

RAIA AND HER FAMILY

Raia Bekker was born in 1920, on December the 12th. She was the last child in the Bekker family. Their father died when she was 11 and since then family lifestyle changed drastically, and not only in the material sense.

Raia was a reluctant school student. She did not finish school. She started working and matured early. In 1937 Raia was only 16.5, but she looked like a grown woman.

She had a difficult life, but always remained optimistic, merry and good-natured. Even before marriage she always liked people, especially kids. She always tried to help people out, even when it was beyond her physical possibilities.

As for her financial situation, it was such that the entire family, all her brothers and sisters, always helped her out. Until now they love her for her sweet compliant personality and for being grateful to them.

Raia got married at 20.

She was working at Karl Marx factory in Leningrad and met a young Russian worker, highly qualified plumber Sergei Trofimov. He was also a soccer-player. He had nice gentle personality. One thing was bad about him: he was fond of drinking and was getting drunk very quickly. Among workers it was common, but Raia was not used to it. There were occasions when they'd find him lying in the street – and he wouldn't even know where he was.

With the start of the war Leningrad was seized with panic. Rumors spread that the Germans were about to occupy the city and rape all girls. Then Raia said, rather than being raped by the Germans, she prefers to marry a Russian guy, Seriozha, and go with him to Ufa. Mama Bekker could not object to this argument.

Thus, Raia and Sergei registered their marriage and went to Ufa with their factory. He was released from military service because he was a good specialist and was needed at the factory. In spite of that, he did have an injury, though not in combat. A shaving spurted off into his eye at work – and he lost that eye. Later he got an artificial eye. Raia and Seriozha lived in Ufa area, in the barracks, but in a separate room.

Around 1943 their son Oleg was born. Everyone calls him Alik.

Thus, five of the Bekker brothers were combat fighters during the war. Arkadiy worked at the factory and Grisha was in America. Two of the three Bekker sisters' husbands also fought the Nazis, and only Seriozha, ethnic Russian, was in the home front. I provide this

family statistics to make a point against the wide-spread myth that Jews did not fight the war, but escaped to Tashkent instead. This notion is still popular among Russians.

After the war Raia and Seriozha returned to Leningrad and occupied one room in Mama's apartment on Lesnoi. Aaron lived in the other room. In a short while Aaron married and they had 2 kids, while Raia gave birth to their second son Yura on October 17, 1945.

Mama also lived in the same apartment, in Raia's room, but she frequently stayed with her other kids – with Leva or Sasha. Or she'd come to Riga and stay with us for 6-7 months.

10 people in two small rooms was a norm in the Soviet Union. Many families lived that way.

Sergei received a separate apartment as a grant from work as late as in 1970, when Raia was 50. They had three children by then: two sons and a daughter, called Lenochka. A baby girl had always been Raia's dream. Thus, at 50 they got an apartment in a new building. They had 3 rooms there: 2 bedrooms and a dining-room for 5 persons. While by American standards: one bedroom per person, it was not enough.

Still, Raia was very happy. She wrote us an excited letter – and even expressed her emotions in rhymes! In these rhymes she described how she had picked up a warrant for the apartment in the office, walked out into the street – and kept singing out loud all the way home. She still lives in that apartment. It is a fifth floor apartment and there is no elevator in the building. Walking 5 stories up was OK for Raia at 50 – but it is much more difficult for her at 72.

But nothing can be done.

Raiechka decorated and furnished her apartment very nicely. She still keeps it clean and she still preserves her happy attitude.

Years passed and brought changes to the life of this family.

One summer Raia, Sergei and Lenochka went vacationing, and Yura stayed behind. He walked out on the balcony and stroke a conversation with a girl on the adjacent balcony. Her parents were also away from home. Her father was in the military, and her mother was a teacher.

Also, she had a small child. The girl's name is Lorina.

They became friends and presently Yura announced that he wanted to marry her. Raia was not very happy but could do nothing. They got married. Yura adopted her boy. Then their daughter Olia was born, then – their son Oleg and one more daughter – Asia. At first they lived with Lorina's parents and then bought a coop apartment.

Yura works very hard to provide for his family – while his wife does not work, or so I heard. Yura has no professional education, but he is very handy and a natural-born mechanic, just like his father. We learn things about their kids only from Raia's letters. A few months ago Oleg, who is 15 now, visited America with his school orchestra. Unfortunately, the orchestra was sent straight to Albany where they had to perform. Mark and others met Oleg when he came to New York for a day-tour.

