

Part Seven

Kiev Friends
of Peter & Helen
Stavrakis,
1917–1943

*“In remembrance of my friend and
in witness to the best times of my life,
The years of the dawn of my life.”*

—Yuri Duhovichni



Helen and Peter belonged to a small group of close friends hand-picked for special higher scientific and technical education that was established by the Soviet Union in 1928 in order to quickly bring the country up to the level of the West.

Helen's University was KII – Kievsky Industri-alni Institut (later called the Kiev Polytechnical Institute), where she finished her *Diplom* Engineer after 5 years. The field is closely related to Chemical Engineering in the US.

Peter was tutored at home for most of his school years but enrolled in public school for about the last two years. He then went to university to study in the Faculty of Biological Sciences. He had always wanted to become a doctor like his Greek father, who vigorously opposed his wishes and argued for Biology instead. After one year, Peter dropped out of Biology and entered medical school, graduating at the age of 21 in 1938. He was always an excellent student and seems to have been accelerated in his studies even though he lost one year in the diversion to Biology, as those courses were not transferrable to medical school.

Peter and Helen married on 4 April 1938. The marriage has its own story told in the section about their youth (Part 6).

They kept most of these photos of friends in a separate dog-eared album. They date mainly to 1935–1937. During those years, it was difficult to acquire a camera, but we know that at least Zamryi, Nina Stavrakis's husband and Peter's brother-in-law, had one. Also, friends sent each other photos as remembrances with inscriptions on the back. These latter are difficult to discern, for they used nicknames and slang internal to their group.

They were being prepared — then everything changed. On 23 August 1939, Stalin's government signed a non-aggression treaty with Nazi Germany, and just one week later, on 1 September 1939, Germany attacked Poland, thus starting World War II. At the same time, the Soviet Union began preparations to invade and annex eastern Poland. With Kiev located strategically between the two powers, the Soviets started to mobilize the Kiev Special Military District. This affected everyone in Peter and Helen's group.

Peter finished medical school in July of 1939. Helen probably finished Polytechnic either that same year or one year later. Both went to work immediately, but with war looming to the west, the mobilization and preparation in Kiev had begun. After 1939, there is no photographic record of boat trips, cavorting in the forest, or groups of young people gathering playfully in the woods. Their world had changed irrevocably.

This collection of photos represent the “best years of our lives” for our parents and their friends. Education was free, and stipends covered their food and expenses.



Helen Sochanskaya and Peter Stavraki ca. 1937.

Each person was following a dream that they were led to believe was unlimited. Education intrigued them and engaged them. Helen once said, “We felt as though the whole world was open to us. We could do anything. Be anything. Everything was possible during those school years. The state made us feel that way because we were the future of the country.”

They loved their studies, and their professional futures seemed to be certain. These photos represent those few optimistic years, which ended abruptly and tragically as their world first came unraveled and then disappeared in the conflagration of WWII.

Some of their friends simply disappeared, like Peter’s friend and nephew, Andryusha, who was probably killed on the front lines at the start of Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. Others like Ira, who had proven non-Russian heritage, were permitted to leave the Soviet Union. She settled in Denmark, married, and lived a normal middle class European life. What happened to the Jews and half-Jews such as Ada Ginsburg and Yura Duhovichni? No one knows. What happened to the pleasant, smiling Lyolya Derudo? Galya? Vera?

Some we do know. Tamara Bogaterchuk ended up in Ontario and kept in touch with Helen and Peter over the years. One friend ended up in England and had a son who died at age 34 in a car accident, sometime in the late 1950s. It was said he liked to drive sports cars fast, but that may have been a rationalization after the fact to lessen the pain.

There were other friends who are not represented by these photos, for much of the time no one had a camera, and processing was unavailable. Those schoolmates who survived the war made their mark in Soviet science and technology. In later years, in the US, they often recognized names and photos of former classmates reported in the Russian American newspaper.

Names

We use “Helen” for Elena Sochanskaya because she was later known by that name. When she married in Kiev in 1938, she retained her own name.

Peter’s name was officially Pyotr Stavraki but we use “Peter” because he was known by the anglicized version of his name most of his adult life. However because in Russian his surname was spelled without an “s” on the end, we use that form here to designate his family as a whole.

Goloseevo

Many of these photos were taken in Goloseevo Park, which is situated in the southern part of Kiev and declared a landscape art monument, named for the Goloseevsky Monastery which is active today. It covers an area of 140.9 hectares and is part of the natural forest that once surrounded the south of the city. The forest was planted over open fields. There had been oak trees there also at one time.

It is said that the name may have originated from the word to “cry” because during Tatar times, this is where women cried for those killed.

In 1932 they built an agricultural academy. In August of 1941 the frontline of the war passed through here.

Kiev Polytechnic

Our mother, Helen, entered the Kiev Polytechnic Institute in Chemistry in 1935 and finished in 1939. She was one of a hand-picked group of young people who were being prepared by the Soviet Union to lead the country into industrialization and make it competitive with the West. The war and the following period of repression changed this dream for everyone in that generation, but for Helen and her cohort this was an enchanted period of excitement and anticipation.

They were treated with great respect, and the state invested in these future young scientists. They were supported financially and academically and treated extremely well.

The Kiev Polytechnic Institute was founded in 1898, and Helen’s uncle, Nicolai Britchkin, completed his engineering degree there as well. During its lifetime, the institute changed names several times:

- 1898–1918 — Kyiv Polytechnic Institute of Emperor Alexander II
- 1918–1934 — Kyiv Polytechnic Institute
- 1934–1948 — Kyiv Industrial Institute (this is when Helen attended, which is why her college photo has the abbreviation KII)
- 1948–1968 — Kyiv Polytechnic Institute of Order of Lenin
- 1968–1992 — Kyiv Polytechnic Institute of Order of Lenin of the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution
- 1992–1995 — Kyiv Polytechnic Institute
- 1995–2016 — National Technical University of Ukraine “Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”
- 2016 — National Technical University of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”



Helen and Peter.

Back of photograph:

KII (Kievsky Industrialni
Institut) 9 February 1937,
under the shade of palm trees

Helen and her schoolgirl friends
from the institute.



Back of photograph:

Winter Landscape
KII 9 February 1937,
after laboratory

Name of the photographer at
the bottom but undecipherable.

Helen and KII female students
in the woods.





Back of photograph:

II Course

Helen and girl friends in the woods. They are all in the KII in the second course.



Back of photograph:

Presentation of the bride KII 9 February 1937

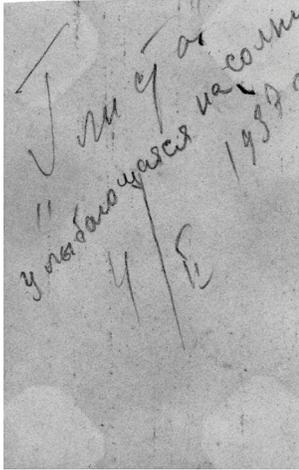
Helen's institute girl friends in the woods. The name of the person who took the photo is at the bottom but indecipherable.

The caption makes jest of an old Russian custom for the tsar to choose a bride. On an appointed day, eligible daughters of the empire's nobility were lined up in the palace shoulder to shoulder for him to select one to marry.

Back of photograph:

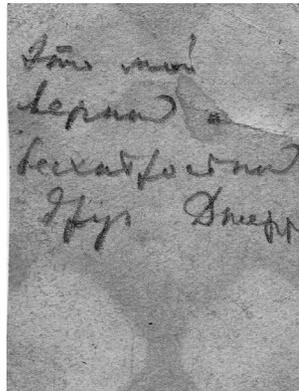
"Glista" smiling in the sun
4 February 1937

"Glista" refers to a parasite, a
reference to her being skinny.
Could be Peter's handwriting,
but it seems a bit more clear
than his was.

