, seemed the most beautiful. Over the course of her life, Raya was goal-driven and organized. She had great marks in school and helped her sisters and their friend's study. She helped Dosya Begun especially. Dosya lived and dined with my grandmother's family for all of high school.

My mother also had two close Russian friends. After completing their education, the two lived in Kyiv. My mom exchanged letters with them, and we met when we visited the city. Another friend from

[38] A similar proverb in English is being the "black sheep" of the family.

her higher education courses was Gitl. Her married surname was Nikolayeva, from her husband Anatoly. My mom kept in touch with her over her entire life.

I already mentioned my dad's friendship with Tolya or Anatoly, who suffered a tragic fate. He was a sailor in the Baltics who participated in the Kronstadt rebellion.[39] Tolya was a Trotskyite and married a Jewish woman. In the 1930s, the two lived in Yelohov or Yellow Square in Moscow. They could see Saint Basil's Cathedral from their apartment. The church functioned even in those years, potentially to fool the foreigners.

Anatoly was the head of the Bikov Airport. In 1937, he was arrested and received a ten-year conviction. He was not allowed to write letters to the outside world. His family, Gitl and her two daughters were exiled to the Siberian town of Aralsk. The older daughter, Galya, barely managed to finish school. The younger one was very young, even younger than Sanna at the time.

Mama worried about them dearly. Somehow, in 1940, she managed to get permission for them to move to Yaroslavl. Unfortunately, they were never granted full permission to live in the city. Gitl was able to find work in the infant orphanage on the old Nekrasov estate as a pediatric doctor. The ward was in the village of Karabiha, 10 or 15 kilometers from the city.

My mom was already sick by then. Actually, she never was really healthy. In 1918, she contracted typhoid from the epidemic while treating sick people and developed heart complications. Her doctors

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[39] A major 1921 uprising of sailors, soldiers, and civilians against the Bolshevik government. The Kronstadt sailors demanded free speech, free elections, and an end to the Bolshevik monopoly of power, signifying frustration among the workers over war communism. The Leon Trotsky-led Bolsheviks launched a brutal assault in response which resulted in significant casualties on both sides. The drink of choice of the sailors who often burned the Bolshevik officers and their families alive was "Baltic Tea"—a spoonful of cocaine dissolved in a glass of vodka.

told her she was not allowed to give birth, but she really wanted a child. After I was born and everything turned out fine, she took the risk of having another child. My mother did not look particularly healthy when she was young. In all her pictures, she looked skinny, serious, shy, but also like a good listener who gave practical advice. She had extraordinary organizational skills.

When the family settled in Yaroslavl, my mother completely switched to pediatric medicine. Years earlier, after she completed higher education in Kyiv, she left to be the country doctor in a remote area of Kostromskaya County. It was 100 kilometers from the railroad and located in the woods. She lived in a small house (an "izba") across from the hospital.

During the long nights of the winter months, wolves visited her yard. If she stayed late with patients, an old guard waited for her with a rifle to help her cross into her home. In 1917, she visited her family in Kyiv. She could not return to her previous location due to the revolution, so she was sent to work for the typhus clinic. This was where she became ill.

Leib Belotserkovskiy was also in Kyiv in 1919. The two knew each other from their early high school years. However, every picture he signed to her had notes that addressed three of the sisters, Sonya, Anyuta, and Raya. They were merely a circle of friends. They were not very political, a mishmash of young people with different ethnicities and perspectives.[40]

Grandmother's house was known as the house of the five most beautiful girls in Solomenka, as per Anyuta. The group had picnics on Batiyev Mountain and kayaked on the Dnieper River. When she grew older, Raya was actually engaged. However, her groom disappeared. He was potentially killed during the war.

[40] In other words, not interested in political subjects.

Their difference in age was not apparent when they met again, even though Raya was three years older than Leib. In 1919, he left for Moscow to finish his university studies. Raya went to visit him, they married, and she went to work in the town of Myshkin.

Raya was a pediatrician, an ophthalmologist, and an otolaryngologist. In Yaroslavl, she was the founding member for the city's first children's clinic. She was also its head doctor for many years, until she grew seriously ill. After that, she started working as a physiotherapist.

Raya continued working after she gave birth to Sanna. She began thinking about me, her older daughter. I was five at the time Raya decided to organize a kindergarten co-op. All of the children were roughly the same age, between four and six. There were about twenty of us total. The other children's parents were medical workers who could not afford to hire individual nannies.

Raya rented a house for the kindergarten. Two rooms were set aside for playing and napping. Two adult sisters cooked and fed the children. Elsa Robertovna, a former nurse, also took care of us. Elsa was German and came from the Baltics. She brought lots of toys, books, and games that were in German. One of the sisters played the piano, and the children learned different songs. Elsa made costumes for us, and we put on performances of different fairy tales. In other words, the kindergarten was really fun. Most children looked forward to coming each day. Raya's organization continued operating until 1930.

In addition to her direct responsibilities as the head of the children's clinic, Raya spent a lot of time in public service. She even became the city council deputy and supervised an orphanage. Frequently, a girl from the orphanage roughly Sanna's age visited us over the weekends. I do not remember her name, but she came over until my mom's death and still kept in touch with Sanna afterwards. During the war, this girl completed expedited courses to become a doctor

assistant. She was sent to the frontlines and turned up in Moscow after being discharged. I happened to meet her once in the city.

With Mom's help, a Center of Education in Sanitation were created. The center had a library with all of the leading periodicals of the time. My mom always got the first pick from this library, and one of my duties included returning them.

Raya had talent not only as an organizer, but also as someone who could listen, understand problems, and engage in hands-on help. In the 1920 and 1930s, there were no phones in peoples' homes. This meant that other than talking at work, people communicated through visitations. Every evening, someone came to our home to see my mother. On the weekends, my mother, Sanna, and I visited Eva Markovna. We also visited Zeltser and her younger daughter Alya, although less frequently. We were friends for many years, even though we went to different schools.

It should not come as a surprise that even my colleagues visited Raya. Young people were always drawn to her. I remember that when I was in seventh grade a young doctor who had just finished medical school visited us frequently.

Another interesting example came while I was a student in my first year of university. My girlfriend and I met two students in their fifth year who moved to be residents in Yaroslavl. During the winter break, we went to dance at a club. One of them named Fima Eizenshtein walked me home and I invited him in to visit. After I left for Moscow, he started visiting Raya Aronovna almost every day. When he occasionally visited Moscow, he made sure to stop by my school to tell me what to buy and what to bring back on the train. This was the year before World War II, but produce was already hard to find. In any event, butter, cheese, fancy chocolate, and caviar were only available in Moscow. There were even restrictions around buying 200 grams of butter per person.

When Fima finished his residency in June, he returned to Moscow and received his diploma. Mother was checked into the radiology clinic then, and Fima went to visit her. This was one week before the start of the war. Interestingly, they truly communicated as friends. He had no interest in anything else with her or with me, as he had a bride. I also was not interested in him, and we were never really close. Thus, I do not know anything further about his fate.

An infectious disease specialist named Dr. Kovina was another frequent visitor at our house. She was a bright and energetic person who worked at the children's hospital for infectious diseases. Dr. Kovina's husband was a lot older than her. He worked for the city council at the Department of Public Benefit and was educated in agriculture. I only heard about him through discussions from the adults of the house.

In 1938, Dr. Kovina was arrested. Her husband was the one who was actually supposed to be arrested, but he was not home at the time. My mother went to their house to find the whereabouts of their son. He was only a few years older than me.

The Kovinas rejected Raya's help and said they would handle everything themselves. Thankfully, the tumult ended quickly. A few days later, Dr. Kovina ran to my mother to thank her. All of the other relatives and friends were afraid to go to her house. It turned out that Dr. Kovina was very lucky. She had saved the prosecutor's daughter when she was admitted to the hospital with severe diphtheria the previous year. The prosecutor essentially tore Dr. Kovina's case file in half. The authorities released her and gave up on arresting her husband.

My mother also found a caretaker position in the children's clinic for a single woman she knew. Since the woman had trouble finding housing, my mother talked Eva Markovna into taking her in to stay with her. The woman ended up helping Eva Markovna around the house and took care of Eva when she got sick.

Upon reflection, I do not remember my mother ever cooking. She often supervised housework instead. When she was young, my grandmother took care of the housekeeping. After she married, my mother always had housekeepers. When the family lived in Myshkin, we had a cook, a maid, and a nanny. When we moved to Yaroslavl, we moved with one maid. When Sanna was born, a woman named Matryona moved from the village to live with us as a nanny.[41] She took care of Sanna and did all of the housework aside from laundry. A special laundry woman spent an entire day a week on that task. She was rather large and was a professional "laundress." If she did not finish her work in one day, she came again on the following day.

Our house did not have hot water, but we did have running water. We used to put a big wooden basin on a bench in the kitchen and fill it with water. The water was then warmed by the Primus stove.[42] Our washed laundry was carried in two buckets with a rocker to the Volga River for rinsing.[43] Then, the laundry lady would return and hang the washed items to dry in the attic or the yard. She would subsequently sit down with Matryona to have tea from the samovar. It was not that big, and it held enough liquid for about twenty glasses. Teatime continued until the samovar was completely empty. Then, the laundry lady's duties involved ironing every piece of clothing, which she usually did the following day.

We bought our fresh produce at the farmer's market. Typically, our nanny went to get the provisions. While the nanny was at the market, I usually visited the nearest store. When the government mandated the use of "kartochki" which assigned families to specific

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[41] The name Matryona is related to the Russian nesting doll, or Matryoshka. It used to mean a "little matron," or a married woman of some social status.

[42] The first pressurized burner kerosene stove, developed in 1892. They were noisy, smelly, prone to exploding, but life-saving due to their functionality and low-cost.

[43] A wooden beam carried on the neck and shoulders, with two buckets filled with water on either end.

stores, my duties included helping with the shopping.[44] Sometimes all three of us would go to the store, my mom, Matryona, and I.

My mom was in charge of raising and educating her children. I cannot say that I found learning to be of particular concern. Sanna, the baby of the family, occupied more of our mother's time. No one was explicitly focused on my studies. However, I was only five years old, so the adults had to take me somewhere during the day. This was a big factor behind why my mother organized the kindergarten. When I eventually attended an actual school and began fifth grade, I turned out to be completely illiterate. My mother had to arrange for special tutoring, and she was always involved with the PTA at school. When I graduated, Mom went with me to Moscow. But, as I said, I never felt especially supervised while attending school.

The last few years of her life, Raya was very ill. She rarely went out, but someone always came to visit her in the evenings. She read a lot. One of my new duties became going to the library. I started reading thick magazines, including the new publications of domestic and foreign-translated literature. I started reading new modern literary works more than even the Russian classics, which had been available in our home library since the 1930s.

My parents' personalities were very different. What they had in common was a mystery to me. To be more precise, I never gave it any thought at the time. In hindsight, I think I was genetically more "Belotserkovskaya," and Sanna took after our mother's side. Even in choosing my profession, I thought less about who I wanted to be, and more about who I did not want to be. My parents did not influence my decision in any way. They of course loved their daughters, but there were absolutely no outward signs of affection. I do not remember ever being kissed, hugged, caressed, or hearing any questions from my parents about my school affairs and friends.

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[44] "Kartochki" were cards issued to families and individuals to distribute food rations.

When I showed up home late, which I did frequently, the nanny Matryona would stay up and give me a talking to. From the eighth grade on I often came home late after going out to the theater. My friends Alla's mom was an accountant there, so we could attend any show we wanted without a ticket.

Matryona did not always like my male admirers. In ninth grade, I was courted by an older man. He was an administrator's driver who studied during the night to get a technical degree. Each time she say him, Matryona told me each that he was not the right match for a doctor's daughter. She often turned him away from our house. I myself was flattered when he came to pick me up in a car. My mom never said a word about it.

Mom and I never had heart-to-heart talks. It might have been because I left home at eighteen while she was sick and Sanna was still a child in need of care. In the last year of my mother's life, the war started. Mom had already quit work by the time I returned to Yaroslavl to be with her. Our grandmother came to help take care of her. I would return home from the hospital late, and sometimes spend the night.

When Mom got really bad, she started having health episodes in the night. Grandmother would wake me up to see our neighbor on the second floor so Mom could get a shot for her pain.

In spite of all this, my mom's death took us by surprise. Raya died at the age of fifty-three on June 13th, 1942. I actually have a kind of memory gap from that time. I only remember that a lot of people came to visit, even Aunt Rahil from Kineshma. This was the town where Shika's family, Kelya, and Rivochka lived. After the funeral, Rahil took Grandmother with her and returned to Kineshma. Matryona stayed near Kyiv for a little longer, then left for the village to take care of her niece. She was finishing school at that time. Papa came back after the funeral, and I returned to Moscow. Aunt Sara and Balya then moved in with Papa and Sanna.

After my mother's death, I moved in with Aunt Anyuta. She was my grandparents' third daughter, and the one who resembled my grandmother the most. She had gray eyes and blonde hair. She never really went gray, though her hair strands thinned a little later in life.