He made a good impression on them. He is a nice boy, sweet, polite and blonde, like all Bekkers. He received many gifts – not just from relatives, but also from their hosts in Albany and from the audience; and not just for himself – but also for his sisters, parents and grandmother.

His Albany hosts were so fond of him that even offered to adopt him. Naturally, he declined their offer. All in all, this was quite a story, and Oleg will remember it, even though this was not his first foreign tour.

And now I'll turn to the other Oleg – Raia and Seriozha's first son whom everyone calls «Alik».



**Raia Bekker-Trofimova visiting
Sofa and Mark Bekker in Riga
for their 40th wedding
anniversary.**



**Raia and Aron visiting
monument to their parents
Gita and Yosif Bekker at the
Jewish Cemetery in Leningrad
(St. Petersburg), Russia.**



**Raia and Betty with brothers Lev, Senya, Mark, and Aron visiting
Mark and Sofa to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.
Riga, Latvia, 1977**



Raia's sons Oleg and Yura Trofimov with cousins Zhora and Leva Bekker.



Raia's son Oleg with cousins Joseph, Lenya, Vlada and friend on the beach.



Raia's son-in-law Sasha, son Yura with daughters Olia and Asia. St. Petersburg, 2002.



**Raia's 80th birthday, daughter Lena and her husband Sasha.
December 17, 1999, St. Petersburg.**



**Raia's visit to New York for 60th wedding Anniversary
of Sofa and Mark Bekker. 1997.**



**Joyce and Inna visiting family in St. Petersburg. Right to left: Bella,
Alesha Bekker – Zhora's son, Volodya Bekker, Raia and her grandson
Oleg – Yura's son.**

ALIK

He was a calm, good boy and also had skilful hands. He served in the army and returned. Then it turned out that he'd been subjected to radioactive irradiation, and that caused leukemia, or cancer of the blood. Its symptoms did not appear right away, but developed over time.

But all of it did not come to light until later. After the army Alik was spending time in the company of his friends and once met a girl named Lida. She was a ticket-master at the airlines ticket office. They became close and he moved to her place. He had a car and was a good auto-mechanic. During one of our visits to Leningrad Alik took us around the city in a car. Then we drove to the cemetery to visit the graves of our parents and Valia Bekker. We also went to the Piskarev cemetery and to other places with him.

He and Lida had no kids.

At 40 Alik died of leukemia. One can imagine what a mother feels when her son, especially her first-born, dies. Raiechka still has not recovered from this blow.

And there was another sorrow to befall her.

Raia and Seriozha lived together for over 40 years, and even though he drank a lot and could sometimes drink himself to oblivion, he was still a very good man. He helped her in bringing up children and keeping up household; he was never rude or impatient and was very good to her mother. She called her «Mama» as all Bekkers did. He tended to her when she was old and lived with them. He even used to take her night-pots out.

When he was sober, they were very happy.

As for my personal impression of him, I always admired this Russian commoner who was able to survive in the Jewish family and remained tolerant to all its peculiarities. He was always good and friendly to everyone, never said a rude word and certainly never pronounced anything anti-Semitic.

These were all his good sides. Of course, no one knows what he thought or felt in the depth of his soul.

For example, I remember the following episode. During one of Grisha's visits to Leningrad the entire family – 40 or 50 persons – assembled at Sasha and Klara's small place in Pivovarsky Lane. Innochka also came with Leva and Ilusha who was then less than a year old. They lulled the baby to sleep in his stroller and put him out on the staircase one flight above Sasha and Klara's apartment. The child was sleeping. At some point, his father went up to check on him

– and found Seriozha already there. No one had asked him to go – he went up out of his personal concern. And this was very characteristic of his attitude to children. He adored them. That’s what Seriozha Trofimov was like.

When the doctors announced that Alik was terminally ill and had only 2 or 3 months to live, Seriozha kept his grief to himself trying to spare Raia’s feelings. One day in the summer Raia, Seriozha and Lenchka returned to the city from their Lysii Nos summer cottage in order to visit public bathhouse. In Soviet suburbia shower stalls or bathhouses were a rarity and most of vacationers commuted to the city for bathing. Americans usually have difficulty taking it in, because here every suburban house has a shower stall.