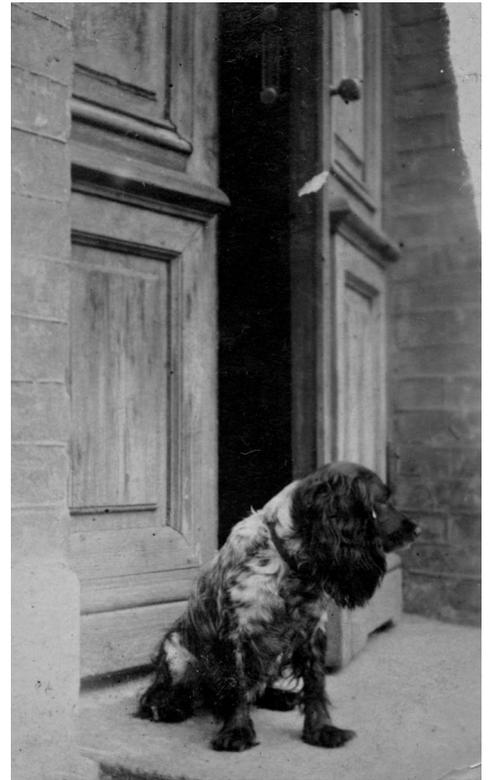




This appears to be similar to the dog named Jerry in the other photographs. This dog belonged to Yura Duhovichni, who stopped by to visit and took this photo with Helen and his dog in front of the door to her home at 12 Malopodvalnaya St.



Back of photograph:
 This is my loyal innocent
 (бесхитростный —
 without deceit). My friend
 Jerry (Djerry)



Seems to be the same dog as in the previous picture, although that one is taken near palm trees and steps. Was that Jerry or not? We don't know. In this picture, the dog is in front of Helen's home in Kiev on 12 Malopodvalnaya Street and was probably also in the photo on the left.



Back of photograph:
Truhanov Island 1937



Back of photograph:
Truhanov Island 1937
Helen and another young woman.



Куга на
снегу " или
" Изъян пейза-
жа "
4/II-377

Back of photograph:
"A pile of snow" or "A blemish (ИЗЪЯН) on the landscape"
Truhanov Island
4 February 1937

This seems to be in Helen's own handwriting. She is making fun of herself, or someone else is joking about her marring the beauty of the landscape.



Back of photograph:

Truhanov Island
February 5, 1937

Peter and Helen in the snow.

↓ Looks like a scene on the Dnieper with a riverboat. It was together with the Truhanov Island pictures.



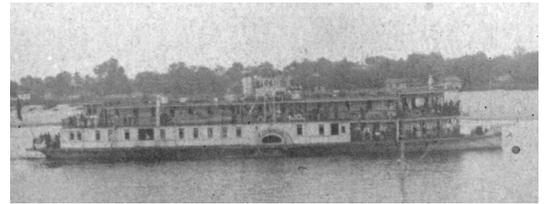
Back of photograph:

A snout of a very cunning animal
(or "her face looks cunning like a fox")

Spring 4 February 1937

Truhanov Island

Helen in the snow. In Russian the word "face" applies to humans only. The animal face has a different word, and when it is transposed, the effect is a bit of pointed humor. So here the writer pokes fun at her cunning by giving her the face of an animal. In other words, it implies she is "cunning like a fox."



Back of photograph:

Truhanov Island
5 Februar 1937

Helen and a friend in the snow.



1936 Helen in Peter's kayak.



Back of photograph:

Tigre wolfs down food; or, "Bon Apetit"
 1 December 1937
 Signed T.

Peter is sitting in his kayak wearing the same sun glasses that we see later swimming. He is eating something that was wrapped in newspaper, presumably fried chicken.

The date must be when the photo was processed or given because it was probably taken locally during the summer.

Peter's father had certain advantages, being a physician and was quite famous for his skills in handling severe mastoid infections. So Peter had some material things other young people did not. We know his father got him a bicycle, and it appears this was his kayak. It was also rare to have a camera at that time.



Back of photograph:

1936 Goloseevo

Two couples in the grass. Helen is on the left. The man next to her appears in other photos later on.

Goloseevo Park is situated in the southern part of Kiev and declared a landscape art monument. It covers an area of 140.9 hectares and is part of the natural forest that once surrounded the south of the city. Goloseevsky Monastery is there as well.



Five girls in lying in the grass. Helen is second from left.

Helen at dinner with friends.
Yura Duhovichni wearing
glasses.



Helen is second from left, and the tall blond man
in back is Kot Gubarov.



Dinner at someone's home. It is possible that the man with the
glasses standing in back is Yura Duhovichni.



School friends at someone's house fooling around.



Back of photograph:

October 1937 VII-III

Six students. The Roman numerals refer to their class and group within the faculty.



Helen with a group of friends at KII. They were all chemists and the back says only "course."



Back of photograph:

30 June 1936
Group 8-x KII

Helen with other KII students at Kievsky Industrialni Institut (later Kiev Polytechnic Institute). Students belonged to a faculty, class, and group. The group number is at the top of the photo, which seems to be an official class photo of Helen's group.

The superscript of some dates may refer to the group. Here we can make out Group 8-x.

It may have been the year she entered if it was a four-year course.





Peter in a school group with his nephew, Andryusha, on the right and one down. He was tutored at home most of his life, but apparently for the last two years he was sent to school. We don't know what school this is.

He seems to have finished secondary school at age 15 because he spent five years in university (having lost one year in the Faculty of Biological Sciences) and then graduated from medical school in 1938.



←
Back of photograph:

1937 (?)
School Number 6
Mechanical Shop

Machine shop in School #6, which was the school Helen attended before she went to the Institute. So this is probably the equivalent of high school. The date is probably 1934.

This is Helen's class from KII (Kievski Industrialni Institut). She entered in the fall of 1935 and graduated in June 1939 with the degree of *Diplom Engineer* in Chemical Engineering.



Helen at KII with two other students.





Crimea road trip – Nina and her husband, Zamryi, and Peter and Helen in Zamryi's car. He apparently had a camera. It was in July 1937. Zamryi was an engineer and loved tinkering with mechanics.

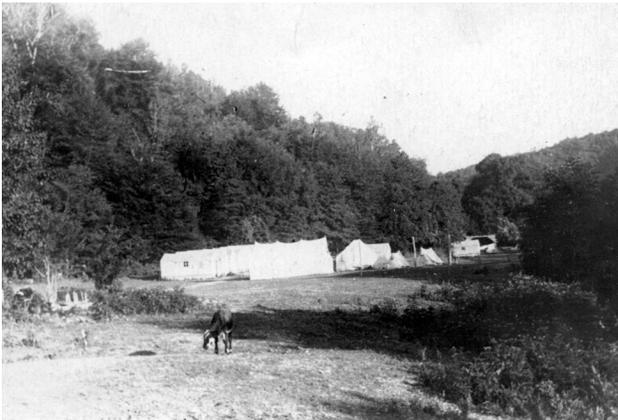
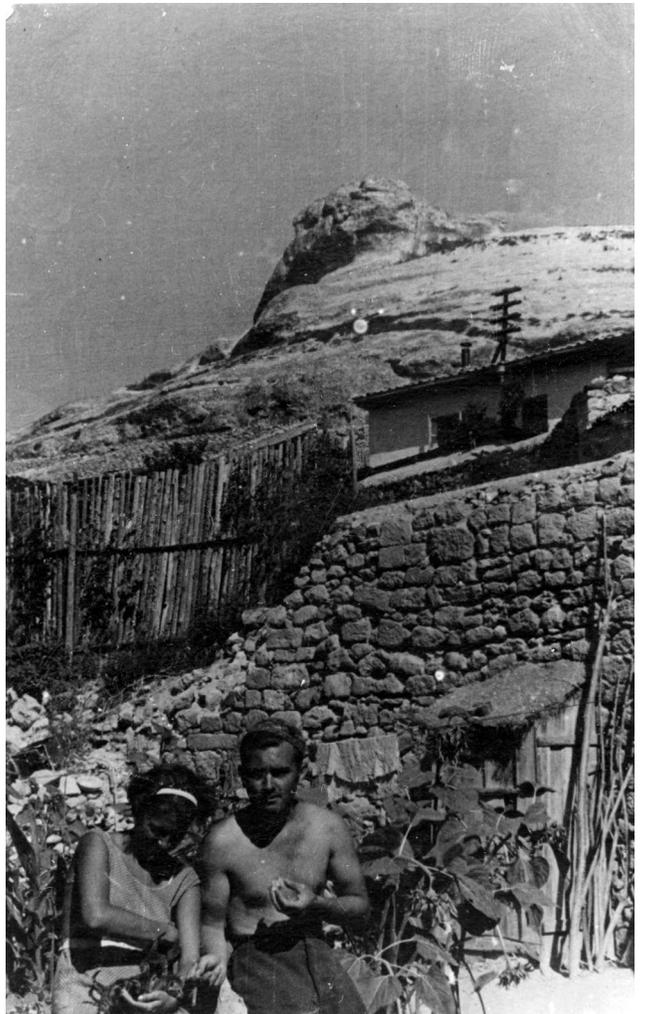
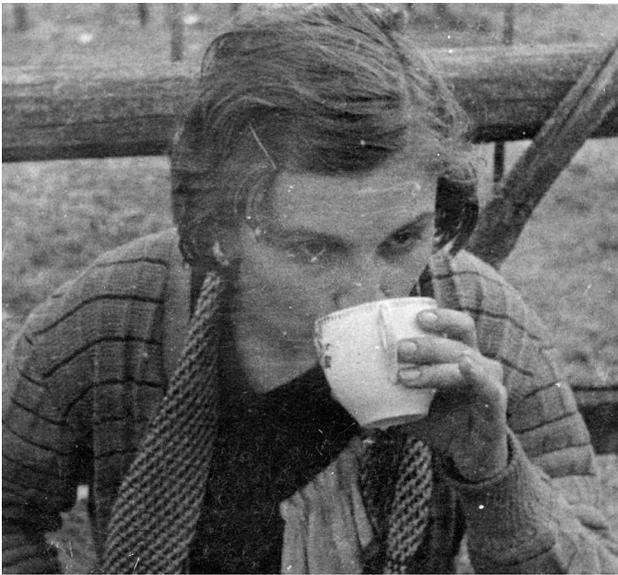
Late labelling by Kathy indicated that at least some of the photos in this set with the car were of a picnic on the Dnieper. It is possible that two trips got combined.