Anyuta graduated from a finishing school for girls with my mother and then attended higher education Bestujevskiye courses.[45] Upon graduating, Anyuta became a teacher.

During the revolution, Anyuta moved to Moscow. The reason was personal tragedy. Anyuta was in love with a neighbor who was friends with her brother Lyova. We even had a picture of the two of them. After the first World War, this neighbor married her younger sister Rahil, who became Keyla's mother.

Anyuta got a very small room in a communal apartment. Ten families lived in the apartment, sharing one kitchen with one restroom. The restroom had only one toilet and one bathtub. Anyuta had a dark pantry with a hot plate heated by a gas canister in her little room. At first, she worked at a school. Then, she stopped because of a throat problem and went to work at the library.

At the district library, Anyuta was in charge of a readers' circle and helped young poets who sometimes stayed with her in her apartment. She spent what little earnings she had on supporting the struggling writers, even though her salary was low and she needed the help herself.

I traveled to Kyiv with Alik and stayed with Anyuta when Eda was born. He was three years younger, and I was fifteen at the time. Anyuta loved her nieces, nephews, and sisters, and was extraordinarily kind. However, her neighbors would take advantage of this kindness, often borrowing money from her and forgetting to pay her back.

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[45] These prestigious higher education courses taught in St. Petersburg were some of the first to be open to women in Russia.

As previously described, Alik and I walked around Moscow all day during the trip. We had hot dogs and ice cream we bought with the money our respective parents gave us for the trip. Anyuta boiled potatoes during the visit. I ate too much ice cream and got some kind of food poisoning. I had horrible nausea, and again, could not have ice cream for several years after that trip. On August 1st, we celebrated Keyla's birthday in Kyiv. I could not even join everyone sitting at the table, as there was a pint of ice cream on display.

When I was accepted into university, I lived in a dormitory and visited Anyuta frequently. By then she as working as the senior librarian at her library. When World War II started, collective panic broke out. Anyuta left the city with two of her friends, a husband, and a wife. The husband was a rather elderly Bolshevik who worked in the philosophy department at the Bauman Institute. Essentially, Anyuta left with them to help his wife.

The three of them moved to Ijevsk. Rosa, the wife, and Anyuta worked at the weapon-producing factory. The husband had a special card that allowed them to get extra food.

They returned to Moscow in 1943 and Anyuta returned to her job and her little room. It was still standing, but some of her things were gone. This included my photo albums, which devastated me.

When I returned to Moscow during the war, I moved in with Anyuta. It was easier for us to live together and combine her salary with my student stipend.

Ama visited us once. At that time, he was the head of the artillery division at Kaliningrad. He came to Moscow for some replacement parts. His driver's wife was in charge of the factory's cafeteria, and visitors constantly visited them and got drunk at their house.

Ama usually brought us firewood. On rides with his driver, he would leave the car to dig for frozen potato spuds in the ground. He also brought us leftover food from the cafeteria. Ama loved Anyuta very

much and always took care of her. When Kyiv was liberated, Ama's mother Dina returned to the city. She had spent the evacuation in Balashova on the Volga River. Ama managed to get Aunt Dina special permission to visit Moscow and stayed with Anyuta. At that time, there were no regular routes from Moscow to Kyiv.

This was around the time Joz came. He exchanged letters from the frontlines with Izik, and visited Anyuta when he came to Zelenograd. This was the special visit when we met.

My grandmother, Ghenya, Shika, and their children Ilya and Eda also stayed with Anyuta until they were granted permission to return to Kyiv. Thanks to Anyuta's neighbors who gave her the keys to their room when they left Moscow, everyone had a place to sleep at night. My father and Sanna also came to Anyuta to meet Joz.

Additionally, Eva Markovna came for a few days en route to Vilnius. Her grandnephew was found alive there, as it turned out his nanny had saved him during the war. When everyone from the ghetto was taken to a concentration camp, the nanny stood by the side of the road and grabbed the baby. She took him to her parents and said he was her son. Eva Markovna later returned from the trip with the boy. His name was Mark. She took him to Kemerovo to his grandmother, her sister.

I took care of Mark while they stayed with us in Moscow. His parents were sent to the concentration camp, and nobody knew whether they survived. The nanny gave Eva Markovna and Mark some salo for the road.[46] They traveled to Kemerovo, where Mark's grandmother was exiled by the Soviet government as a "bourgeois"

[46] Salo is cured pork fat, often put on sandwiches or cut into pieces like ham. Obviously, the food was not kosher, and it was rather uncommon in the city. Salo was found in Odessa farmers' markets, but not stores.

before the war.[47] This was the first time I saw salo. Mark would eat nothing else, even though he was extremely thin.

After some time, Grandmother and Mark returned to Vilnius. He was returned to his parents, who managed to survive. Later, Mark and his parents immigrated to Vienna. Grandmother had passed away by that time. Mark graduated from Vienna's Conservatory and became a famous musician. I think he is a pianist.

Anyuta's younger brother Lyova graduated from school with Uncle Yasha. Lyova was then drafted to fight in the First World War. He returned with a wife named Sonya. She was a nurse, and a generally strange person. They did not have any children. The two lived in communal apartment in a famous Kyiv high rise called "the skyscraper of Ginsburg."[48]

Sonya was obsessed with cleanliness. Visitors needed to take off their shoes and sit on the couch in their apartment. She would then mop the floor immediately after lifting all the chairs in the home onto a table.

Lyova was an accountant at a factory, and Sonya did not work. The sisters adored their brother and visited him often. During the war, Lyova and his wife evacuated and then returned after Kyiv was liberated. Their house was destroyed, so they received a small room in a new neighborhood.

Lyova was very close to Uncle Yasha. They were close in age, and their wives grew to be friends too. Yasha's wife went blind soon after their wedding due to an accident. She could not do much, so Sonya frequently visited to help her around the house. Lyova was

[47] The label of "enemies of the state" (business owners and the educated), to be sent away from the big cities and to have their belongings confiscated.

[48] The twelve-story building in Kyiv, known as "Ukraine's first skyscraper" and Europe's tallest building before 1925.

extremely kind. He loved his sisters and their children. Sonya passed away first, and Lyova died before Eda's wedding.

Rivochka was the next sister in age. She had a rather strong personality despite the fact she was sickly. Over the Soviet period, she graduated from her university's department of biology and was sent on first assignment to Dnepropetrovsk.[49]

Within the family, Rivochka was the closest to Rahil. Even though Rivochka was younger, she held herself as the head of the family. This was because Rahil married early and moved out. Rivochka also got married in Dnepropetrovsk, and later returned to Kyiv with her husband Zyama.

Zyama loved all of Rivochka's nephews and nieces. When they visited, he took each of them to Kreschatik for ice cream. When Ilya and Eda were born in 1938 and 1939 respectively, Zyama acted like a second father to them. Their birth father Shika was disabled.

Zyama was in accounting, working as a bookkeeper. He was drafted into the army at the beginning of the war. Zyama was appointed as a major, and the head of the financial division of his regiment. He was ultimately killed near Harkov.

Rivochka was the head of a clinic's testing laboratory. During the evacuation, Rivochka was with Uncle Yasha, Grandmother, Rahil, Keyla, and Shika. Ghenya and their girls, and Yasha's mother, father, and sister also joined. They all stayed in Kineshma near the Volga River. Later, Keyla and Lucy left for university in Tashkent. Everyone else stayed with Aunt Sonya and Uncle Senya. Grandmother also left for Yaroslavl, while Rivochka freelanced in a hospital. Her husband managed to mail her her diploma. Having the diploma in hand allowed her to return to Kyiv with the family after the end of the war. Upon returning to Kyiv, the family got their apartment on

[49] She was quite literally "sent," as the government decided where one would work upon graduating.

Solomenka Street back, but not right away. Rivochka worked as the lead of the testing lab again in Kyiv until her death. She was in charge of raising her girls.

The youngest of the sisters, Rahil, graduated from medical school after her daughter Keyla was born. She had to work in the far away village of Motovilovka as a pediatrician after graduation. The government assigned her a residence. Over their summers, Rahil took Keyla with her to Motovilovka. Keyla lived with her father and her nanny in Kyiv to attend school during the winter. This pattern went on for several years.

Sanna and I spent one summer with Rahil, Keyla, and our grandmother in Motovilovka. Our parents were vacationing in Crimea at the time. I was probably eight or nine years old. I remember seeing a large overgrown orchard there. Little Sanna almost always followed behind Grandmother, holding on to her skirt. She also liked to put a pillow on the floor and dance around it, singing "Katyusha."[50] Keyla and I spent entire days playing in the garden. I remember the garden having a small shed. It was probably a former rabbit house. It was the perfect place to play in. There was a neighbor next door. He was very strange, so we decided to spy on him. The neighbor wore a t-shirt made from the Soviet flag, with the letters CCCP printed upside down on the back.

Rahil took us to the pond after she came home from work. On the weekends, Uncle Yasha came by car to bring us groceries. The entire village would gather to look at the car being driven by someone in a fireman's uniform. He was the head of the firefighting unit in our region at that time.

Once the war started, Uncle Yasha sent the entire family to evacuate. He was essentially left on his own in the local government offices. Everyone else abandoned their post, but he stayed to put out the

[50] A popular war-time song about a girl named Katyusha waiting for a soldier to return to her from war.

fires in the city. The Germans came and captured him, and he passed away in either a concentration camp or Babiy Yar. His assistant was able to escape on foot to tell us about Uncle Yasha's fate.

Rahil worked as a physician in the military hospital in Kineshma. After everyone returned to Kyiv, she continued working as a physician in a hospital for veterans and disabled people until she was seventy years old. She organized medical help in the basement of her apartment building in retirement. She saw each patient for no fee, completely voluntarily.

Nerry Berman, 1997–2004

PART FOUR

The Years Beyond the Story

Dad passed away from leukemia in February 1987. He was just 64 years old, and in any developed country, he might have lived much longer. He was a very strong man physically and mentally, and made outstanding achievements in every endeavor he pursued, despite the many political and antisemitic obstacles in the Soviet society.

However, living in the USSR took its toll. Serving in the active army (mainly on the frontlines), from 1941 to 1946, seriously affected his health. But the most significant blow was being exposed to high doses of radiation. The exposure was never officially admitted by the authorities, and those affected were never warned.

The exposure happened while he was working in Chelyabinsk in 1952 and 1953. That area had been heavily contaminated by radioactive waste, which was dumped into sources of drinking water by nearby nuclear facilities, unbeknownst to the general public. Dad experienced the first symptoms of leukemia a couple of years later.

The second exposure likely occurred in May 1985, when he visited a friend in Kiev (just 60 miles from Chernobyl) and spent the entire day outside. That day, Dad was caught in a severe rainstorm that contained acidic and possibly radioactive elements. He felt unwell soon after and never fully recovered. He had to retire in the spring of 1986 and moved with Mom to Moscow, where he was scheduled to receive treatment in a specialized oncological hospital. However, in April 1986, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster occurred. The hospital was closed to all patients not officially related to the Chernobyl accident, and his treatment was postponed to the spring of 1987. He died in February 1987 without receiving the necessary care.

He was buried at the Mitinskoe Cemetery in Moscow. Later, our beloved relatives Olga and Dima Desyatnik were also buried next to him. There is a shared monument at the site.

Oh, well...

After Dad passed in 1987, Mom continued living in her Moscow apartment. First she was alone, then with her granddaughter Elena from 1988 to 1989. In 1989, Lucy, Elena, and I left the USSR as refugees and, in 1990, settled in Massachusetts, USA. Mom and Rina's family joined us in 1992, just as the USSR ceased to exist. She lived with us for a while in our Boston home, then in our condo in Sharon, MA. In 1995, she moved into an apartment in Sharon's senior housing complex next to our building, where she spent the longest and happiest years of her life in the U.S.

There, she met her new life companion, Aron Lieb. He was an elderly Holocaust survivor from Poland, and they spent their days caring for each other, visiting children and grandchildren, relatives and friends, and exploring places together.

In these golden years, she watched her family thrive and finally felt a sense of freedom she never had in her homeland. She traveled widely, both within the country and abroad, and maintained strong social connections with friends and relatives in the U.S. and overseas. She read voraciously, devouring books that had never been available in the USSR, and significantly advanced her English by attending classes and studying on her own. That kind of initiative was rare among Russian émigrés her age.

Once, while browsing through her photo archive, I asked her why she didn't record what she remembered about all the people and the era she had lived through, an era that had all but disappeared. She took this idea seriously and began preparing notes. At first, she probably didn't realize how enormous the project would become. She started and stopped several times, but over many years—gathering notes, contacting surviving relatives and friends around the world, and handwriting the text—she eventually completed three notebooks, which are now translated in this memoir.

After many good years, her health began to decline. She suffered a stroke in 2005 that took away her speech and motor abilities. She was placed in a temporary rehabilitation facility and released home once she had partially recovered. It soon became clear that, with her condition, she required permanent assistance, as she had not fully regained the ability to speak, walk, or live independently.

Given how much of her life and career had been centered on language and human connection, this was a devastating blow. She became depressed and unmotivated, struggling even to get out of bed.