Thus, Raia and Lenchka went to the ladies’ bath court, and Seriozha went to the men’s bath court. They agreed to meet outside. Raia and Lenchka finished bathing, walked out and started waiting. Seriozha was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly a medical emergency vehicle drove up and promptly someone was carried out of the bathhouse on stretchers. The body was entirely covered with a sheet. Out of sheer curiosity Raia stepped closer and lifted a corner of the sheet. There she saw Seriozha, dead. One can only guess how she felt and what she thought. Exactly 2 months later Alik died. I think, Seriozha simply could not cope with the idea of his son’s impending end – and his heart stopped. He would have been 70 that year.

LENOCHKA

Lenochka was Raia and Seriozha's youngest child. Raia had always wanted a girl – and finally her wish was granted: Lena was born. She was a nice, quiet girl and a family pet. She completed 8 grades at school and went to a technical school where several disciplines were taught in German. It was affiliated to «Svetlana» factory. Raia worked there for many years. She first came to this factory after the war – and stayed until retirement. She was known as good and experienced worker.

Once Raia took Lenochka on a tour of Moscow. There she met a tall, handsome young man. They liked each other and soon became bride and groom. Raia organized a sumptuous wedding in a restaurant, with many guests and wonderful decorations.

The wedding took place a couple of days before Klara and Sasha had to leave the country, so many of their friends came there. We also came from Riga.

Alik (I think, that's how he was called) had a room and they started living there. Alik worked as cafeteria manager on Peterburgskaia Side. For several years everything went well. Lenochka gained weight and looked pretty. Unexpectedly, she learned that Alik was cheating her with another woman. She left everything in its place, including things she herself had brought from home, and moved back to her mother's.

It turned out that, before Lenochka, Alik had been married and divorced twice. Alik was Jewish, and Raia always wanted Lenochka's husband to be a Jew. Still from the very beginning of their romance she was unwilling to have him as son-in-law, and even tried to dissuade Lenochka. Apparently, she had a foreboding of sorts.

In any case, Lenochka still has not re-married and continues living with Raia.

Yet, she did enroll in evening classes at college. Two years ago she graduated from the faculty of economy planning. Her mother rewarded her with a 1-month trip to America on Yanochka's invitation. Yanochka, Leva's youngest daughter, was Lenochka's childhood friend. This trip impressed and excited Lena, and, like so many visitors before her, she started nurturing the idea of emigration.

In her situation, however, this is not easy, for nationality box in her passport reads: «Helena Sergeevna Trofimova, Russian». Now she is begging her mother «to deliver» her to America. Otherwise she has no chance of ever getting here.

Raia decided to send in papers to Washington DC. Aaron, the only

Bekker brother left in Leningrad, also wanted to apply for immigration status. Approximately a year ago, on May 30, 1991, we sent in papers for Arosha, while Olia did the same for Raia and Lena.

In the end of June this year both us and Olia received Washington post-marked notices saying that our relatives' information had been entered into their computer. We'll see what happens next.

In spite of her natural optimism, the mood of Raia's recent letters borders on desperate. She says that their life is horrible and gets worse every day.

The only thing I do not get is how she is going to leave behind Yura and her only grandchildren. Won't she miss them and worry about them? I even asked her that question in one of my letters. But it is her decision to make. It is likely that processing of their papers will take another year and a half or two years. And time is the best of advisors.

MORE ABOUT ARON

My last record about Arosha refers to the time when he expressed willingness to visit America again. On his insistence, Mark sent him an invitation for 2 months. In September 1991 he arrived. He apparently had previous discussion with his sons about his intention to seek political asylum in the United States.

For 2 months he lived with us with rear stays over at Leva's. Leva and Sofa could not invite him more often because of their poor health. Our state of health, of course, was no better than theirs, and we were older. In general, I think that with age visitors become a heavy, almost unbearable burden. We, however, had no way out. Our visitors thought differently, and our family ties were very strong.

That September was warm, and Arosha spent many days at the beach in Brooklyn returning by night. In 2 months he met a 70-year-old lady called Mira. Soon he moved to her place.

Then he took steps towards legalizing his status in the US. He could not do that without a lawyer's help, and a lawyer needs to be paid. Every month Grisha was sending him a sum of money – otherwise Arosha would not have survived.