According to Elena Bernotas (Diacon), Nina's daughter, they did take a trip to Crimea and drove on the Caucasus road, which was so famously bad that it had a special nickname.



Crimea road trip – Nina and her husband, Zamryi, and Peter and Helen in Zamryi's car. He apparently had a camera. It was in July 1937.









View of the Crimean landscape.

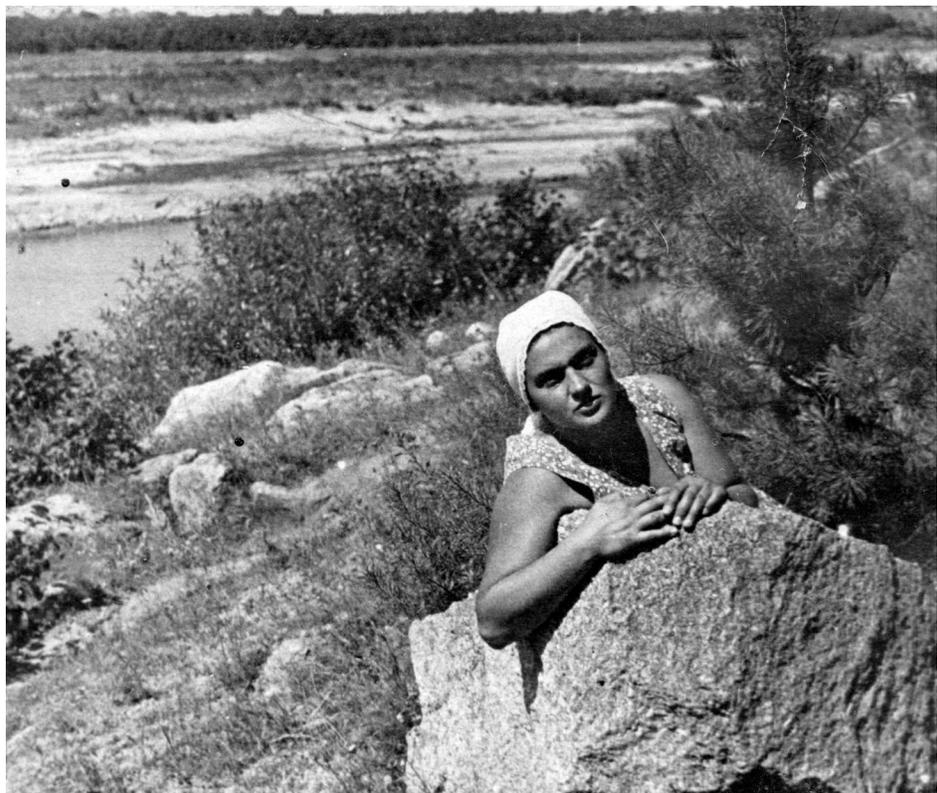


On the Crimea road trip.



Back of photograph:

Alushka, Crimea — view
from my window of Chatir
Dag (a mountain)
Summer 1936
Signed N. Gubarov (His
nickname was "Kot.")



Nina Stavradi, Peter's sister,
climbing rocks on the Crimea
trip.

KL: I think the man on the left is wearing Kartuz and the man on the right has Feska or smth like this, maybe Fes — <https://handvorec.ru/novosti/krymskotatarskie-traditsionnye-muzhskie-golovnye-ubory-xix-n-hh-vv-lektsiya/> ("С середины XIX и до начала XX вв. получили широкое распространение фесы, сшитые из черного бархата без украшений ... В степных районах полуострова фески стали носить к концу XIX в., они были менее нарядными, шились небрежно, кисть обычно отсутствовала").

Tubeteika should be lower in height.



Probably a view of Crimea. Two men can be seen on the right. The one on the far right is wearing a Tubeteika, or an Asian pillbox-shaped, embroidered hat and is holding a shovel. The one on the left seems to be wearing an Asian hat called a Tubeteika.

Those hats were popular at the time and are still worn in the US to this day. In the pictures of the Stavrakis family at their *dacha*, Peter is shown wearing one.

Back of photograph:

July 1937
At the Desna River

Peter is shaving, probably on the trip they took with his sister and Zamryi to the Crimea and the Caucasus. They camped just sleeping out in the fields and traveled in Zamryi's car.

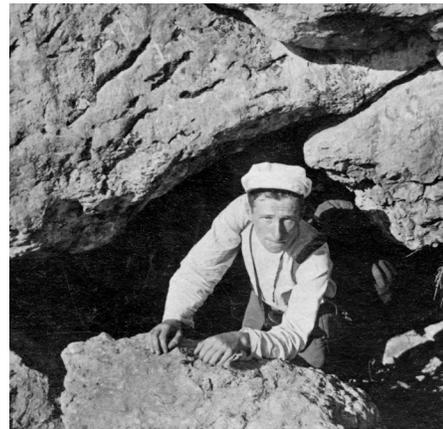
Swimming in Yalta with Ayu Dag mountain in the background on the right. This man is in one of the other pictures as well.



A view of Yalta with the hill in the back called "Ayu Dag" or "Medved Gora" (Bear Mountain).



Peter swimming, probably in Crimea. It was with the Crimea pictures.



Unknown man, but this picture was in the same set as the Crimea pictures.



Peter is swimming with someone unknown behind him. Both are wearing the same sunglasses. Peter had similar sunglasses in some of the photos with the kayak labelled December 1937, so from summer of 1936.

It says 1926 on the back, which probably means it was at a *dacha*. So "N." would have known Peter from childhood.

The picture was placed with the Crimea trip with Nina and Zamryi, but it seems earlier.

The signature beginning with the "N" is Nicholas Gubarov, also known at Kot Gubarov.

Back of photograph:

Crimea summer 1926 Gurzuf
N. Gubarov



Monument in Sevastopol to the military engineer Jeduard Ivanovich Totleben, who headed the defense of Sevastopol during the Crimean war in 1853–1856 when the city suffered a 349-day siege.



Back of photograph:

Summer 1936
"Starik"

We don't know what *starik*, or "old man," means. It must have been some joke between them.



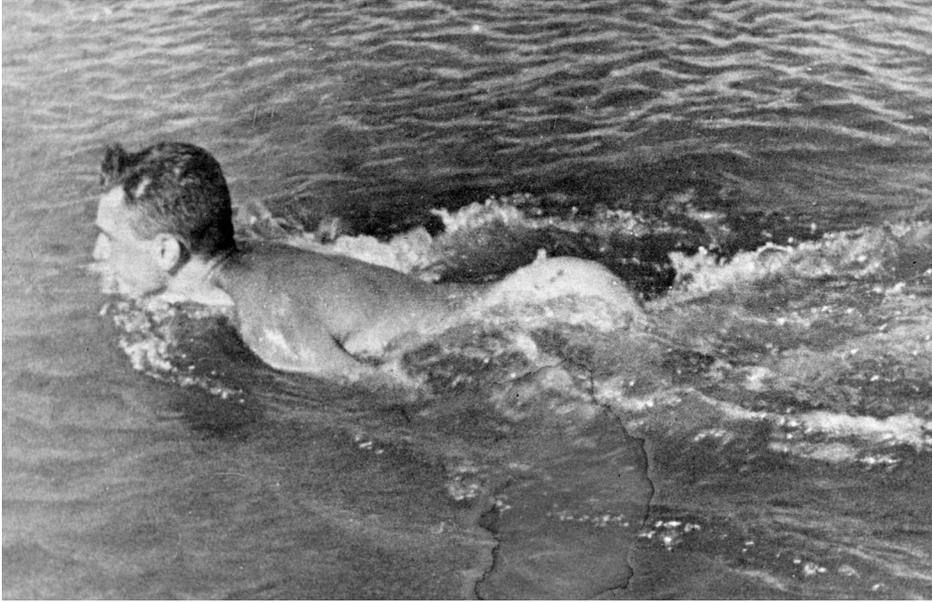
Helen in her bathing suit on a beach, probably 1936.