Luckily, after a waiting period, Mom was admitted to the Hebrew Senior Life Center (HSL) in Boston in 2007. The HSL was an outstanding facility that gave her ten more years of meaningful life. There, she underwent physical and speech therapies and made noticeable progress, but the real breakthrough came when she was referred to an art therapist, Olga Shmuylovich.

Mom was immediately captivated by this new opportunity to express herself through visual art. Her interest in life returned, and her motivation was rekindled.

At first, Mom couldn't even sit up or hold a pencil. Staff had to support her hand while she lay in bed. But with hard work, determination, and Olga's guidance, she gradually began to regain independence. Everyone around her was amazed at the degree of her recovery. She regained strength, began walking, was able to express her needs orally, and within about a year, she was sitting in the common room, drawing on her own.

Under Olga's supervision, Mom created replicas of works by famous modern artists. Her replicas were so impressively accurate that they were displayed in the HSL Art Gallery and featured in an album titled *Replicas*, sold at the HSL gift shop. Her art and recovery story inspired many other HSL residents striving to improve their own well-being.

She also returned to her old habit of reading for hours each day. Many of the books came from the large library at HSL, and others were brought to her by Rina and Mark. In the last years of her life, reading had become difficult for her, but she listened with interest and without tiring when Rina and Mark read to her aloud.

And in conclusion, none of this miraculous recovery would have happened without the daily support of my sister Rina, who was Mom's greatest advocate. Rina coordinated with HRC staff, took walks with Mom, read to her, and was always there when needed.

Mom lived at the HRC until reaching the age of nearly 94 and passed away in 2016. She is buried at the Baker Street Jewish Cemeteries in Boston. Her grave monument also bears my father's name, serving as his cenotaph. I hope their souls are reunited.

May their memories be a blessing.

Mark Berman, 2025

JOSEPH BERMAN

A Life in Dates

Birth and Early Life

- 1923 — Born in Kyiv, USSR
- 1940 — Graduated high school with distinction, receiving the highest grade in every subject
- 1940 — Admitted to Kyiv University, Department of Western Languages and Literature

War and Military Service

- 1941–1946 — Served in the Soviet Army, primarily on the front lines during World War II
- 1944 — Awarded the *Order of the Red Star*
- 1945 — Received the *Medal "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945"*
- 1985 — Awarded the *Order of the Patriotic War, 2nd Class*

Life and Career

- 1945–1946 — Foreman in an army construction brigade in Odessa
- 1946–1947 — Continued education and graduated *summa cum laude* from Odessa Pedagogical Institute (OPI), Foreign Languages major
- 1950 — Graduated *summa cum laude* from OPI, Logic major
- 1946–1952 — Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Odessa Naval Academy
- 1952–1953 — Senior Lecturer, Chelyabinsk Polytechnic Institute
- 1953–1955 — Senior Lecturer, Odessa Polytechnic Institute

- 1954 — Earned Candidate of Sciences degree (Ph.D. equivalent), Institute of Teaching Methods, Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Moscow
- 1955–1963 — Docent and Head of the Foreign Languages Department, Belarusian Institute of Railroad Engineers, Gomel
- 1963–1986 — Professor and Head of the Foreign Languages Department, Odessa Technological Institute
- 1967 — Earned Doctor of Sciences degree (advanced postdoctoral qualification), Moscow State Linguistic University
- 1986 — Retired
- 1949–1986 — Published six academic books and higher education textbooks, along with over 70 scholarly articles on foreign language teaching methodology
- Supervised 14 doctoral candidates in foreign language education. The department he chaired was the only one at a non-linguistic university in the USSR to establish a postgraduate program in language studies. He frequently lectured on his research at academic and teacher-training institutions across the Soviet Union.

Family and Personal Life

- 1944 — Married Nerry Belotserkovskaya
- 1946 — Birth of son, Mark
- 1947 — Birth of daughter, Rina

Later Years and Passing

- 1986 — Retired and moved to Moscow
- February 1987 — Passed away in Moscow at age 64
- Burial — Mitinskoe Cemetery, Moscow; cenotaph at the Baker Street Jewish Cemeteries, Boston

NERRY BERMAN (NÉE BELOTSERKOVSKAYA)

A Life in Dates

Birth and Early Life

- 1922 — Born in Myshkin, USSR
- 1940 — Graduated high school with distinction, receiving the highest grade in every subject, Yaroslavl
- 1940 — Admitted to Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology, Moscow

War and Military Service

- 1942–1944 — Served in the Soviet Army as a nurse in an evacuation mobile hospital
- 1985 — Awarded the Order of the Patriotic War, 2nd Class

Life and Career

- 1940–1945 — Graduated from Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology, major in Chemical Technology
- 1948–1951 — Graduated from the State Institute of Finance, degree in Money and Credit; qualified as an economist
- 1962–1964 — Graduated from the Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Kiev; qualified as a high school German teacher
- 1972 — Earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. in Education from the Maurice Thorez State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Moscow
- 1963–1977 — Taught at various schools and higher education institutions, holding positions as lecturer and senior lecturer
- 1964–1986 — Published numerous scholarly articles on foreign language teaching methodology
- 1954–1986 — Assisted in research, preparation, and editing of all academic publications by Joseph Berman

- 1978 — Retired

Family and Personal Life

- 1944 — Married Joseph Berman
- 1946 — Birth of son, Mark
- 1947 — Birth of daughter, Rina

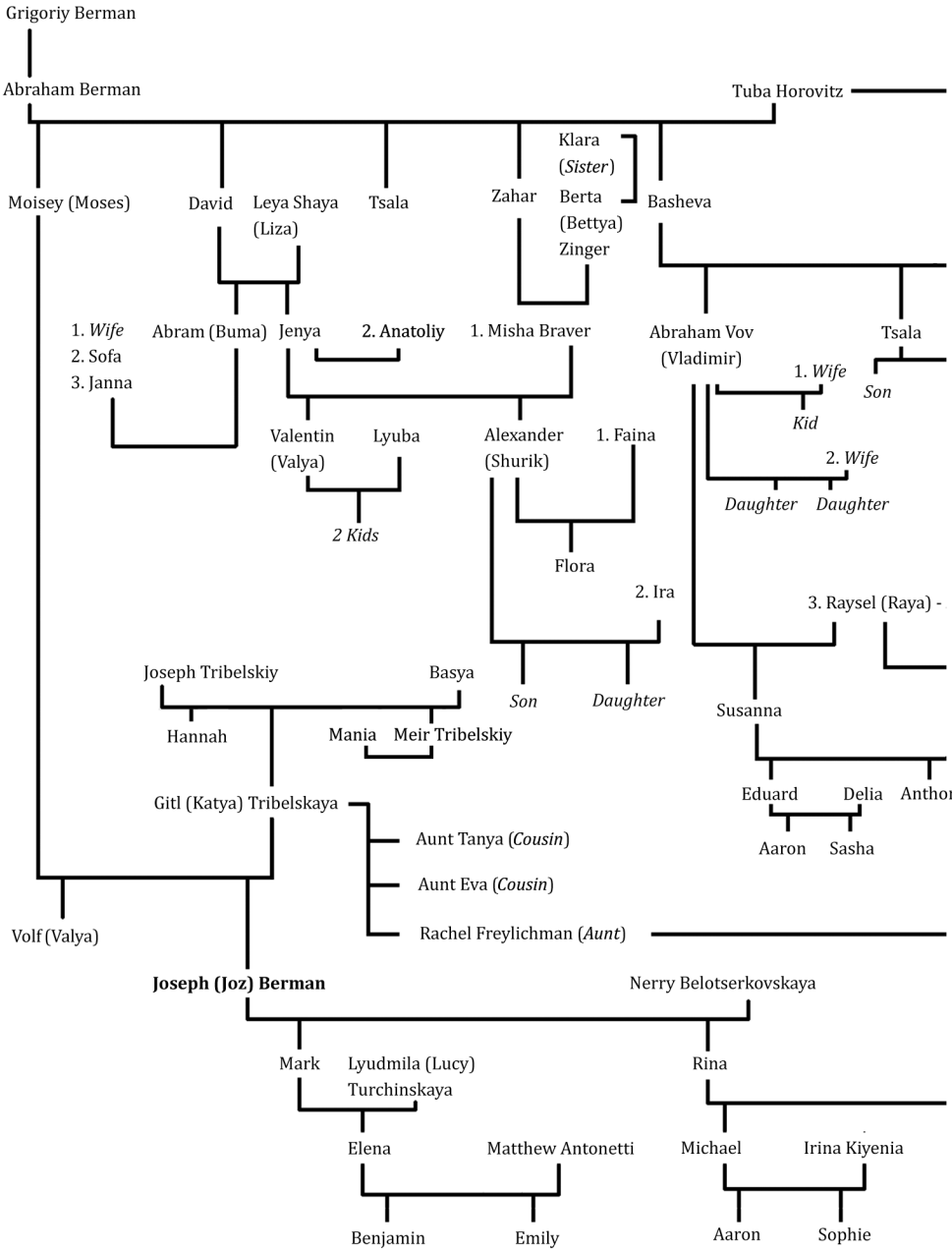
Later Years and Passing

- 1986 — Moved to Moscow
- 1992 — Emigrated from the Russian Federation as a refugee and settled in Boston, USA
- March 2016 — Passed away in Boston at age 93
- Burial — Baker Street Jewish Cemeteries, Boston

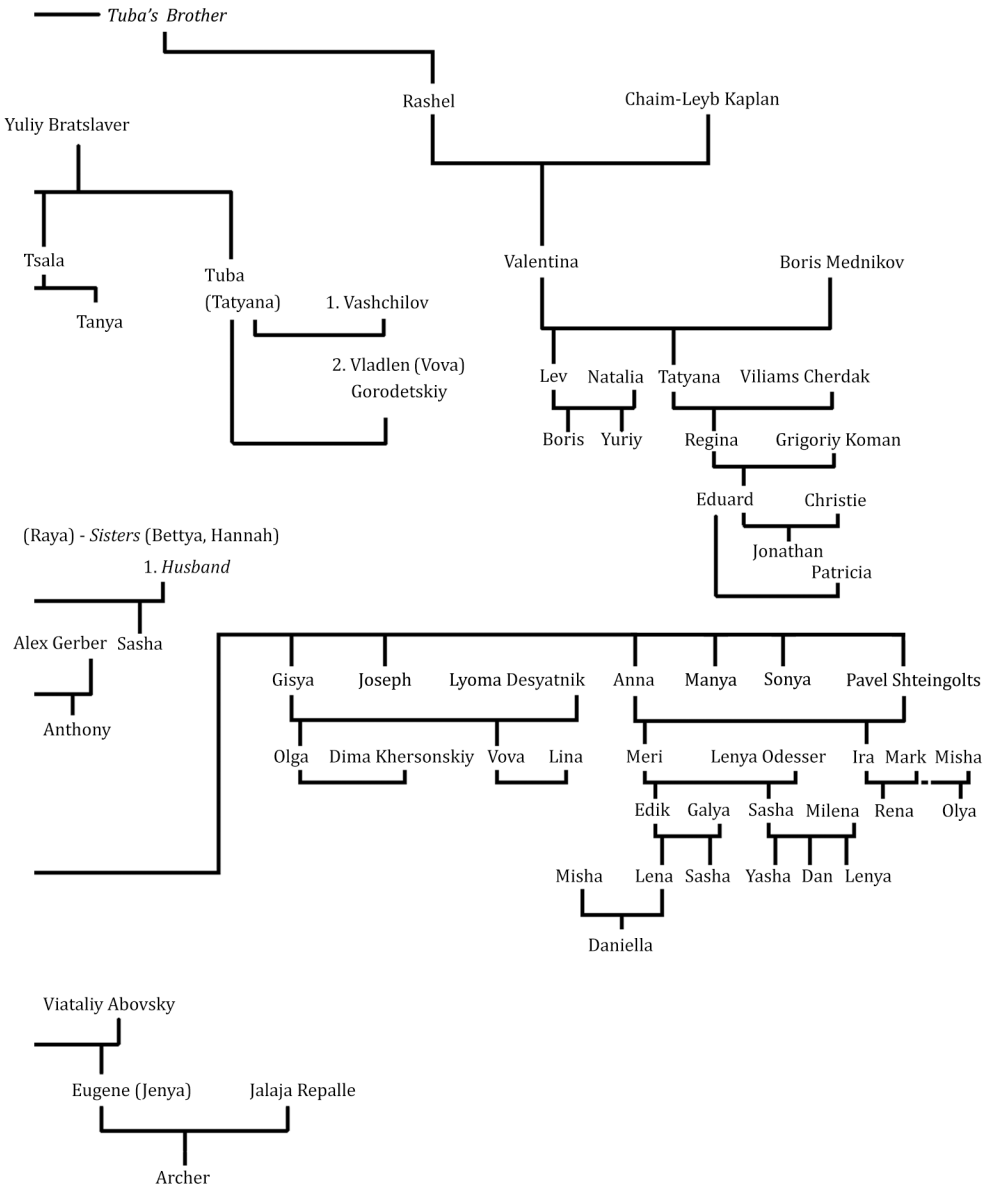
FAMILY TREE:

The Berman and Belotserkovskiy Branches

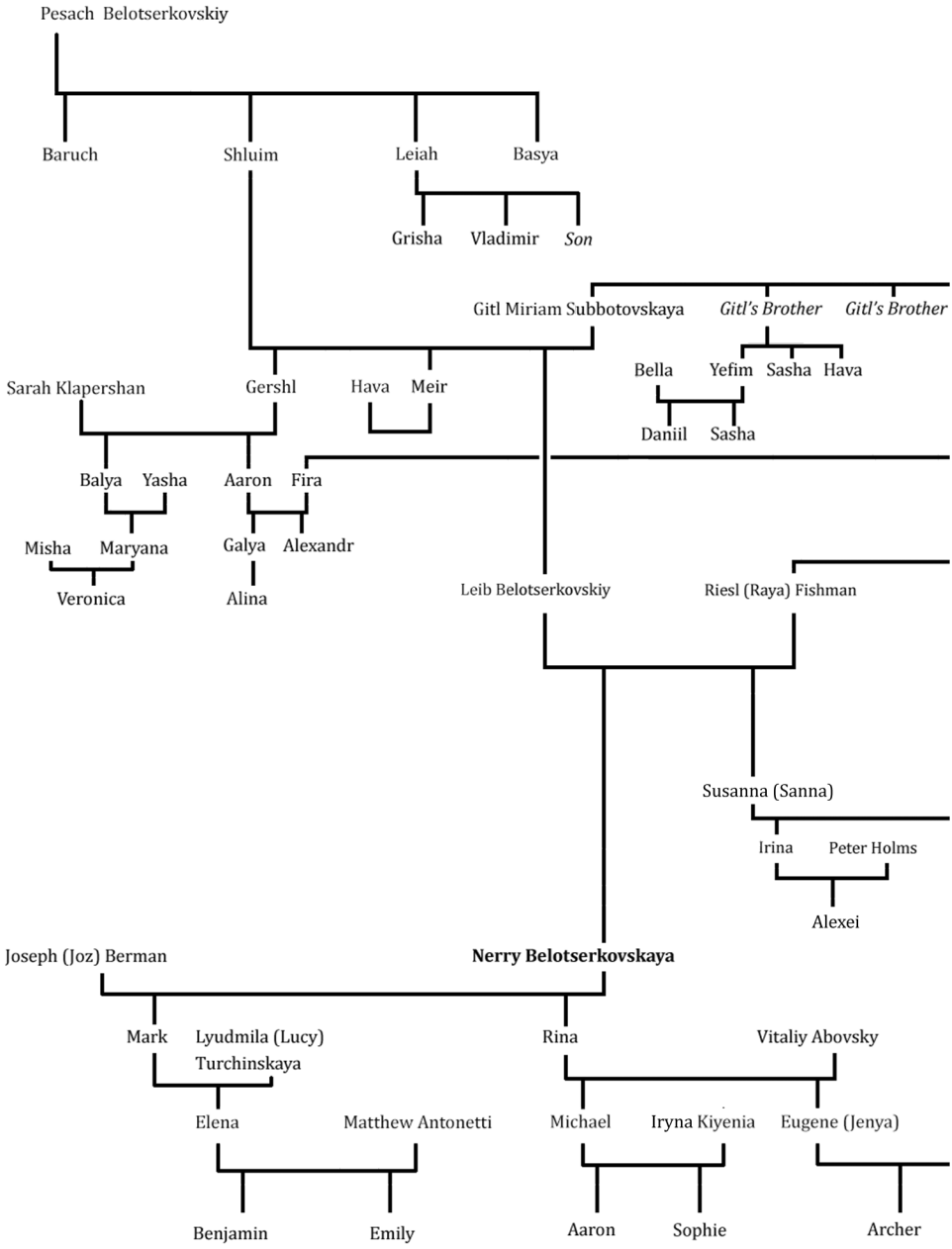
Berman's Branch of the Family Tree – Page 1



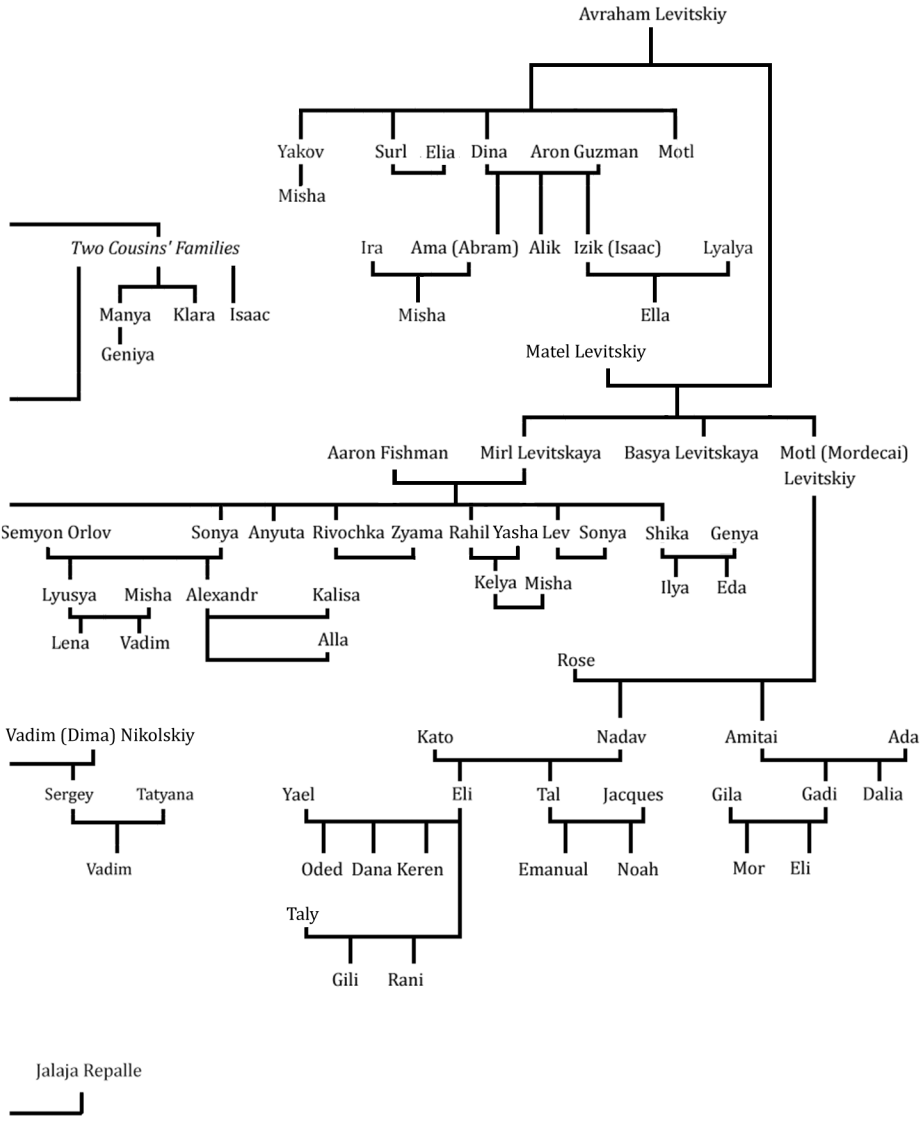
Berman's Branch of the Family Tree – Page 2



Belotserkovskiy's Branch of the Family Tree - Page 1



Belotserkovkiy's Branch of the Family Tree – Page 2



APPENDIX:
Photographs from the Family Archives

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Вчера состоялись похороны старѣйшаго машиниста ст. «Бирзула» ю.-з. ж. д. Абрама Бермана, скончавшагося 60 дѣтъ въ одесской еврейской больницѣ. А. Берманъ былъ единственный еврей-машинистъ на юго-западныхъ дорогахъ, прослуживший 37 дѣтъ и за свою добросовѣстную службу награждавшійся медалями. Три сына А. Бермана окончили желѣзнодорожное училище. Одинъ изъ нихъ и сейчасъ служитъ въ конторѣ депо «Бирзулы», а другой состоитъ машинистомъ на той же станціи. Старшій сынъ Давидъ Берманъ до военной службы состоялъ также машинистомъ въ Бирзулѣ, но послѣ отбытія воинской повинности ему уже было отказано въ обратномъ пріемѣ на службу, на жел. дорогу изъ-за того, что онъ—еврей.

Yesterday, the funeral was held for Abram Berman, the oldest locomotive engineer at the Birzula station of the Southwestern Railway, who passed away at the age of 60 in the Odessa Jewish Hospital.

A. Berman was the only Jewish engineer on the Southwestern Railway. He served faithfully for 37 years and was awarded medals for his dedicated service. All three of A. Berman's sons graduated from a railway technical school. One of them currently works in the Birzula depot office, and another is an engineer at the same station.

The eldest son, David Berman, also worked as an engineer in Birzula before his military service, but after completing his service, he was denied re-employment on the railway because he was Jewish.

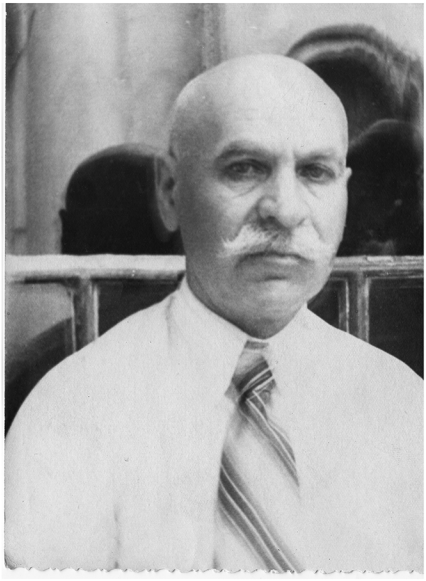
Top Left Abraham Berman (1910s)

Top Right Tuba Horovitz (1910s)

Bottom Left Abraham Berman (1910s)

Bottom Right Abraham Berman – Obituary, *Odessa News*, January 28, 1912

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

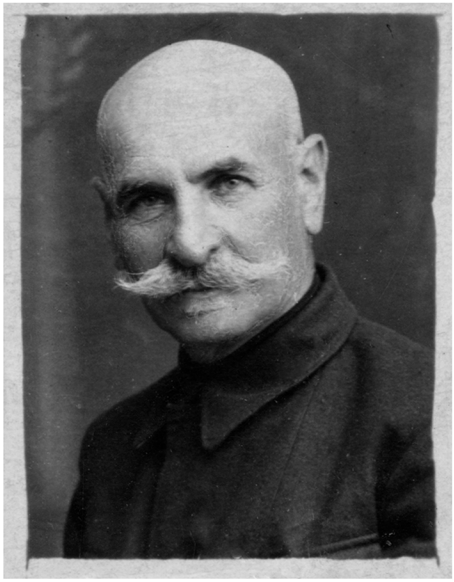


Top Left	Abraham (Buma), Leya, Jenya, David Berman (1923)
Top Right	David Berman (1953)
Bottom Left	Moses Berman (Odessa Technical School of Railway Transport, Class of 1903), with a graduation watch, later a family heirloom, photographed again in 2025 and overlaid here
Bottom Right	Moses Berman (Technical Division, Southwestern Railway Administration, 1918)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Top Left	Joseph Tribelskiy (1910s)
Top Right	Basya Tribelskaya (1910s)
Bottom Left	Gitl and Volf/Valya (1920)
Bottom Right	Volf/Valya (1920)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans



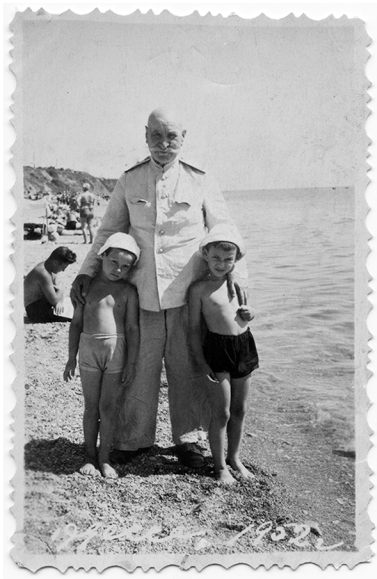
Top Left	Joseph, Moses, Volf (1926)
Top Right	Moses Berman (late 1940s)
Bottom Left	Gitl Berman (1944)
Bottom Right	Moses Berman (1944)

Chapter One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Top Gitl (Katya) Tribelskaya, Rina Berman, Mark Berman, Moses Berman, early 1950s

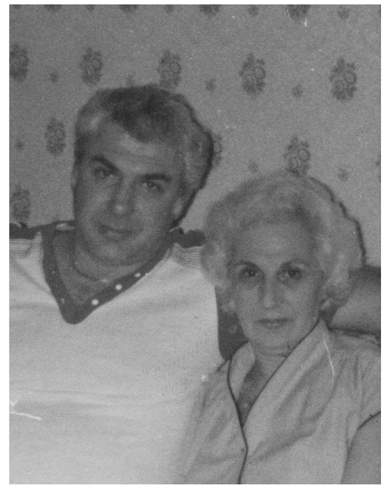
Bottom Rina Berman, Moses Berman, Mark Berman, early 1950s