For some reason Aaron did not want to wait until our appeal for his and his sons' entry to the US comes through. Leva, his son, also couldn't wait and sent his son Sasha to America, for these days – thanks God! – it is easier than it used to be. Thus, Sasha also appeared. He rented a room and started working at different places, such as sewing plant or construction and repair team. He spent 9 months here and was also researching the possibilities of legalization when his parents – primarily, his mother who wanted to see her only son – called him back home.

Sasha is a very nice boy of 20, student of the Lesgaft Physical Culture Institute in Leningrad. He is also a boxer and even took part in several boxing matches here.

To make a long story short, this July he returned home and is now planning to continue his studies. The year when he was absent counts as academic leave.

His parents are fairly well-to-do. At home Sasha not only has no hardships to endure, but, on the contrary, lives in comfort. Having earned a little money in America, he is now even more comfortable.

As for Arosha, he is satisfied with his life here, even though Mira is not very agreeable. He says, he is better off here than in Leningrad because here there are more relatives.

MORE ABOUT INNOCHKA

In September of 1989 Inna met Ely Schwartz, a dentist, whose wife died 10 years earlier of cancer. He has 3 kids: a daughter, a son and Penny, the youngest. They are, respectively, 40, 37 and, I think, 34 years old. Ely's older daughter is divorced and has no kids; his son had 2 in '89 and since then got 2 more; and his younger daughter has 2 girls. All Ely's children and grandchildren like Innochka and treat her well. Ely was prepared to marry Inna right away, but they decided to «adjust» first.

«Adjusting» is no small matter. It takes time to get used to each other. In their relationship there were moments when Inna was on the verge of leaving him. But eventually they worked it out. Apparently, their feelings for each other proved stronger than differences.

On September 29, 1991 they were officially married. There was a beautiful wedding in a posh hotel restaurant. In addition to civil marriage they had *chupa*. Many relatives and friends from both sides were in attendance.

They made a videotape of this wedding and shot many beautiful photos. Though Innochka has added some weight, she looks pretty and youngish, for now she can work less and relax more. She looks much younger than her age and is often taken for her 20-year-old son's girlfriend when they are walking side-by-side. The only thing that upsets her is Ely's unwillingness to go out and travel. He does not like theater, or concerts, or traveling, and values comfort above all. He, however, does not prevent her from going out and traveling without him. A maid who has been in Ely's employ for 30 years comes to clean the house twice a week.

Like many Americans, he likes dining in restaurants. He feels that Innochka should not be cooking on the days when she works. When she is not working, she cooks, but only for one day.

Ely is good to Ilushen'ka and to us. He is generally a kind and generous man. For example, when Aaron arrived, they invited him over for the day and gave him a very good welcome. Ely presented him with 2 suitcases filled with clothes, some of them never worn. There was a set of 15 brand-new shirts in plastic wraps, several suits, shoes, an overcoat, etc.

As for Iluasha, I must say that, in spite of his parents' divorce, he grew up to be a very good boy. Judging by statistics, children of divorced parents often develop various problems. But that's not his case. Certainly, Ramaz – a very good Jewish school he attended from pre-school to graduation – helped in this matter. There Ilusha had

friends from very nice families. Both his friends and their parents love Ilusha and admire his gentleness and kindness. They like him for being a devout friend and for his respect for elders.

Much of it is Innochka's accomplishment. It was she who insisted on sending Ilusha to Ramaz. It was she who paid for his education at the expense of her own needs. She never bought herself expensive clothes, jewels and the like. Her only wish was to give her son access to good education. His father, on the contrary, many times suggested sending him to a public school where Ilusha would have been in a very different company.

Now Ilusha is a senior student at the University of Maryland. From year to year his grades get better; he becomes more serious, sociable, tolerant and gentle with his parents and elders in general. Last year he spent half a year in Israel on the exchange program. Here students have the option of temporarily switching the place of their studies. He liked studying in Israel and fell in love with that country. He became more of an Israeli patriot and even served 3 weeks in the Israeli army. There he received an honorary title of The Best Soldier for interpreting for his fellow soldiers from English and Russian to Hebrew – and back. Fluent in Hebrew, Ilusha has a good command of 3 languages and I am sure it is going to help him in the future.

This summer Ilushen'ka went traveling with his father. First they visited Leva's dying sister, Ilusha's aunt, in Israel, then went to Moscow, Riga and Kaluga. Ilusha was pleased to see the city of his birth – Riga. He visited the hospital where he was born, our apartment where he spent 2 first years of his life and his father's former apartment – as well as many other places. He returned overwhelmed with impressions.