Back of photograph:

1936 summer "I am now the older one"

The implication of this inscription is that the speaker is saying he or she is now older than the recipient as when a birthday takes place, bringing one ahead of the other for a time.

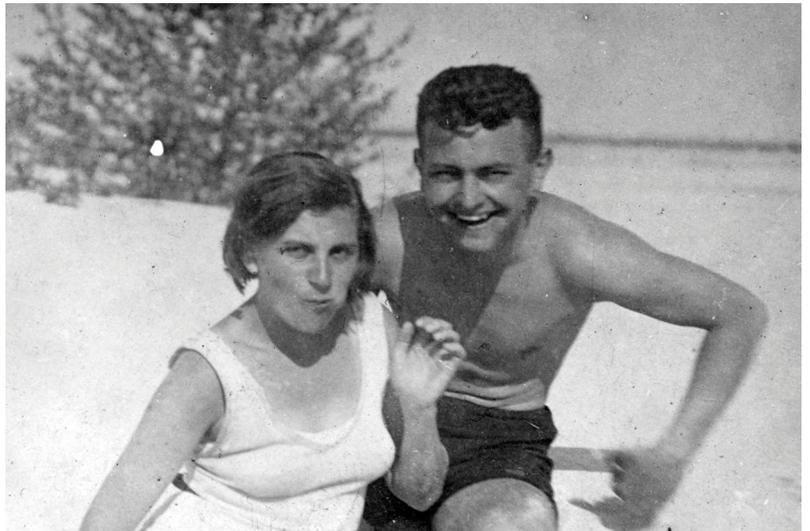


Peter swimming naked.

Helen on a sandy beach on a river or inlet.



Helen on a beach.



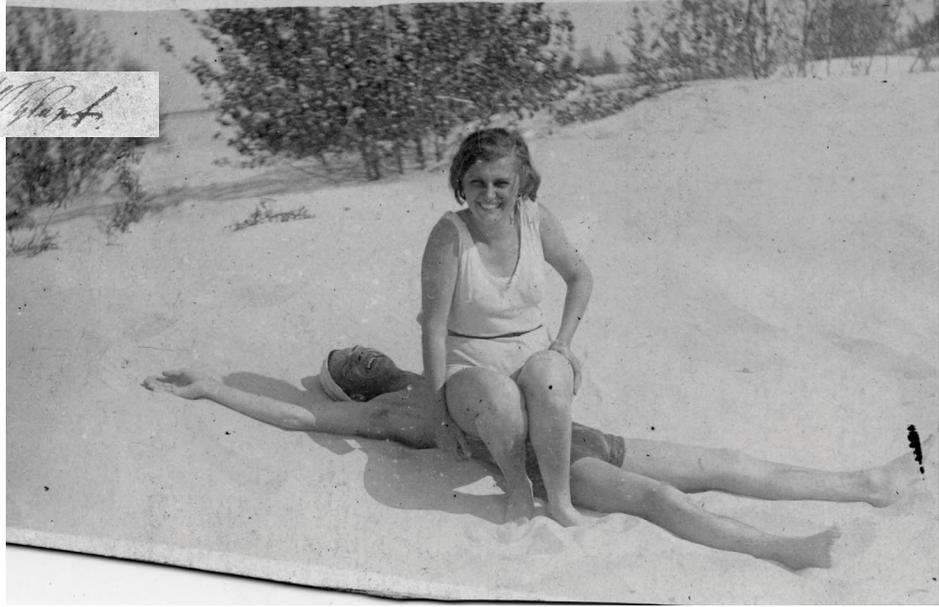
Back of photograph:
Summer 1936
N Gubarov

Helen sitting on top of
Andryusha.

Kiev, Spring 1936. N. Gubarov.

Back of photograph:

Kiev (undecipherable word -
possibly "spring". V??la)
1937 N. Gubarov (Kot)



Back of photograph:

Kiev, Spring 1936
N. Gubarov

Looks like Helen, two others,
and Tamara Bogaterchuk on
the right. Peter is in the middle.





Back of photograph:

1936 "Starik" (Old man)

There are a couple pictures signed "Starik." We don't what that means. Obviously, some inside joke of theirs.



Back of photograph:

1936 "Starik" (Old man)

Helen swimming.

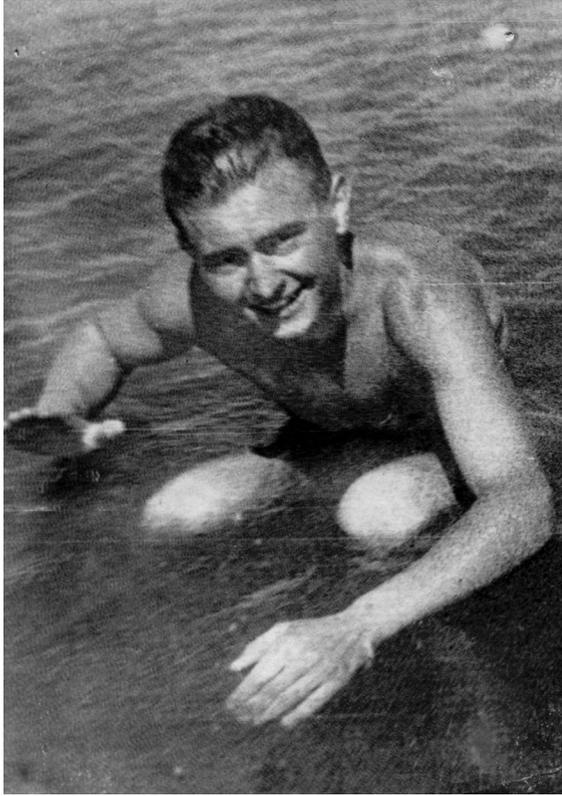


Back of photograph:

1936 Summer

Peter on his kayak. He is wearing the same sunglasses as swimming above. Is this the same kayak they are playing with earlier. This is probably on the Dnieper.

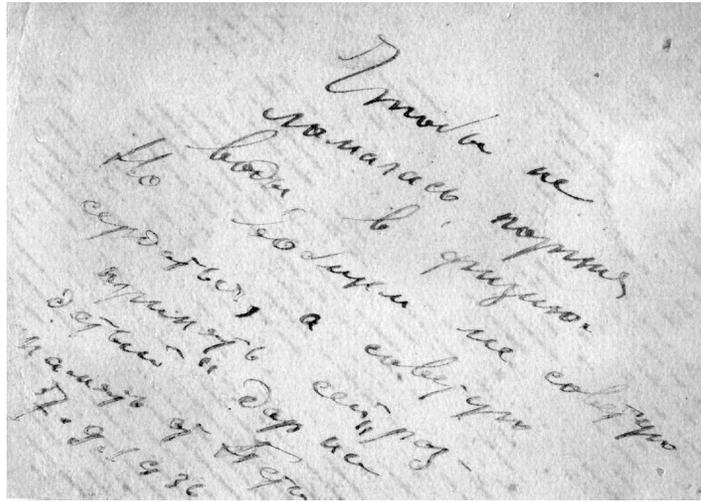
Peter by his kayak, probably on the Dnieper in 1936.



Back of photograph:

I am not trying to splash the water in your face and I advise you not to be angry but advise you to accept this unclothed gift (meaning himself) in remembrance from Petya
7 September 1936

The word used for "disrobed" does not necessarily mean "naked" although it could mean that of just one who is almost naked.



Peter changing in the water, either on the Dnieper in 1936 or in Crimea in 1937.



Helen sitting on a rock. Looks like that same Crimea trip of July 1937.



This is Lyolya Derdo. The back of the photograph is a rhyme that is a joke.

Then there is a word written in different handwriting which is undecipherable, but has something that implies she is fat. *Uboyische* – a person who gives you lots of trouble.