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans



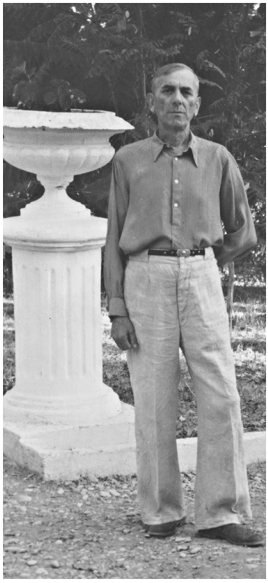
Top	Joseph, Moses, Rina, Mark (1948)
Bottom Left	Rina, Moses (1951)
Bottom Right	Rina, Moses, Mark (1952)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans



Top Left	David, Valentin, Leya Shaya (1943)
Top Right	Valentin, Jenya (1990s)
Bottom Left	Mark, Berta, Zahar, Rina (1948)
Bottom Right	Vladlen Gorodetskiy, Tuba (Tatyana), Berta, Nerry (late 1960s)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans



Top Left	Meir Tribelskiy, Gelendzhik (1957)
Top Right	Mania and Meir Tribelskiy, Israel (1960)
Bottom Right	Meir Tribelskiy seated in the center, his daughter Tsipora at his left, and Tsipora's daughter in front. Standing at left are Tsipora's three sons. Israel (1960s)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Top Left	Yuliy Bratslaver (1909)
Top Right	Aunt Tanya (1958)
Bottom Left	Abraham Vov/Vladimir (1940s)
Bottom Right	Abraham Vov/Vladimir and Raysel/Raya (1960s)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Top Left	Tuba/Tatyana, a medical school student (1933); Tuba/Tanya and Mark Berman (1946)
Top Right	Tuba/Tatyana and Susanna Gerber (early 1960s)
Bottom Left	Mark Berman and Tuba/Tatyana on a sea trip aboard the cruise ship “Pobeda” (1954)
Bottom Right	Tuba/Tatyana (1949)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Top Left Mark Berman, Abraham Vov, Sasha, Joseph Berman, unknown, Vladlen Gorodetskiy (1960)

Bottom Two unknown, Raysel/Raya, Tuba/Tatyana, unknown, Nerry Berman, Rina Berman (1960)

Part One: The Ancestry of the Bermans

Moisey

Abramovitch

Berman

1883 - 1953

To our unforgettable

father and grandfather

from children and grandchildren

Gravesite of Moses Berman, Third Jewish Cemetery, Odessa (photo by Mark Berman, 2004)

Mark's recollection of the cemetery visit: My grandparents, Moses and Gitl, were laid to rest here in the early 1950s. When my mother, Nerry, visited it in 1992 before leaving the USSR to join us in the United States, both graves were still in good condition. When I returned in 2004 during a trip to Odessa and Moscow, I found my grandfather's gravesite still reasonably well preserved and arranged for some restoration. My grandmother's gravesite, however, had mysteriously disappeared. Despite searching for two days with a cemetery worker, I found no sign of her grave, and the surrounding graves all dated back to the early 1950s. The disappearance of Gitl's gravesite remains a mystery, but her memory endures.

May the memory of Moses, Gitl, and the generations of our ancestors be a blessing.

Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Joseph Berman, age 3 (1926)
Top Right	Joseph Berman, age 16, 9th grade, high school (1939)
Bottom Left	Joseph Berman, age 17, high school graduate (1940)
Bottom Right	Joseph Berman, age 17, high school graduate (1940)

Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Joseph Berman, upon graduating from the Military Artillery School (1942)
Top Right	Tuba/Tatyana, Senior Lieutenant of the Medical Service (early 1940s)
Bottom Left	Leib Belotserkovskiy, Major of the Medical Service (1941)
Bottom Right	Abraham Vov/Vladimir Bratslaver, Senior Lieutenant (early 1940s), later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

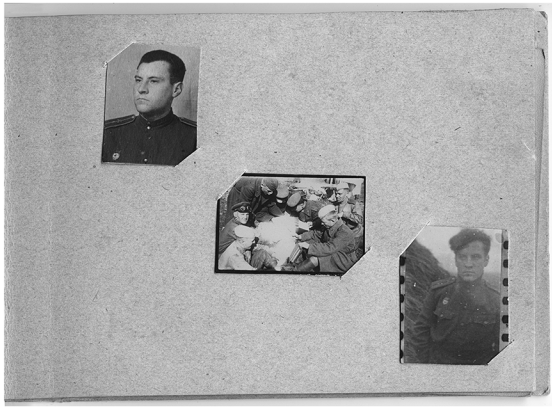
Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Wolf Buckbinder, Captain (early 1940s)
Top Right	Ama/Abraham Guzman, Engineer-Major (1945)
Bottom Left	Joseph Berman, Senior Lieutenant, last days of front-line service, Kaunas (spring 1945)
Bottom Right	Anyuta Fishman, Moscow (1944). She remained in the city throughout the war, keeping family and friends connected. Joseph met Nerry when visiting Anyuta during a redeployment in 1944. Back of photo: "To dear Joz on the day he left for the front, Aunt Anya, Sept 2, 1944."

Part Two: Joz

An album of Joz's wartime photographs:

This handmade photo album was assembled just after the war, probably in 1946. Its pages are thin brown cardboard, sewn with plain black thread. The photographs preserved in the album were originally sent from the front between 1942 and 1945. Each bears an emotional message on the back to loved ones. From 1942 to 1944, Joz mailed them to his parents; from 1944 to 1945, to his wife, Nerry. Preserved for nearly a century, the album remains a treasured family legacy.



Top Left	Front cover of the album, the underlined title reads "Military"
Top Right	Joseph Berman (1943)
Bottom Left	Album page with photographs from 1943–1944
Bottom Right	Colonel Anatoliy Erokhin (1910–1945), Joseph's commander and supporter, killed on the last day of the war, May 8, 1945

Part Two: Joz

Top Joseph (reclined in the middle) with soldiers of his platoon, a photograph from the album (1944)

Bottom Joseph (left) with fellow officers, a photograph from the album (1945)

Part Two: Joz

Joz and Nerry, photographed shortly after their marriage on August 20, 1944

Top Left	Joseph Berman. Back of photo: “A poor photo for a wonderful wife… Joz, Sep 6, 1944, from the front.”
Top Right	Nerry Berman. Back of photo: “To my dearly beloved Joz, from his little wife… Nerry, Sept 6, 1944, Zelenogradskaya Station.”
Bottom Left	Nerry Berman, shortly after the birth of her second child, Rina, Odessa (1947)
Bottom Right	Joseph Berman, just after demobilization, Odessa (1946)

Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Joseph Berman, senior lecturer at the Odessa Naval Academy (1949)
Top Right	Joseph Berman, lecturer at the Odessa Naval Academy (1948)
Bottom Left	Nerry Berman (left) with a friend, Odessa (1949)
Bottom Right	Rina (age 2) and Mark Berman (age 3), children of Joseph and Nerry, Odessa (1949)

Part Two: Joz

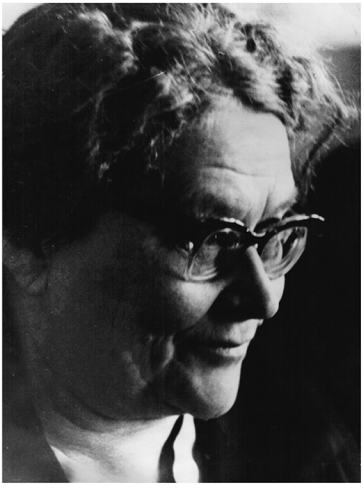
Top Left	Joseph Berman, Senior Professor at Chelyabinsk Polytechnic Institute (1952)
Top Right	Joseph Berman, Chelyabinsk (1952). The book he holds is *Peekskill, USA* by Howard Fast, who was the subject of his first, unsuccessful PhD study
Bottom	Izik Guzman and Joseph Berman, Kiev (1947). Izik was Joz's best friend in high school and also Nerry's cousin, though Joz and Nerry never met or heard of each other before 1944

Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Olga Desyatnik, Joz's cousin (late 1930s)
Top Right	Olga Desyatnik and Dima Khersonskiy, Moscow (2004). Joseph's closest relatives, they gave devoted support to Joseph and Nerry, especially later in Joseph's life and after his passing. Olga and Dima died on the same day and were buried at Mitinskoe Cemetery next to Joseph; their shared tomb lists all three names
Bottom	Professors Joseph Berman (right) and Wolf Buckhbinder (1979). Wolf was Joseph's lifelong friend, starting from their freshman year at Kiev University. They followed parallel paths in their scholarly work, often sharing ideas and collaborating on books and articles

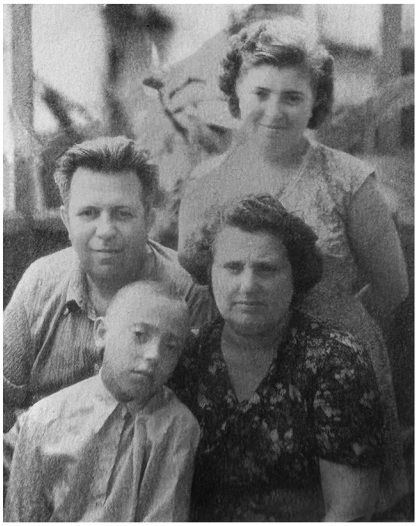
Part Two: Joz

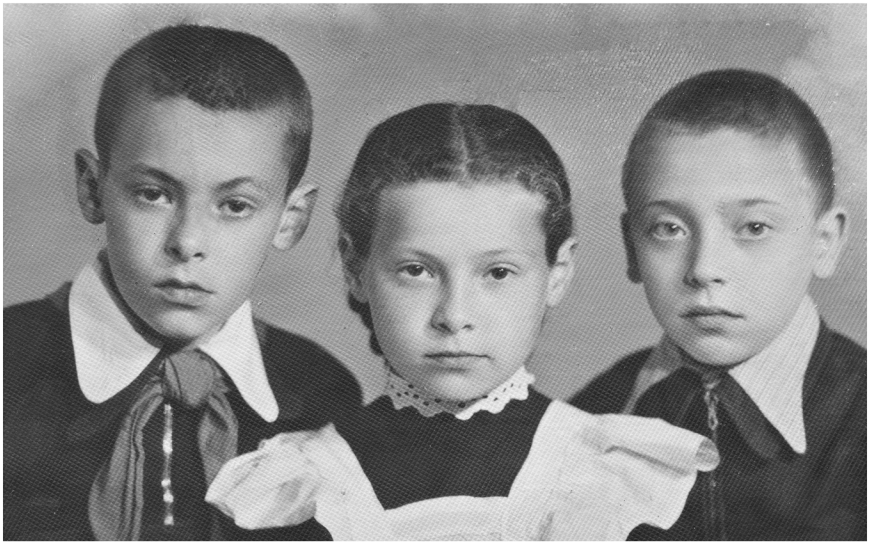
Joseph's most influential colleagues, mentors, and scholars who shaped his career



Top Left	Igor Rakhmanov, leading Soviet specialist in foreign-language teaching methodology, Corr. Member of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR, D.Sc. (Pedagogy)
Top Right	Alexey Leontiev, one of the founders of psycholinguistics in Russia, professor at Moscow State University and the Pushkin Institute of the Russian Language, D.Sc. (Philology)
Bottom Left	Zoya Tsvetkova, professor and co-founder of Moscow State Institute of Foreign Languages, a leading specialist in language-teaching methodology
Bottom Right	Vladimir Arakin, supervisor of Joseph's Ph.D., leading linguist, and author of major English, Norwegian, and Swedish dictionaries and textbooks, D.Sc. (Philology)

Part Two: Joz





The Mednikov family were the Bermans' closest friends and relatives in 1950s Odessa. Living only two short blocks apart, they spent so much time together that it felt like one extended family. The Berman children, Mark and Rina, were inseparable from the Mednikovs' youngest, Lev. After the Bermans moved to Gomel, the four Bermans would return to Odessa every summer and stay with the four Mednikovs in their tiny two-room apartment. It was cramped, but always filled with warmth and love.

Top Left	Mednikovs , Odessa (early 1950s). Front: Lev and Valentina; back: Boris and Tatyana
Top Right	Nerry Berman and Boris Mednikov, Odessa (1976)
Bottom	Mark and Rina Berman with Lev Mednikov, Odessa (early 1950s)

Part Two: Joz

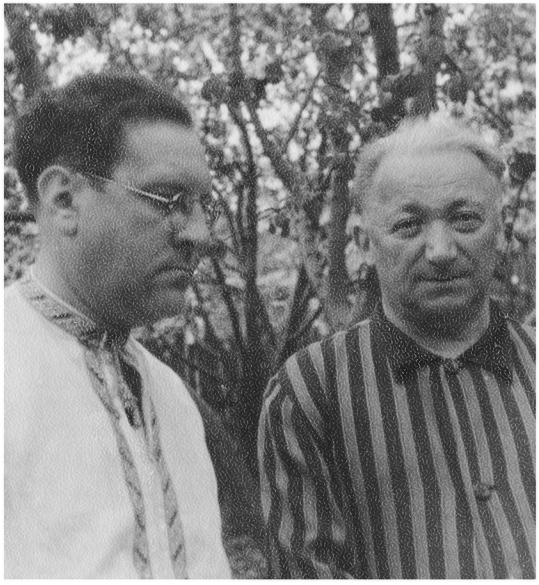
The Freylichmans were another branch of the Bermans' closest relatives in Odessa. Three tightly knit generations of them lived in the very center of downtown, spread across several communal apartments within a single block. The Freylichmans and the Bermans gathered often and remained an important part of each other's lives.