MORE ABOUT JOS AND HIS FAMILY

My last record about Jos is dated by August 20, 1989. Since then many unpleasant changes have occurred, and they upset me greatly.

It all started when Danik, Jos's younger son who was 15 then, declared that he wanted to live with his father. I do not know what made him do that. Maybe the reason is that his mother has become too nervous, screams at him hysterically and pushes the child into conflicts. In response he screams back, and cries. Or the reason may be even simpler: adolescent boys need fathers more than even mothers.

Anyway, a year ago (in 1991), when summer vacations started, Danik moved to his father's place. Mila had to agree, though not without fights and tears. I think, it is all their fault, because, following the American fashion, they refused Danik absolutely nothing while he was growing up. He did whatever he wanted. No wonder, that in this case they had to succumb to his wishes also.

To accommodate the boy, Jos had to rent a new apartment – or rather a house with 2 handsomely furnished bedrooms – for himself and for Danik. The house is neat and clean. It is cleaned once a week by a visiting cleaning woman. Thus, they now live together, the two men.

Jos says that he has no problems with his sons and that he thanks God for that. Danik visits his mother every other Tuesday and stays the night.

Still, I think that family discord left a trace on him. He was not yet 10 when they divorced. He developed a facial tic. Whether it was due to stress or for congenital reasons, we do not know. Mila told me once that her father, her brother and even her have similar tics. Whatever it is, it is sad, and Danik is good-looking. Besides, I think it upsets him, too.

I am always very upset when I see it. His classmates tease him, he has no friends and no one wants to be his friend. Sometimes he makes grunting noises in class, and teachers are probably not very happy. In addition to all this, he is not a very good student. Since childhood Danichka takes a lot of medications, but so far there's no sign of improvement.

Hopefully, at the end of puberty it will all straighten up.

When Danik moved in with Jos, the money issue came up. Jos and Mila failed to settle this matter between themselves, and Jos appealed to family court. When Mila received a court notice, she exploded.

I knew nothing about this: my son tries not to upset me with bad

news. Mila called me and began an awful tirade. «I curse you for raising this kind of a man; I curse your entire family» – and so on. Instead of putting the receiver down and ending this conversation right away, I attempted to sooth her. I asked her what the matter was, since I knew nothing about the impending trial. Finally, I asked her whether she was planning to attend Inna's and Ely's wedding. – «I'll come to her next wedding», she replied. – «What do you have against Inna?» I asked. Then she said that Inna had sent her an invitation for her and her mother, without mentioning Danik because Danik lived with Jos and Inna had chosen to put his name in Jos's invitation. Thus, Mila felt offended.

She communicated her hurt feelings to Inna – and Inna apologized. Still, Mila did to her exactly what she did to me: called her and started cursing her on the telephone. Inna, however, acted smarter: she immediately put the receiver down. As for me, after this conversation I was so upset that I could not sleep for a few nights.

I said nothing to my son, afraid to make already bad situation even worse.

Not long before this incident Mila's brother Zorik and his wife arrived. He asked Jos to meet them – and Jos did. Then he invited them and Mila to his place for a barbeque. That was on Saturday, September 17, and her phone call was made on Friday the 27th.

I had to stay calm and show no sign of distress because Inna's wedding was set for Sunday.

I asked Jos about this trial much later. I told him that I did not approve of this action and that he shouldn't have appealed to court. He responded that there is a huge difference between \$180 and \$2000 monthly payments. I do not know what happened between them later, but they are not on talking terms any more and Jos forbade Mila to visit his place. I know that he last saw her for his birthday when she dropped by and brought him a gift in a box.

This situation makes me suffer a lot. First, curses terrify me. Second, I grieve that after so many years of good rapport their family relationships totally deteriorated. The only good thing is that it was not my fault.

PAVLIK

As a boy Pavlik was nice and calm, with a touch of laziness. With his talents he could have done much better both at school and in college. Still, he finished high school and went to college At Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, which was not the best of choices, of course. On the other hand, as New Jersey residents they saved money on his tuition costs. Pavlik knows that being a graduate of Rutgers is less prestigious than being a graduate of Yale or Princeton. It also affects the range of jobs and salaries one can hope for. Graduates of prestigious universities have larger salaries than graduates of other colleges.

Anyway, in 1993 Pavlik will graduate. He'll get his lawyer's diploma and hopefully will find a good job.