Back of photograph:

I can't forgive this face, although my words are not new. What could be more horrible than the smile of an innocent, virginal cow.

30 September 1936

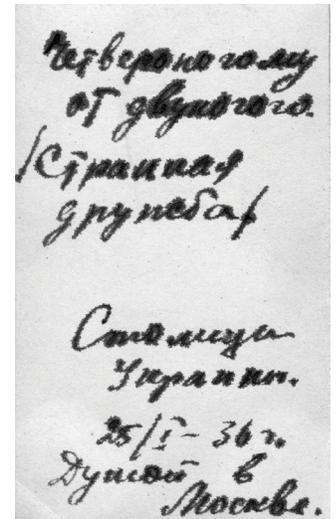
Back of photograph:

To dear Lenchka from Lyolya D.
Evpatoria
10 July 1933

Then, in a different handwriting there is another note:

Being far from him, I suffer with my soul.
Lyolya Derdo

Evpatoria is a city on the Western coast of Crimea (disputed territory since 2014). Helen used to go there. It's considered one of the most beautiful and ancient cities in Ukraine (Russia?).



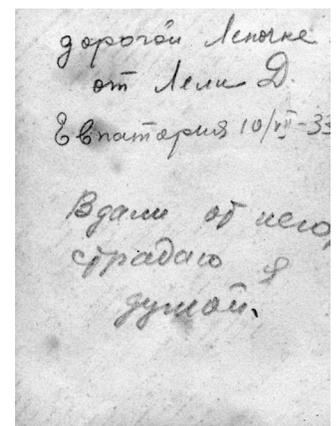
Lyolya Derdo. Her mother "sewed beautifully," according to Helen, and Lyolya was always beautifully dressed.

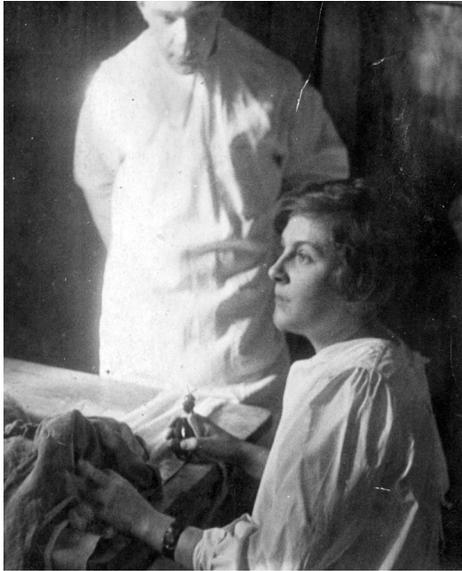
Back of photograph:

From the two-legged to the four-legged — strange friendship.

The capital of Ukraine
25 January 1936

My soul remains in Moscow.





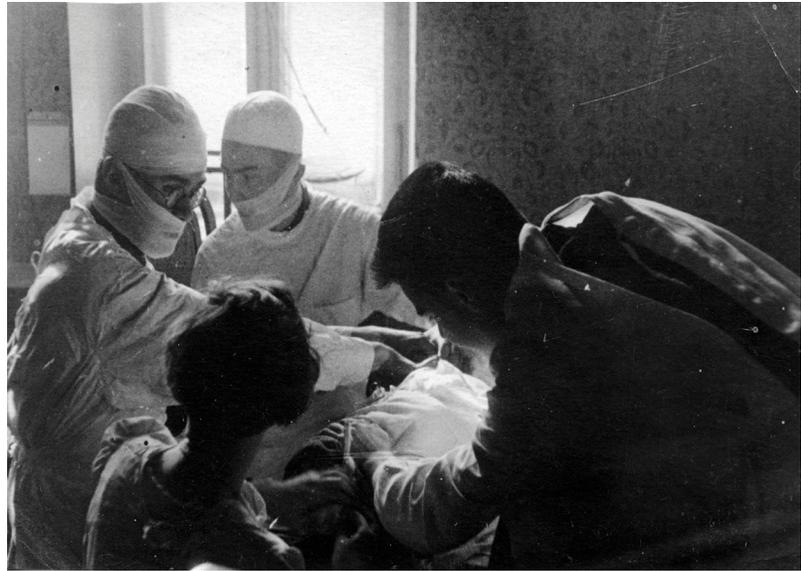
Back of photograph:

22 January 1937
Before the operation
Photo by V. Zamryi

Peter operated on a dog. Helen was an assistant and Vladimir Zamryi was his sister Nina's second husband. He took the photos.

Info from video tape interview: Peter says they are doing a kidney transplant on a dog, but it was "not successful. We lost the kidney. We had to throw it away." The dog survived, though, with one kidney.

There was a story also about Peter testing the joints of a cat. His disjointed it and then put them back, and the cat just walked away.



Back of photograph:

The first cut
Photo by V. Zamryi Kiev

Peter conducting surgery on a dog. The operation was a kidney transplant and was not successful. Peter said, "We lost the kidney. We had to throw it away." However, the dog survived with its remaining kidney.



Back of photograph:

Work in progress
Photo by V. Zamryi
22 January 1937

Peter's dog surgery, probably performed at his home on Funduleevskaya Street.



Back of photograph:

*Before the entrance exams
for the Institute, 1935*

Helen before she took her entrance exams to get into the institute KII, which later became Kiev Polytechnic Institute. She graduated from the institute in June of 1940.



Back of photograph:

*July 1937
At my house.*



Helen studying at home.

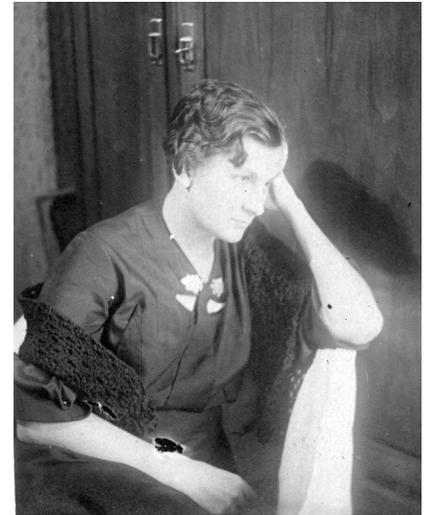
Probably her home on 12 Malopodvalnaya Street, Kiev.



Helen, young portrait.



Helen sitting in a chair indoors.





Helen in a costume.



Helen outside in summer.



Helen outside in summer.



Helen laughing with two girl friends.



Helen in same blouse as left portrait. Helen had several collars, which she would wash and attach to her one or two blouses on different days of the week.

Helen in a series of three portraits, probably taken at the same time.
Back of photograph:

October 1936 (probably)



Tamara Bogatherchuk and Helen.
Back of photograph:

Summer 1936, Vidubitsky Monastery



Back of photograph:

Address KII IXII-III
I can't think of anything more to say
Lena S

7 September 1936
Kiev



Helen with an unknown friend.



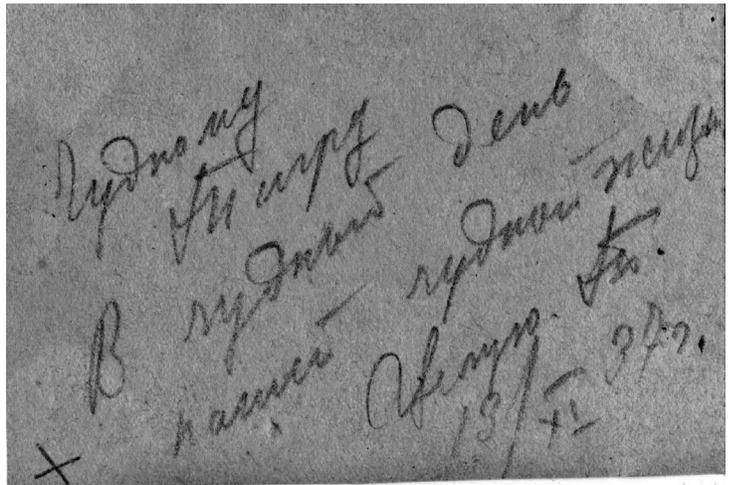
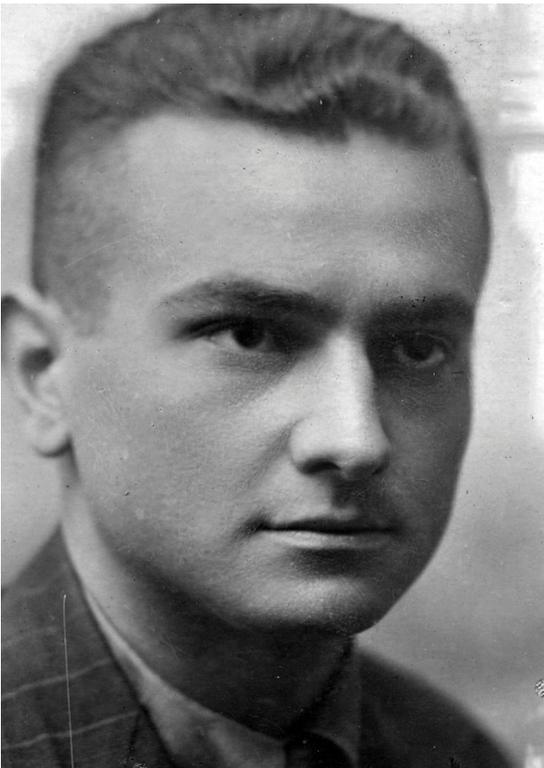
Back of photograph:

In remembrance ba.???
12 July 1939
Moscow

Handwriting seems like that of Lyolya
Derdo.