Top	Freylichmans at Meri Shteingolts' wedding, Odessa (1960). Front: Manya F., Joseph F., Lyoma Desyatnik, Rachel F., unknown, Joseph F.'s wife Vita, Sonya F. and her husband Busya; Back: Joseph F.'s daughter Musyya with her husband, Anna F., Lenya Odesser, Meri S., Pavel Shteingolts, Ira S., Olga Desyatnik, Dima Khersonskiy, Joseph F.'s daughter Zoya
Bottom Left	Kids in front of Odessa Opera Theater (1953). Mark and Rina Berman, Ira and Meri Shteingolts (Meri in back), two unknown
Bottom Right	Meri, Joseph Berman, Lenya, and Edik Odesser, Alma-Ata (1960s)

Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Joseph Berman, Head of the BIIJT Foreign Languages Department, with his deputy, Katerina Ryzhkova, Gomel (1961)
Bottom Left	Joseph Berman, Gomel (1960)
Bottom Right	At a river cruise, Gomel (1962). Misha (Kelya's husband), Nerry, Kelya, and Wolf Buckhbinder

Part Two: Joz



The Bermans' home in Gomel was always lively, filled with guests from both near and far. Among the locals, their closest friends, whom they saw almost every day, were the families of Joseph Barkan and Alexandra Ioffe.

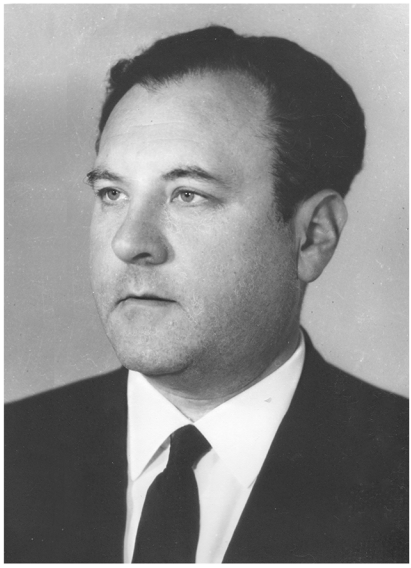
Top Left	At the Bermans, Gomel (1962). Guests from Yaroslavl: Nerry's sister Sanna with her daughter Irina; also Nerry and Rina Berman, Elena and Alexandra Ioffe, and Joseph Berman
Bottom Left	Joseph Berman and Joseph (Azarovich) Barkan in Barkan's apple orchard, Gomel (1960)
Bottom Right	Rina and Mark Berman with Alexander Barkan in Barkan's backyard, Gomel (1961)

Part Two: Joz

Joseph was a dedicated motorist. He taught himself to drive at eighteen and even worked for some time as a fire engine driver. During the war he continued driving in the military. In the mid-1950s, at the first opportunity, he bought his own car, and from then on he always had one. Over the next thirty years he owned three cars, a rare privilege in the USSR. For him, driving was never just a way to get around; it was a passion, a devotion, and above all a kind of freedom. On weekends the Bermans would go on picnics in the nearby forests or make the 200-mile trip to Kiev to visit relatives and friends. Every summer vacation they set out on 700–800 mile journeys to Odessa or Crimea. The road took two to three days; at night they stopped in fields and slept in a military tent. Joseph taught Mark to drive at twelve, and outside of settled areas they would alternate at the wheel. Those trips were the year's long-awaited escape and left the best memories.

Top	Nerry in front of the Bermans' first car, Moskvitch 401 — a rebranded German Opel Kadett, in the countryside near Gomel (1958)
Bottom Left	Joseph, near Gomel (1959). With no car services, he did all the maintenance himself
Bottom Right	Picnic in a forest (1958). Kelya, Alexandra Ioffe with her daughter Elena, and Joseph Berman

Part Two: Joz



Top Left	Nerry Berman, Odessa (1974)
Top Right	Joseph Berman, Odessa (1974)
Bottom	Joseph and Nerry Berman with the Zukins, Odessa (1985)

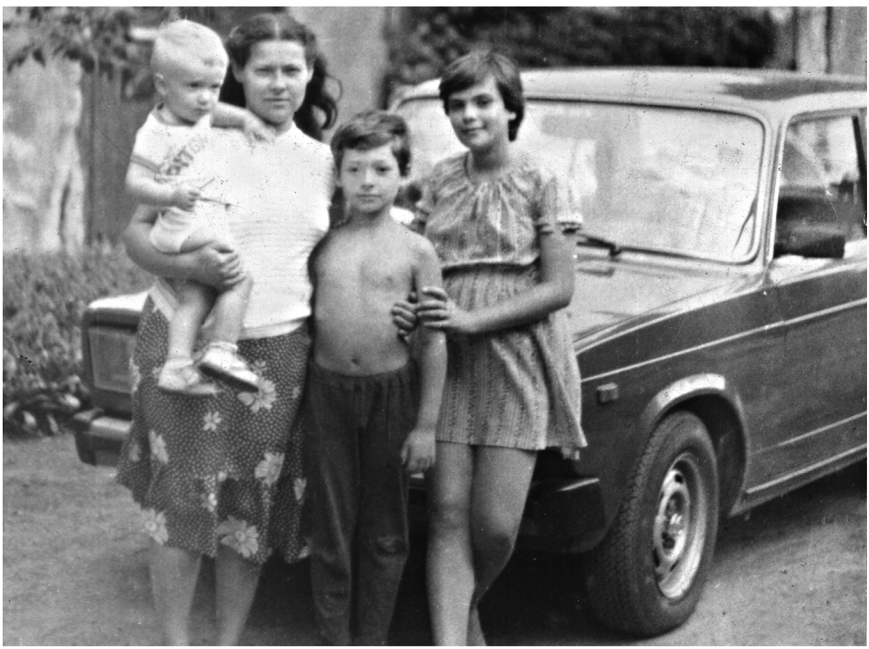
Part Two: Joz

Top Left	Joseph Berman, academic conference, Minsk (1972)
Top Right	Joseph Berman, chairing the Foreign Languages Department meeting, Odessa (1970s)
Bottom	At Joseph's 60th anniversary celebration with leading faculty of the Foreign Languages Department, Odessa (1983). Joseph Berman with Marina Panchenko, Inessa Mikhaylova, and Lyudmila Tuchina. All three, along with twelve others, earned their PhDs under Joseph's supervision. After his untimely passing, L. Tuchina succeeded him as Head of the Department

Part Two: Joz

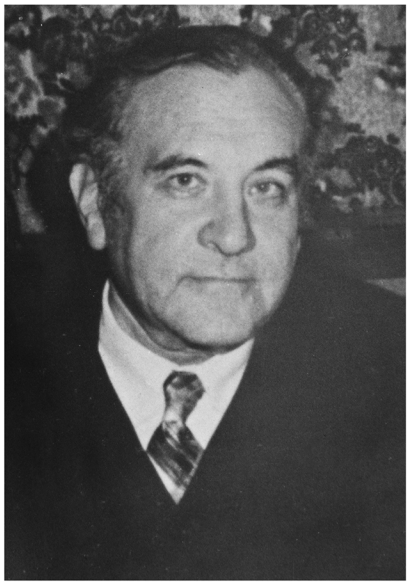
Top	The Bermans with their first grandchild, Odessa (1972). Front: Joseph, Nerry, Rina; back: Lucy and Mark, holding Elena in his arms
Bottom	Nerry and Joseph Berman with their grandchildren, Michael and Elena, Odessa (1970s)

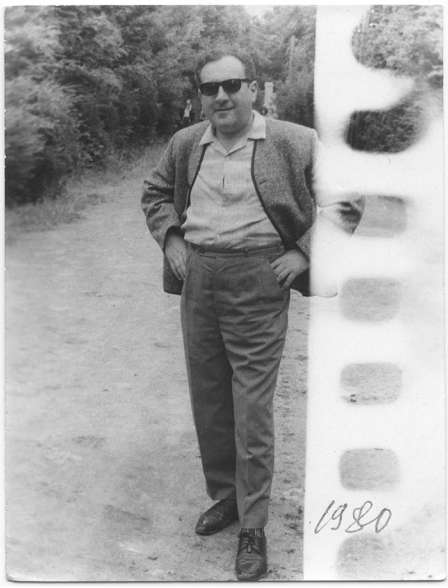
Part Two: Joz



Top	At the Chernomorka summer sports camp in the countryside near Odessa (1982). Michael Abovsky with Nerry, Lucy, and Elena Berman
Bottom	Summer at the dacha, Bolshoy Fontan, Odessa (1983). Rina Berman with the children, Eugine and Michael Abovsky, and Elena Berman in front of the Bermans' third family car

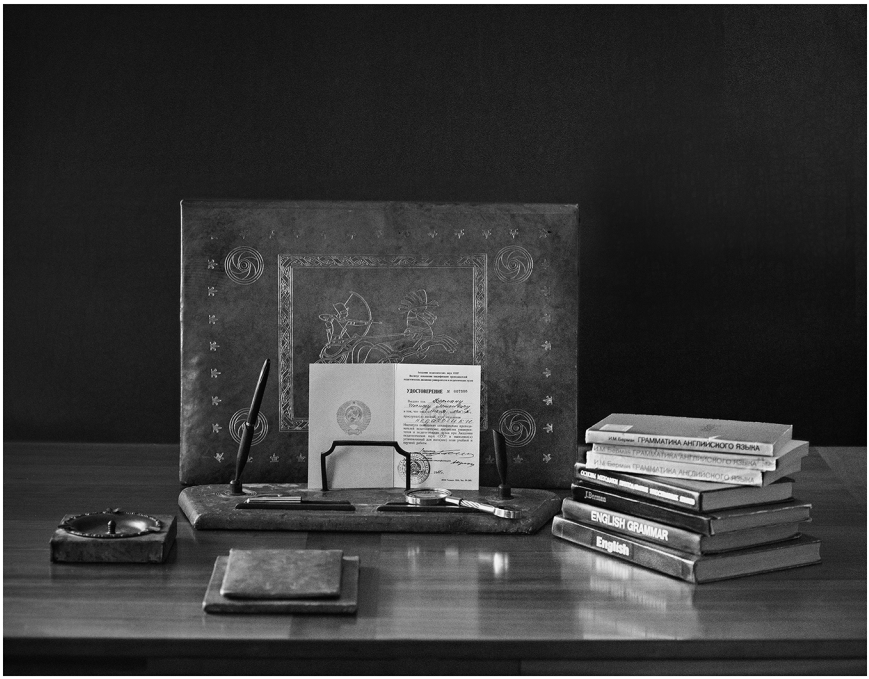
Part Two: Joz





Top	Joseph jokingly raising his hands, showing nine fingers as he is surrounded by nine women, Kiev (1962). Left to right: Nerry, Genya, Rahil, Kelya, Sanna, Anyuta, Balya, Rivochka, Eda
Bottom Left	The last photo of Joseph, taken on November 6, 1985, Odessa
Bottom Right	Joseph Berman (1980). This casual photo gives a true sense of him: his friendly, open look, his attitude, and his approach to life and people. That is how he is remembered by everyone who knew him

Part Two: Joz



Joseph's desk stand and his major publications

Joseph used this stand for many years, right up until his passing. He continued his scholarly research, writing, and learning until his very last day. In the stand's paper clip is a certificate signed by the President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in June 1986, confirming that Joseph Berman had completed the full course at the Academy's Institute for Advanced Training, Pedagogy Department, and fulfilled his plan of educational and scientific work. Joseph passed away soon after, in February 1987.