He is a good boy. He does not drink, or smoke, or use drugs, and I hope he'll stay like that in the future. I wish he'd start living normally – that is, rent an apartment, furnish it and find a good wife. He is already 25 after all.

Family life of his parents did not make a good impression on him.

Still, I am glad that Pavlik, as all our grandchildren, values our family tradition and understands that one has to study and be a professional. In our family this notion is passed from generation to generation. In other family kids sometimes go as far as drop out of school.

My quarrel with Mila did not affect our relationships with Pavlik.

Every year during summer break he takes a job in New York, and we give him the keys to our apartment so that he can stay there while we are in a camp. He likes us, and always brings us flowers and things.

In 1991 Pavlik went for 1 semester to London. Unfortunately, he got sick with pneumonia and even had to be hospitalized. But it all ended well. In general, a change of situation was good for him.

MARIK AND LENYA ARRIVED TO NEW YORK

Last summer – I think it was in June – Lenya, his wife Nadia and their 11-year-old son Zhenya arrived to New York.

Lenya is the second son of Senya Bekker and Eva, brother of Marik Bekker, Senya's first son. Emigration was not easy for him. For 10 years they had to live as internal refugees, because of Lenya's affiliation with the military. During this time their other son died at 12 of cancer of the leg bone. As a child he was playing hockey and a puck crashed into his leg at a great speed. This stimulated the development of cancer. The boy died in great pain. For his parents it was a tragedy, of course, and they became even more protective of Zhenya.

Zhenya is a nice calm boy with blonde hair. He has very good manners.

Lenya and his family came on Marik's invitation. For a while they lived in his private house, and then rented a one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn, furnished it and bought a used car. Then they started looking for jobs. In Moscow both Lenya and Marik did elevator repairs. Marik found a good company job very quickly – just 2 months after his arrival to America. He is still working for this company and is valued as an excellent worker. His boss promised Marik to hire Lenya too when he arrives. Then recession came and instead of expanding, they had to reduce work places.

Lenya was hoping to work professionally, but he was not familiar with American technology – and spoke little English. He found the way out: went to work for car-service. There he is earning some money. Nadia took Home Health Aid courses, received a certificate and started working for 2 families: one Russian and one American. Their life was getting better – and then the unexpected came. Zhenya got sick. Something was wrong with his head. The doctors suspected cancer at first, and the boy went in for urgent surgery. Then it turned out that the source of the problem was a pinched blood vessel which caused headaches, dizziness and other symptoms by increasing pressure in the boy's eyes. Zhenya's surgery was successful and after a prolonged stay at the hospital he returned home. Now a visiting nurse works on the recovery of his various body functions. It is a long and complicated process and the doctors warn that it will last no less than a year. I hope, with God's help, he'll recover completely.

While Zhenya was at the hospital our daughter Innochka was regularly calling his nurses and physicians and had lengthy talks with them. All information about the progress of Zhenya's treatment went through her, because Lenya and Nadia do not know enough English.

Lenya and Nadia came to America with a certain amount of money saved from the sale of their coop apartment in Moscow.

SENYA AND HIS FAMILY EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL

Earlier in this book I already wrote some about Mark's brother Senya. This last year brought so many changes into his life that I feel like adding one more installment about him.

About 4 years ago Senya first visited America on Marik's invitation. He stayed here for 2 months and visited us, Leva and Olia. Grisha flew in from California to see him. Senya spent 3 days with Grisha in his hotel room. Everyone was making parties in his honor. Then we celebrated Senya's birthday in «Odessa» restaurant. It was a splendid party with many guests.

His youngest son Grisha was still married to Rita whom he divorced later. Senya visited them less frequently than others, because they had to work and sitting alone in the house was too boring.

He received many gifts and money donations and happily returned home. He only regretted that he had not brought his wife Fira. Back then it was still hard to get an exit visa even for one family member. In a while that changed, and entire families started coming to visit us. Other changes were negative: Moscow, as well as other cities of the USSR was engulfed by horrible anti-Semitic wave. Even pogroms seemed possible. At that point parents of Vlada's husband Petia emigrated to Israel. They begged Petia and Vlada to join them – and Fira said that she had to follow her daughter, wherever she goes. Senya was more interested in going to America where the majority of the Bekker family was living. He asked his sons to send him an invitation – but they did not do that. Therefore, Israel was the only choice left.