Peter, portrait.



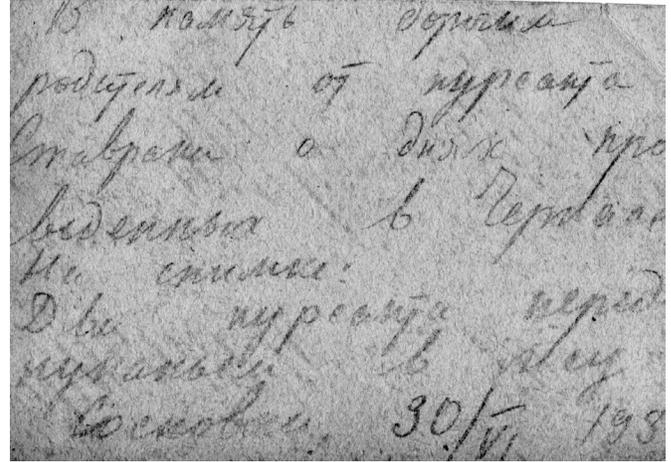
Back of photograph:

To the wonderful Tiger; wonderful day; our wonderful life.

Kisses T.

13 November 1937

"T." sent a couple of cards but we don't know who that is. He and Helen called each other "Tiger" all their lives. This is not in Peter's or Helen's handwriting, though.



Back of photograph:

In remembrance to my dear parents from Cadet Stavraki about the days spent in Cherkassy. On the picture you see two cadets before swimming in the pine forest (or a place called Pine Forest).

30 June 1937

Peter and another man who may be their friend and famous biologist, Misha Voitsvanski, stand in the forest in uniform during some kind of military service. See below for information about Misha.

Back of photograph:

Discharge
? February 1937

The term "discharge" refers to some kind of service — military or civilian. His uniform looks a bit like that of a pilot. Maybe he was in some kind of medical corps or youth service corps.

Peter told of performing some kind of youth service when he had to go to the villages and give inspirational speeches on communism. He described having gone with someone else and given superb and riveting talks full of all the communist jargon and buzzwords, although he could not remember a single word of what he had said. He just strung nonsense together, he said, and would feast in the village after.





Back of photograph:

To a nickname to someone small from Volo????
November 1938

They are joking with each other and it is an inside joke at that.

Peter Stavraki in military uniform. Possibly this is in 1940, when he graduated and was conscripted immediately into the military. He certainly does not look happy in this photo. This is from some document.



Peter Stavraki.



Peter and Helen.



Peter and Helen.
Back of photograph:

1936



Peter and Helen.
They married in April of 1938, so all these earlier pictures are their courtship and love affair.



Tamara Bogaterchuk as a child (unless we are mistaken and this is a photo of her daughter Olga Jeletsky who looked a lot like her). Tamara went to medical school at the same time as Peter and was part of their group. She became my (Olga's) godmother even though she was no believer, and ended up in Ottawa, Canada. The story of her family can be found in one of the other chapters.



Tamara Bogaterchuk when she was young. She always prided herself in her "cute" upper lip. Her family always thought she was extremely attractive, although Helen always thought it was a bit exaggerated. Her grandfather was a famous chess player.

Tamara Bogaterchuk.



This seems to be a small chapel, and since it was with the picture of the Crimea trip, it may have been something they saw along the way, although it is possible it was simply out of place.

Back of photograph:

24 May 1936

This is probably Helen, lying on some kind of cantilevered post, but her arm is covering her face, and there is no caption.



We don't know what this was. Located with the Crimea pictures, it could have been a cottage they saw along the route, or it could have been out of place.



*Stopping & having
to inspect
Sector 342
(gaps in woods)
Kiev 25.5.37.
Mara*

Back of photograph:

To Psurik, In November looking
back at the suffering of spring
1937 in Pharmacology

Kiev, 25th of May 1937

Mara

Woods near Kiev. When Helen and Peter came to the US, they always wondered that the Eastern forests had so much undergrowth. They talked about their forests, which were clear between and around the trees.



Back of photograph:

6 March 1937

Goloseevo

Goloseevo is the name of a forest in the southwest part of Kiev, which also has a monastery by the same name and is considered an important natural park with typical local tree species.



Helen and Ada Ginsburg in the woods.



Probably Kot Gubarov (Nicolai Gubarov).



A botanical garden of some sort with someone walking in it.

Andryusha (Andrei Storozhenko) is in the middle, and the man on the right appears to be Kot Gubarov.

Helen often spoke of Kot Gubarov, even towards the end of her life. It seems he may have been the runner-up to Peter in her affections!

Helen was pretty close to being in love with him before she settled on Peter. She mentioned him occasionally when she was in the nursing home in Portland, OR.





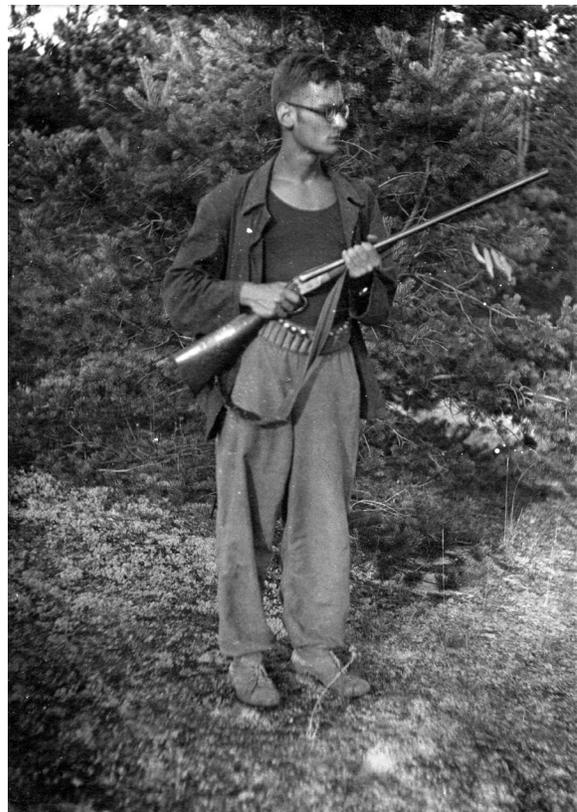
Friends in the woods.



Woods near Kiev.



On 30 April 1936, Helen among the trees. Goloseevo Woods.



Young man with a gun in the woods.

Back of photograph:

13 May 1937
?? Course

Helen and a male friend who appears in other pictures. She is wearing the same dress with a polka dot upper part and white front as in the previous picture.



Back of photograph:

Second course, Spring

Probably the same outing into the woods with classmates of Helen's from KII. She is wearing the same polka dot dress as in the next photo with a polka dot upper part.





Back of photograph:

Course II

Helen and a man in a tree.



Back of photograph:

Goloseevo 1937



Helen with unknown man with a gun, also found in pictures to follow. This seems to be a cropped blowup of the picture above. Next to him stands Ada Ginsburg. These were all classmates of Helen's in KII.

30 April 1936, Goloseevo. Helen sitting on a log with a young man who has a gun.



Back of photograph:

30 April 1936

Young man doing a handstand on a log.
Probably in Goloseevo.



Two young men at the edge of a pine forest. As are the others, they are dressed in coats, ties, and white shirts. They have placed coats and jackets on the ground and seem to have a thermos.



Back of photograph:

The Holy Trinity
KII
9 February 1937

Hat looks the same as
the pilot or military cadet
and uniform.