Editors — Benjamin, Elena, Mark, Rina — and the rest of the family:

We were enormously blessed to have Joseph and Nerry in our lives

May their memories be a blessing

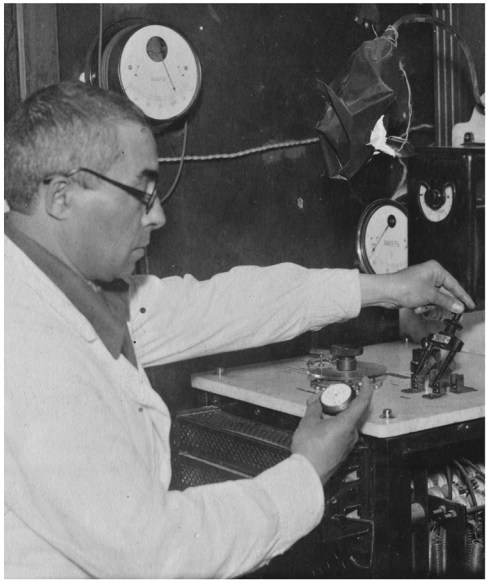
Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Shluim Belotserkovskiy
Top Right	Gitl Miriam Subbotovskaya
Bottom Left	Leib Belotserkovskiy
Bottom Right	Reisl Fishman

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Leib Belotserkovskiy, Kiev (1910). Then earning a living by teaching Hebrew and preparing to enter the 6th grade of gymnasium. Back of photo: To Sonya, Raya, Anyuta from Lev
Top Right	Leib Belotserkovskiy, student at Moscow University, Moscow (1916)
Bottom	Leib Belotserkovskiy (third from left) with classmates, gymnasium graduation photo (1914)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

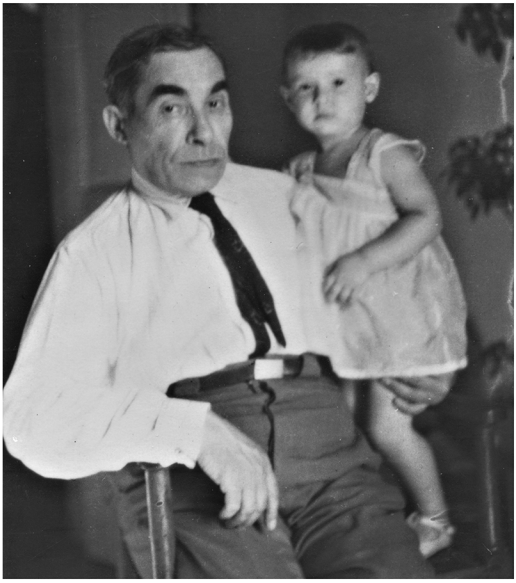


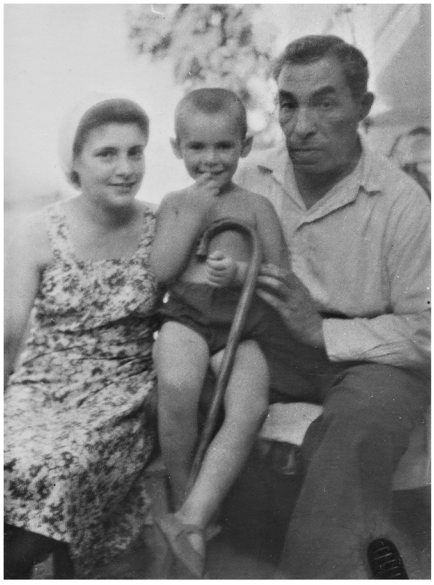
Top Left	Leib, Nerry, and Riesl (Raya) Belotserkovskiy, Myshkin (1923)
Top Right	Nerry, Reisl (Raya), Sanna, and Leib Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1934). At that time, Reisl was Chief Physician of the City Children's Polyclinic, and Leib was radiologist at the city hospital
Bottom Left	Leib Belotserkovskiy, lead radiologist at the city hospital, Yaroslavl (late 1930s). In 1940, he was awarded the highest civilian decoration for exceptional service: the Order of Lenin
Bottom Right	Leib Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1940)

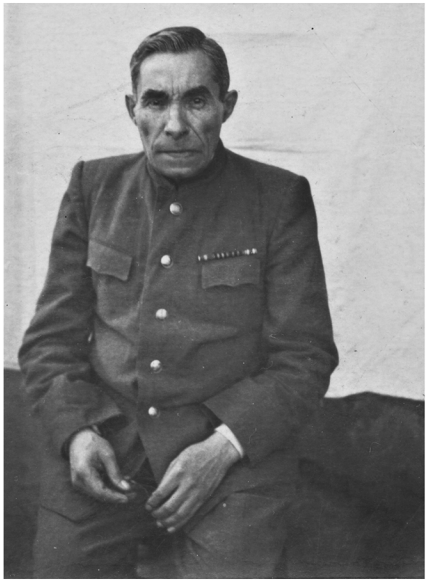
Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Leib Belotserkovskiy (third from left) playing Preference with friends, Yaroslavl (1930s)
Top Right	On the verge of WWII, visiting friends in Leningrad (January 1939). Front: Nerry with her best friend Yulia Begun and Leib Belotserkovskiy. *M. Berman note:* I visited Yulia in the 1970s, she survived the Leningrad blockade, worked as an architect, and still lived in the same communal apartment with her husband and two children
Bottom	Wartime photo: Leib Belotserkovskiy, Major of the Medical Service, with his daughters Nerry (left) and Sanna, Yaroslavl (1944)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

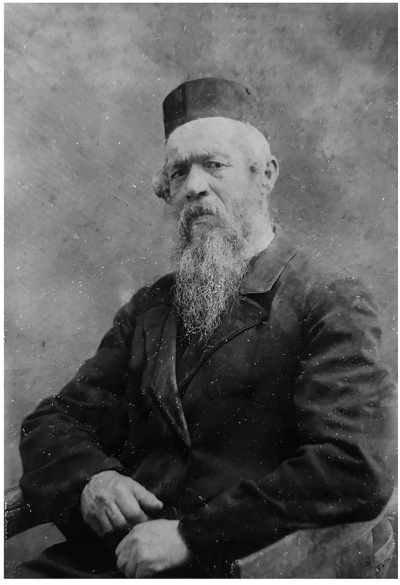


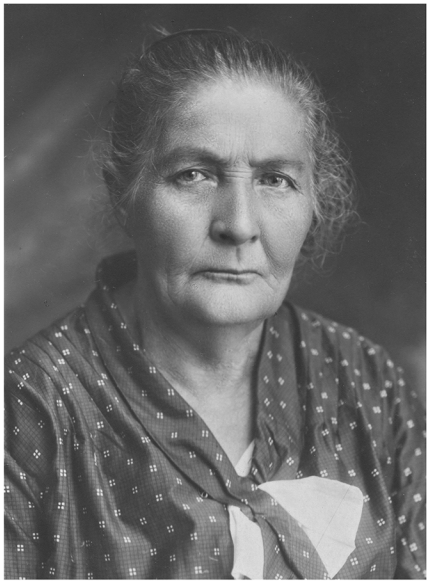




Top Left	Mark Berman and Leib Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1948)
Top Right	Rina Berman and Leib Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1949)
Bottom Left	Sanna and Leib Belotserkovskiy, holding Mark on his lap, Yaroslavl (1949)
Bottom Right	Leib Belotserkovskiy, in his final photograph, Yaroslavl (July 1950)

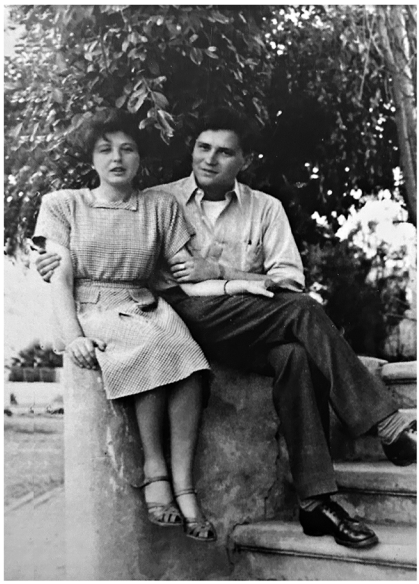
Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family





Top Left	Avraham Levitskiy (1890s)
Top Right	Matel Levitskiy (1890s)
Bottom Left	Aaron Fishman
Bottom Right	Mirl Levitskaya

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family



Top Left	Mordecai Levitskiy, serving in the British Army's Royal Fusiliers (Jewish Legion), and Rose Levitskiy in the uniform of the Jewish medical service (1917)
Top Right	Mordecai Halevi (Levitskiy), Israel (1950s)
Bottom Left	Ada and Amitai Halevi (1950s)
Bottom Right	Kato and Nadav Halevi, Rome (1970s)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Reisl Fishman, gymnasium graduation photo, Kiev (1909)
Top Right	Rahill, Lev, Reisl, and Riva Fishman, Kiev (1909). Their mother's house was known as "the house of the five most beautiful girls on Solomenka." The sisters not pictured here are Anyuta and Sonya. *Note:* Around 1909, Solomenka, a district of Kiev that was home to teachers, doctors, and railway families, was an unpretentious yet respectable neighborhood
Bottom	Anyuta, Reisl, and Sonya Fishman with two friends, Kiev (1909)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Reisl Fishman, graduate of the Higher Women's Medical Courses (1914)
Top Right	Reisl Fishman, in a Red Cross medical uniform (1914). Drafted into service as Russia entered WWI; photographed before deployment
Bottom	Rahil, unknown, Riva, and Reisl Fishman, Yuryevets (1920). The Red Cross operated there aiding the wounded and typhus victims; Reisl caught typhus and suffered heart complications

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

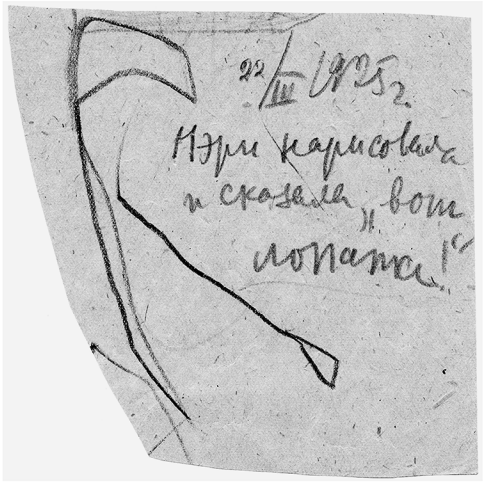
Top Left	Reisl and Nerry Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1924)
Top Right	Reisl, Nerry, Leib, and Sanna Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1934)
Bottom	Rivochka Fishman and Reisl Belotserkovskiy (née Fishman) (1925)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Sonya, Rahil, Kelya (surname Hayt), Riva, and Lev Fishman, Kiev (1927)

Bottom Anyuta, Rahil, Riva, and Sonya Fishman, Kiev (1957)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family



Top Left	Nerry Belotserkovskiy with her nursemaid, Myshkin (1923)
Top Right	Nerry Belotserkovskiy's first drawing, from Reisl's diary documenting Nerry's first year. In the right corner, Reisl wrote: "Nerry drew this and said, 'This is a spade.'" Yaroslavl (1925)
Bottom Left	Nerry Belotserkovskiy with Lyusya Orlov (1925)
Bottom Right	Nerry Belotserkovskiy at a masquerade, Yaroslavl (1930), dressed in traditional Tatar costume: a popular clothing celebrating the "Peoples of the Soviet Union"

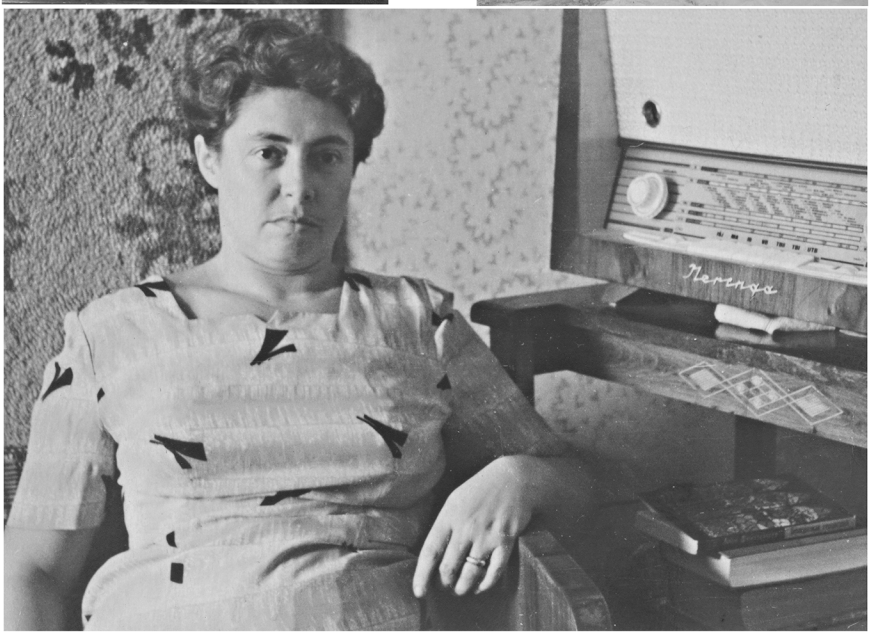
Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Sanna and Nerry Belotserkovskiy, Yaroslavl (1934)
Top Right	Sanna and Nerry Belotserkovskiy (back row, second and third from left), Yaroslavl (1930s)
Bottom Left	Nerry Belotserkovskiy in her high school classroom, Yaroslavl (1938)
Bottom Right	Nerry Belotserkovskiy, Moscow (1944)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Nerry and Mark Berman, Odessa (1947)
Top Right	Nerry and Rina Berman, Odessa (1947)
Bottom	Gitl Tribelskaya, Rina, Nerry, Mark, Joseph, and Moses Berman, Odessa (1947)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

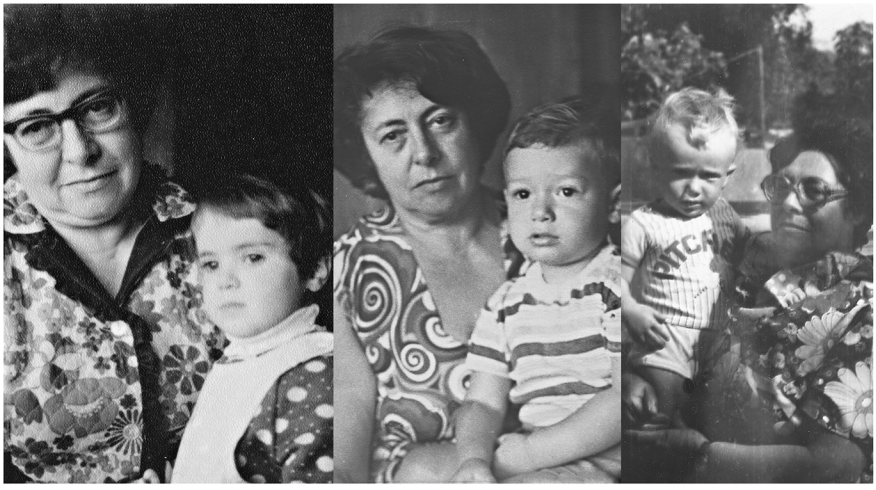


Top Left	Unknown, Sanna Belotserkovskiy (Nikolskiy), and Nerry Berman on the steps of Odessa's famous landmark: the Potemkin Stairs, Odessa (1949)
Top Right	Nerry Berman, Anna Shteingolts, and unknown in front of another of Odessa's famous landmarks: the Opera Theater. Odessa (1953)
Bottom	Nerry Berman in her living room, Gomel (1960). At right is the latest radio-magnetophone. The Bermans were early adopters of new technology — the first in their neighborhood to own a TV set, car, refrigerator, and magnetophones. They also had a large library of fiction and professional books in several languages, all rare possessions in Soviet households.