Approximately in the same period their son Grisha who had not seen his mother for 14 years visited them in Moscow. He spent about two months at his parents' house on their full provision and service. He arrived with a small backpack and without money – or maybe he had some, but did not want to exchange it. His parents asked Grisha to send in papers for them, and he promised that he will. Later he said that he had sent their papers to Washington DC, and that they had probably been lost. Whatever is true – is true.

Thus, they had nothing left but make plans for Israel. In the meantime, Vlada's son Misha finished specialized medical courses. He wanted to be a medical doctor. Jews were not accepted to medical schools, however. Also, he had reached army service age and was about to receive conscription notice. So, all talks about both Israel and America ceased.

Vlada managed to send him off to Israel alone, to the care of

Petia's parents. He is a good boy. He went to *ulpan* to study Hebrew. Now, if I am not mistaken he is already a student of medical school.

Vlada, Petia and their daughter Innochka along with Senya and Fira continued their preparations for departure. Finally, in late December of 1991 they left for Israel. Senya was already 85. Changing one's lifestyle at this age is difficult. Many relatives of ours were helping them out with money, but their situation still was – and continues to be difficult.

Grisha from California gave them very significant financial help. Also they were getting money from Zhenia Golubovskaia, Fira's relative; from Olia, from us, from Inna and from their son Marik.

They have big problems with the language: Hebrew is hard to learn.

Living arrangements are also far from ideal. In Moscow Fira and Senya lived in a separate two-room apartment, though it was on the fourth floor and there was no elevator in the building. In Israel apartments are very expensive, and three families have to share a three-room apartment. Senya and Fira live in one room, Vlada and her family – in the other, and a strange family of three persons occupies the third room. This arrangement is not very different from a communal apartment in the Soviet Union, and, of course, it depresses and irritates them. Besides, winters in Israel are cold, though snow is a rarity, and there is no heating in the houses. In their first winter there our relatives had nothing warm to wear or cover themselves, because their luggage had been accidentally shipped off to Belgium and it took almost half a year to get it back. When it finally arrived they saw that one side wall of a container had been taken out and the best and most expensive items had been stolen. Still, they got warmer clothes to change into, as well as blankets, pillows and the like.

In her letter to us Fira writes that Senya does not feel well, that he is very depressed, lost weight and it looks like he is «melting» right before her eyes. We feel very sorry for him. We hope that eventually it will work out for them.

Now Vlada and her husband have to find jobs and start living separately. So far communal existence has not done good to their relationships.

Notoriously, for certain families emigration proves too much of a challenge. It affects not only lifestyle, but also personalities, as well as interpersonal relationships. As the result, many families fall apart.

OUR GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On the 3rd of May, 1987, we celebrated our golden anniversary: 50 years of life together. Because of our children's marital problems, we were not in the best of moods at the time. Still we decided to celebrate this wonderful occasion. Not a year in our lives passed without the most solemn celebration of our wedding anniversary. Even during the war, when Mark was in the army and we lived in Raievka, Mama would bring honey from the market, make pancakes, make tea, put Mark's photo on the table – and we'd celebrate our special date.

Thus, we could not miss our 50th anniversary.

We rented a dining-hall in Midway hotel and invited all our relatives and friends: the total of 65 persons. This place was located in Queens, and our guests came from Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. We provided transportation to those without cars.

Inna gave us a videotape of this event and an album of photographs as a gift. And Jos presented us with a VSR to view the tapes.

I baked a real Jewish strudel and made a walnut tart. We hired a good band and everyone was dancing and having fun. We were happy to have lived to this wonderful date.

Friends and relatives sent us greetings from different cities and countries. We also received greetings from President Reagan and the First Lady, and from Mayor Koch. Many greetings – both in prose and in verse – were recited from the stage into the mike. Our children presented us with a wonderful basket of 50 carnations – and we kept it in our apartment for a long time.

I made myself a gown of golden fabric for the occasion. For Mark we bought a new white suit, and I used fabric from my dress to make him a golden bow-tie. Everything was very beautiful and solemn. I was so nervous that my hands were shaking when I took the mike to deliver my speech. I rehearsed it through the previous night – and could not sleep. Until the last moment I could not believe that we'd live to this occasion. For in old age anything may happen to us every moment.

Mark was so nervous that he could not speak. He said how happy he was to finally be in America, that the dream of his life had been fulfilled – and tears ran down his cheeks. For him tears are a very rare occasion. I remember him crying only two or three times in all our years together.