Helen and friend who appears in several pictures (same cadet hat — same guy was on "Holy Trinity" outing).



Helen and an unknown man. He is in some of the other pictures, so he must have been a student at KII as well.



Back of photograph:

25 November 1935

Kiev

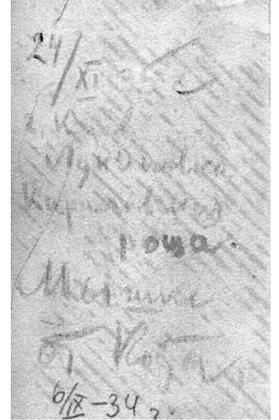
Lukyanovka, Kirilovskaya Roscha

To Mouse from Kot

6 September 1934

He is Kot Gubarov, and his name also means "Cat". He used it as his nickname. Mouse must be Helen with whom he was apparently in love before she settled on Peter as her husband.

(A *roscha* is a copse of one specie of tree or a city park.) The "Mouse" is female and the "Cat" is male. A year later he sent "Mouse" the picture below of the WWI pillbox, but the handwriting on the back is different.



Looks like Helen.



Helen with Valya.

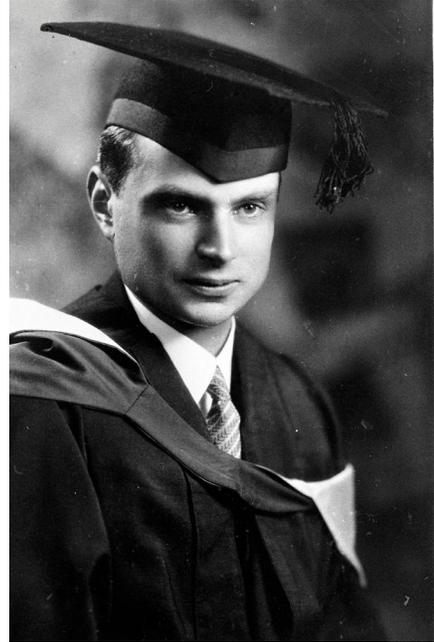
Back of photographs:

5 July 1937 at the home of Valya Ludyuk

There is a Valya Lotsyuk or Lyatsyuk (photo missing) but in the same batch as George Steshenko (see my added notes at bottom). They referred to her as "Pop's school friend." Is this the same Valya?



Three older men, unknown.



Yura Vladimirovich Stavradi, Peter's cousin from Odessa. Probably graduation in Canada from McGill University around 1932.



Probably 1936. The guy on the left is in the next two pictures as well and is unknown. The guy on the right was in the photos in the woods sitting with Helen on a tree and holding a gun.

Unknown.
Back of photograph:

1936



Unknown. She is in some of the group school photos, so probably a classmate of Helen's at KII.

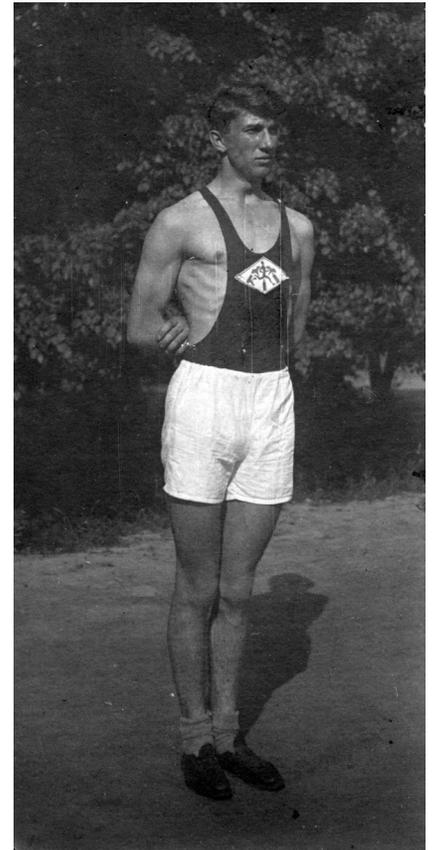


Classmate and Ira who went to live in Sweden (See her photos from Denmark in the Appendix).



Ira, Helen's friend who went to live and marry in Sweden because she was of Swedish heritage.

According to the video, Ira Giberg? was Helen's best friend and was Swedish. Her family left for Sweden, with some difficulty, when Ira was 17 and Helen 16. Helen read the back of a photo in which Ira was pictured but was sent her by Shura Landaga. On the back, Shura thanks Helen for "saving her mother, and by doing so you gave me great joy." No further explanation.



Unknown.



Back of photograph:

19 August 1934
 Zoopark
 6 hours 30 minutes (or 6:30)

Helen with an unknown woman. It is unclear what the time reference means.



Back of photograph:

In remembrance of 1933

To Lenchik

“To the most repulsive and terrible girl whom I always cursed and annoyed every evening in the most abusive manner”

Galya C.

She uses a twist of words here meaning to verbally abuse using curse words, which is a childlike linguistic combination. Her last name in Russian starts with a Russian “S” or an English “C.”



Back of photograph:

1933 Goloseevo

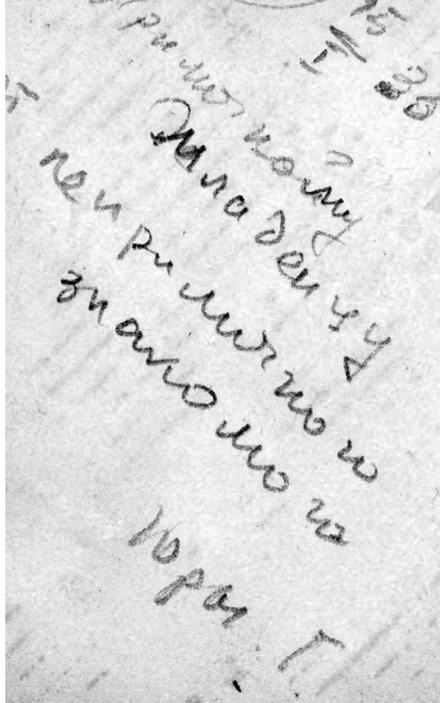
Helen and a friend and classmate who seems to be Vera, the same as in the next photo.



Back of photograph:

To Lenchka from Vera
 10 March 1934

Don't let me scare you; it is only me.



Back of photograph:

15 January 1935

To a polite (well-behaved) infant from an impolite acquaintance

Yura G.



Misha Voinstvenski (Mikhail Anatolevich Voinstvenski). He became a well-known ornithologist and environmentalist. He was appointed Head of the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Sciences – now Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Ukraine on Khmel'nitski Street, the same street Peter lived on. It's also where the Academy of Medicine was located and where Peter studied at the anatomical theatre.

Helen and Peter saw him on their one trip back to Kiev in 1995. Misha died a year later. A chestnut tree was planted in front of the Zoology Academy in his honor.

Footnote: His name appears in the KBG documents of the arrest of Andrei Storozhenko (Andryusha) in 1938, as being one of the friends Andryusha referred to, along with Peter. (See Russian Wikipedia for full entry.)

Back of photograph:

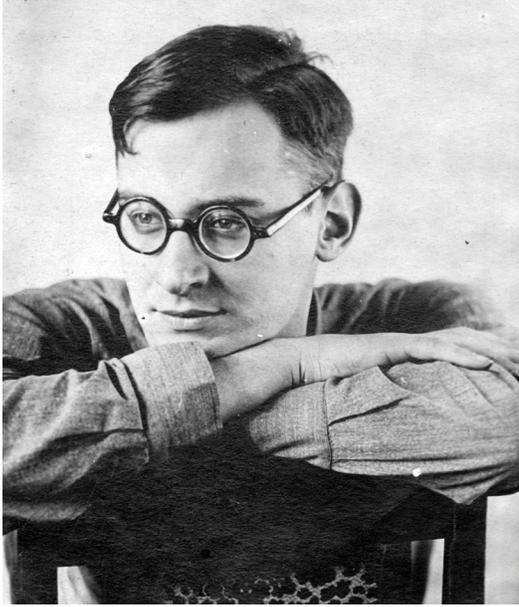
August 2, 1936

..in the paws of fate...

“..laugh, Pagliacci, even as your heart is breaking...”

This appears to be Kot Gubarov.

He refers here to Canio's Aria in Vesti la Guibba from I Pagliacci. This last phrase is in a different handwriting from the first one.



Yura Duhovichni was Helen and Peter's friend. Helen says he was an engineer. He took the photo of Helen sitting on her stoop with his dog when he stopped in to see her.