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Nerry Berman (1970)
Top Right	Nerry and Joseph Berman, Baku (1974)
Bottom	Nerry Berman at the defense of her doctoral thesis in education, Moscow (1972). This was the fourth major degree she earned, after master's degrees in Chemical Technology, Economics, and Foreign Language Teaching

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family



Top Left — Joseph, Anyuta, and Nerry, Kiev (1964). Nerry and Joseph had first met at Anyuta's apartment in Moscow in the summer of 1944

Nerry with her grandchildren:

Bottom Left — Nerry with Elena Berman, Odessa (1974)

Bottom Center — Nerry with Michael Abovsky, Odessa (1978)

Bottom Right — Nerry with Eugene Abovsky, Odessa (1983)

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Dima and Sanna Nikolsky, Yaroslavl (1956)
Top Right	Nerry Berman with her little sister Sanna (late 1940s)
Bottom Left	Back: Dima Nikolsky, his mother Natalya Narbekova, and Sanna Nikolsky; front: Sergey and Irina Nikolsky, Yaroslavl (1963)
Bottom Right	Dima Nikolsky, Lucy Berman, Irina and Sanna Nikolsky, and Mark Berman, Yaroslavl (1970). Photo taken by Sergey Nikolsky

Part Three: The Belotserkovskiy-Levitskiy Family

Top Left	Nerry Berman and Kelya Hayt (1932)
Top Right	Kelya Hayt and Nerry Berman, Pyatigorsk (1981)
Bottom Left	Lyalya and Izik (Isaac) Fishman, Kiev (1946)
Bottom Right	Kelya Hayt and Sanna Belotserkovskiy, Kiev (1946)

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Top — Nerry Berman with her life companion, Aron Lieb (late 1990s)

Bottom — Nerry Berman at her granddaughter Elena's wedding, Connecticut (1999). From left: Lucy Berman, Matthew Antonetti, Elena Antonetti, Nerry, and Mark Berman

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Top Left — Nerry Berman at her apartment with her granddaughter Elena (left) and daughter Rina, Sharon, MA (1998)

Top Right — Nerry Berman with her granddaughter Elena and daughter Rina, Connecticut (1999)

Bottom — At Eduard Koman's Bar Mitzvah, New York (2000). From left: Nerry, Rina, and Mark Berman, Eduard Koman, Elena, and Matthew Antonetti, Lucy Berman

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Top Left — Mark and Nerry Berman, Newtown, PA (2005)

Top Right — Nerry Berman at her apartment with her granddaughter Elena Antonetti, grandson Benjamin, and newborn granddaughter Emily, Sharon, MA (2005)

Bottom — At Nerry Berman's 88th birthday party, Waltham, MA (2010). From left: Mike Abovskiy, Emily, Elena, and Benjamin Antonetti, Rina, Nerry, and Mark Berman, Matthew Antonetti, and Vitaly Abovskiy

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Top Left — "Replicas," an album of artworks by Nerry Berman, created while she was a resident at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center, Boston (2012). Offered for sale in the HSL store.

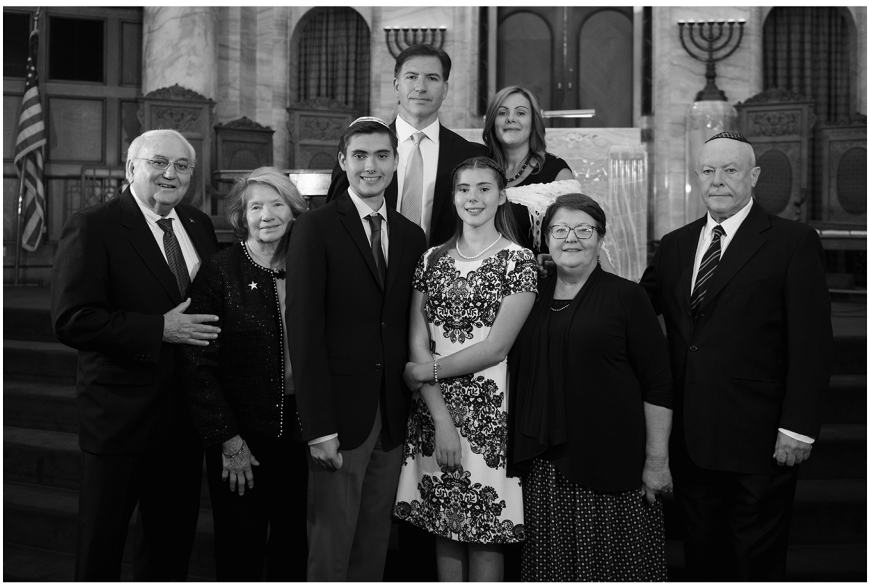
Top Right — Nerry Berman with her granddaughter Elena at an exhibition of Mark Berman's photography, Boston (2012). Even after she was confined to a wheelchair, Nerry stayed lively, curious, and deeply involved in her family's life.

Bottom — Nerry Berman working on a painting, HSL, Boston (around 2010). After a stroke, she was severely limited in sitting, holding objects, and speaking, but through strong will and spirit she regained strength and renewed her creative skills and continued to develop her creative talents.

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Nerry and Joseph's lineage through their son Mark

In the Soviet Union, it was impossible to live openly as Jews. Nerry, Joseph, and their children were part of a "lost generation," cut off from their roots and traditions. In America, Elena renewed that connection and passed it on to her children, Ben and Emily.

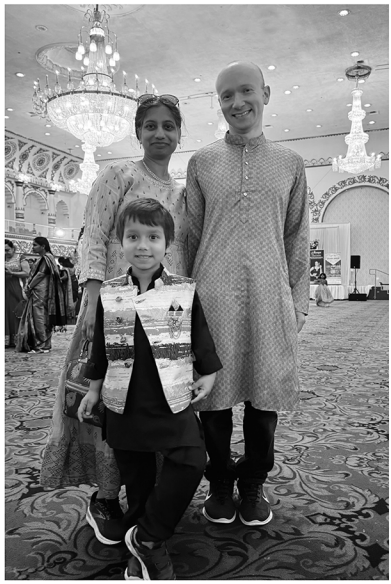


Top Emily, Elena, Benjamin, and Matthew Antonetti at Benjamin's Bar Mitzvah, CT (2016)

Bottom At Emily's Bat Mitzvah, CT (2018). From left: Richard and Zaiga (Matthew's parents), Benjamin, Emily, and Elena Antonetti, Lucy and Mark Berman

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

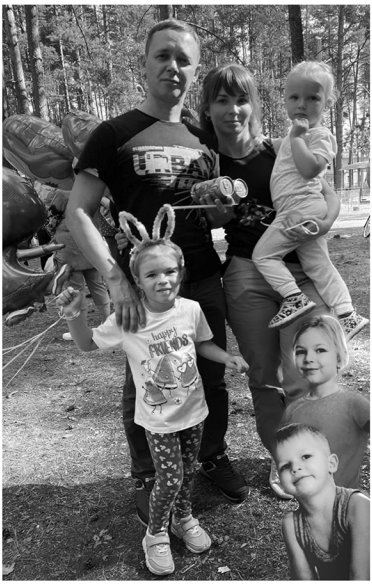
Nerry and Joseph's lineage through their daughter Rina



Top Left	Sitting: Rina and Lucy Berman with Peppi on her lap; standing front: Vitaliy, Eugene, and Michael Abovskiy; standing back: Mark Berman, Boston (early 1990s)
Top Right	Eugene Abovskiy with his wife Jalaja Repalle and son Archer, NJ (2025)
Bottom	Rina Berman, Aaron and Michael Abovskiy, Emily Antonetti, Iryna Kiyenia-Abovskiy and Sophie Abovskiy, CT (2018)

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Susanna Belotserkovskaya's (Nikolskaya) lineage



Top	Front: Alexei; back: Peter Holmes and Irina Holmes (Nikolskiy), UK (2002)
Bottom Left	Sergey Nikolskiy, Okulovka, Russian (mid-2010s)
Bottom Right	Vadim Nikolskiy's family, Okulovka, Russia (2020s). Vadim with Yulia and children: Olga, Daria, Denis, and Arina

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Abraham Vov (Vladimir) Bratslaver's lineage through his daughter Susanna

Freylichman lineage through Meri Shteingolts (Odesser)

Top Edward Gerber and Juley Gerber-Medrano, Aaron, Susanna, Anthony, and Alexander Gerber, NY (2012)

Bottom Back: Yasha, Galya, Sasha (Edik and Galya's son), Ilya (Galya's father), Lena, relative; front: relative, Edik, Daniella, Lenya, Milena, Sasha (Meri's son), and Meri, Hadera, Israel (2020s)

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Tuba Horovitz's lineage through Valentina Mednikov

Top Front: Valentina Mednikov, Tatyana Cherdak (Mednikov), and William Cherdak; back: Aron Lieb, Nerry Berman, Eduard, Regina, and Grigoriy Koman, CT (1999)

Bottom Regina Koman (Cherdak), Tatyana (Mednikov) and Williams Cherdak, Grigoriy and Eduard Koman, Brooklyn (2012)

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Tuba Horovitz's lineage through Valentina Mednikov

Front: Natalia, Lev, and Yuriy Mednikov; back: Regina Koman (Cherdak), Israel (2019)

Mordecai Levitskiy's lineage through Tal Halevi

Jacques and Emanuel Menasche, Tal Halevi, and Noah Menasche, NY (2021)

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Lifelong Family Friends

At Elena Antonetti's (Berman) wedding, Connecticut (1999)
Back: Wolf Buckhbinder, Serafima Zeltser, Basya (Wolf's wife), Mark Buckhbinder, Rina Berman, Mark Zeltser, and Vitaliy Abovskiy
front: Raya (Mark Buckhbinder's wife), Dinah Zeltser, Michael and Eugene Abovskiy

Part Four: The Years Beyond the Story

Nerry was born the same year the Soviet Union was formed. She lived a long, meaningful life, outlived the regime she was born into, left Russia after the USSR's collapse, and spent a quarter of a century, her golden years, in the United States. She was blessed to reunite with her children and other modern descendants of both the Berman and Belotserkovskiy branches of the family, who now mostly reside on the East Coast of the U.S. and in Israel.

Nerry Berman (Belotserkovskaya)

May her memory be a blessing

THE EDITORS

The book was edited by Nerry Berman's direct descendants, preserving her voice and legacy for future generations

Benjamin Antonetti

Great-grandson of Nerry Berman

Co-Editor and Translator

Elena Antonetti

Granddaughter of Nerry Berman

Co-Editor and Translator

Mark Berman

Son of Nerry Berman

Co-Editor and Appendix Design

Rina Berman

Daughter of Nerry Berman

Co-Editor

Spanning the rise of the USSR, WWII, and the postwar years, I'll Go on Living tells the story of two Jewish families enduring the darkest chapters of 20th-century Ukraine and Russia. In her memoir, Nerry Berman recounts the many intertwined life paths that connected her with Joseph Berman, a young soldier drained by four years on the Eastern Front. The story, while rooted in Nerry's personal experience, serves in equal measure as a historical account of the legacy of survival, resistance, and the will to keep choosing life.

As remembered by family and friends, Nerry was a quiet, introspective person whose strength revealed itself in the moments that called for deep compassion and unwavering resilience. This memoir, translated and prepared for publication by Nerry's children, her granddaughter, and her great-grandson, bring this remarkable part of history to life.