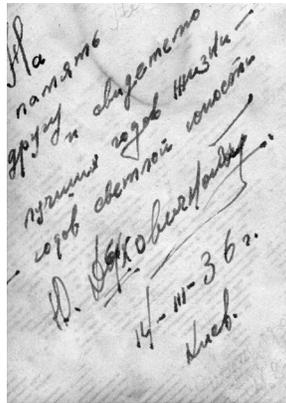
Yura's father was Jewish; his mother Russian. When the war started, Helen said "Он разматался"—disappeared?—Yura "zabezhal"—ran in to see us—one more time during the Nazi occupation. That was the last time they saw him. They thought he left for the East.

Helen remembered him as a wonderful ballroom dancer, especially the waltz.

In 2017, the authors found a reference to a "Yu. Duhovichni" in Kiev, who worked at the famous Taras Shevchenko University and whose firm won an award for it in 1995.

KL: Maybe it was "смотался"?

смотаться = покинуть какое-либо место, часто в спешке



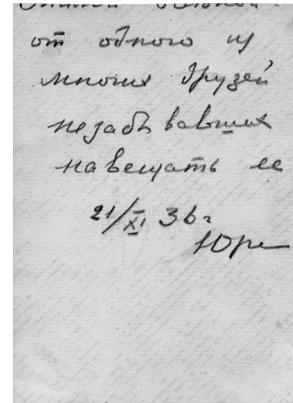
Back of photograph:

In remembrance of my friend and in witness to the best times of my life. The years of the dawn of my life.

Yura Duhovichni
14 March 1936

In different handwriting, a note on the bottom says, "Fizauditor N 87."

In that same handwriting, a note on the top looks as if it says "Petya."

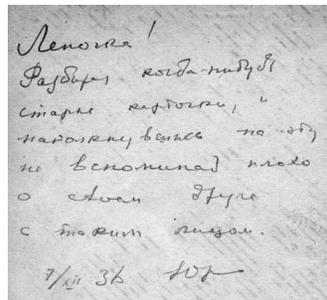


Back of photograph:

??? from one of your many friends, who does not forget to visit her.

21 November 1936
Yura

The top of the photo is cut off, cropping a couple of longish words. We do not know who the "her" refers to. It could be his mother, or a grandmother, or someone also homebound...



Back of photograph:

Lenochka!

Some day when you are looking through old photographs and you stumble upon this one, do not remember badly your friend with this face.

7 December 1936



**Yuri Anatolievich Siemensov
(George Siemiencow in the US newspaper)**

“Dyadya Yura” as we knew him in the US, was a good friend of Helen and Peter’s from Kiev days. He was a chemist, and the son of an eminent chemist, Anatoly Petrovich Siemensov. His wife, Rufa (Ruffina Archangelskaya), was also a successful chemist in Kiev. Yura’s family was well-off and had a summer *dacha* in Bucha, west of Kiev, a well-known retreat where Peter’s family sometimes rented a place and where the family of the famous writer Bulgakov also summered. The Siemensov family was discussed in a book about the history of Bucha (published by the Bulgakov Museum in Kiev).

There are varying accounts of what happened to Yura’s family during the German occupation and after. As with many people in this story, their world collapsed and they fled Kiev. Yura married Rufa and ended up in Easton, PA, teaching chemistry at Lafayette College. His parents lived with him, and his wife and his father also taught chemistry at the same college. His father was a stern, serious man, while Yura liked to joke and was extremely popular with students, many of whom remained his friends for life.

Our family saw him and Rufa quite often. We remember him as a pleasant, short, and roly-poly man who enjoyed kids, although he and Rufa had none of their own. Yura particularly liked our overweight dachshund, Brownie. He was active in many immigrant organizations, such as a Russian summer camp for immigrant kids.

Photo taken in April 1955 during flooding after a hurricane at the Stavakis *dacha* on the Elk River at the head of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

From left to right: Steven Stavakis, a neighbor boy, Jackie or Jerry Schwartz (neighbor twins), Olga with Kathy, and, on the right, Yura Siemensov.

Yura and his wife, Rufa, came to visit often, and occasionally Helen and Peter took the family to Allentown to visit them and see their parents. The two families remained close until the end of their lives.

Left to right: Rufa, Yura, Olga, Susie Schwartz (neighbor), Kathy (in front of others), and Steven Stavrakis

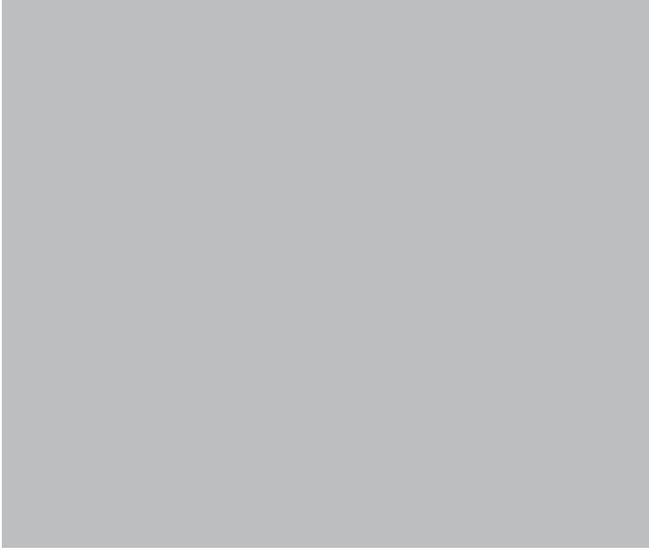


Left to Right: Peter, Olga, Steven Stavrakis, and Yura and Rufa Siemensov. This was the first boat that Peter bought for the beach house. Later he got a 16 ft fiberglass boat with a 40 horse Evinrude outboard motor, which Olga used to explore the upper Chesapeake.

The houses extending along the shore belonged to the Schwartz family, Jewish refugees from Poland who lived in Wilmington and also spent their summers here on the river.



MISSING PHOTOGRAPHS



Missing Photo:

Helen identified it in the video taken in Delaware: A group of her friends at the Industrialni Institut, “Все химики” — all chemists, as she said. There was a park at the Institute, and that’s where the photo was taken. Here are some names and fragments: Isa Garkari?, Nadya Pasterkova (they called her “Svet Kostyushka”— shiny braid — because she had such beautiful hair), and Ilyusha Goldfarb.



Missing photo:

George (Heorhy) Steshenko. A friend of Peter’s. There is a photo of him in the video, about 12 years old or so. His father was a famous singer, Ivan Steshenko, known as The Russian Shaliapin. Ivan (the father) was persecuted during the Soviet period and died in 1937. George became a geologist and also served in the Red Army, though was denied heroism awards due to a “blacklist” against his father. He and his wife moved to Tashkent. He died in 1965.

APPENDIX A

**Road Trip to Crimea in July, 1936
Deserted Villages Ravaged by the Famine**

By Helen Stavrakis

This is what they saw on a trip to the countryside after the famine. We have good photos of this trip.

We traveled for hours, silently observing the dead villages around us. The sky was bright blue, the air clear, and the sun poured the golden warm rays on endless green fields, alive with tall thick grass sprinkled with patches of white daisies and blue tender bachelor-buttons gently swaying with the breeze. Here and there, the tall green-golden wheat or grayish whiskered oat would stretch above the grass,

the lonely reminder of the past, when these fields were heavy with crops shining like poured gold as far as the eye could reach. The houses looked like they were etched in the bright blue of the sky; the walls still sparkled, painted the customary white; but the dark gaping holes of the broken windows, the doors, and shutters oddly hanging on few hinges made the structures look like faces contorted in pain, staring helplessly beyond the time. It was quiet, not peaceful quiet but dead still.



Scene probably from the Crimea trip. This may be one of the villages Helen referred to in her description of the abandoned, depopulated villages.

As if superimposed from the past, a different picture came to my mind. Suddenly, the place was alive with people, animals, and birds. There were flowers around the houses, glowing bright patches. The trees were heavy with fruit, the fields were golden with crops, and the pastures alive with animal herds. Men, women, and children were moving, working, laughing, crying, and talking, caught in the maze of endless chores of the hectic and heady farmers' summer. The hardships of life were eased by the feeling of belonging to this beautiful land that was theirs; this feeling came especially strong during the bright summer and bountiful autumn. No matter how difficult today was, the sun will be up tomorrow, there will be another day...And here, many years later in the middle of this desolate country, the sun was still shining, but there was no tomorrow.