All in all, it was a wonderful celebration and we were very glad and happy.



*The White House
Washington*

We are delighted to congratulate you on your anniversary. As you celebrate the memories of your wedding day and your life together, we know how you cherish the love that has united you through the years. At this special time we wish you every happiness and send our best wishes. May God bless you always.

Nancy Reagan

Ronald Reagan



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

We are pleased to extend to both of you our warmest congratulations on your wedding anniversary.

As you mark this milestone in your marriage, you have our best wishes for a joyous celebration. May your love for each other continue to grow in the years ahead.

Bill Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton

OUR 55TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Five years passed – and it was time to celebrate our 55th anniversary. It's a great blessing that we'd survived up to that date also. Once again the happy occasion charged us with energy and joy – and thus, with life force. Inna suggested making arrangements for our «wedding reconfirmation» – a popular custom nowadays.

We already had one *chupa* in 1937 – but we agreed. She hired the cantor who had also conducted hers and Ely's *chupa*.

On a set date and at a set time (at 1 p.m.) all guests assembled in the restaurant where our gold anniversary had been celebrated. Over 70 persons of three generations attended. We asked all our relatives to bring their kids. It was nice to see everyone: we do not come to see them very often.

The Chupa itself was decorated with beautiful roses. Two baskets with 55 roses in each stood on its sides. These were gifts from our children and grandchildren.

Cantor told an edifying story of our first *chupa*, conducted at the time when religious rituals were forbidden. Then three witnesses were invited – those who also witnessed our first *chupa* in 1937. These were Mark's brothers Leva and Aaron and his sister Olga. In 1937 they were still young and unmarried. Our three adult grandsons took us under The Chupa. Our children walked by our side. It was all very sweet and touching.

Our friend Irina Melamed liked the ceremony enormously, and later told everyone that it had been «the wedding of the century».

After the ceremony we proceeded into a dining-hall where the feast was waiting for us. There were many toasts, a lot of dancing and fun. Ely and his son-in-law were videotaping everything and taking pictures. The next day we got videotapes and photographs – a wonderful gift, our kids and grandkids' heritage.

We received many wonderful greetings and gifts. And, of course, we were very happy. Inna's tender address to us touched everyone's hearts. She invested a lot of her time, imagination and love into this event. Her husband Ely also took active part in this celebration and was loving and generous to us. Apart from everything else, he made *Ketubah* – a marriage contract – on a large sheet of paper. It was decorated with our photographs. All guests signed there as witnesses of this happy occasion.



55th wedding anniversary. Sofa and Mark with daughter Inna, and son Jos. New York, 1992.



Our second chupah.



Daughter Inna presents new ketuba, written by Sofa and Mark.



**Three witnesses which were present at our wedding in 1937
in Leningard: Mark's sister Olga and brothers Lev and Aron.**

OUR GRANDCHILDREN FINISH THEIR EDUCATION

Yesterday it was 52 years since the start of the Great Patriotic War in Russia. More than half a century later, I still vividly recall all we had to endure. Sometimes I do not understand how I managed to survive that. My youth, good health and strength helped, of course. It was not until fairly advanced years that I understood that I do have strong will. This realization came as I recalled all the predicaments of the past and how I never lost my common sense. Now my life is coming to its end, and I should be grateful for every single day.

Thus, we try to find significant and happy aspects in every passing event.

This year our most significant source of happiness was our grandsons' graduation from their colleges. Our older grandson Pavel graduated from Rutgers Law School, and our second grandson Ilusha, Innochka's son, graduated from university. Both events happened in the duration of one week.

First our daughter took us to Washington DC, to The University of Maryland, where 3000 students were preparing for the graduation ceremony. We traveled there and back by air. We flew in a day before the ceremony in order to see the new Holocaust Memorial. Debilitating illness of legs and lower back prevents me from walking, and Ilusha spent three hours taking me around the museum in a wheelchair. Thanks God, wheelchairs are readily available everywhere in this blessed country!

We spent the night in a hotel and the next morning went for the ceremony to the university.

We were happy no end, for higher education is a foremost value in our family, my mother's most cherished precept, and our grandsons upheld this family tradition. In my greeting card I expressed my hope that Ilusha will pass this strife for knowledge to his own children.

Ely and Innochka put together a wonderful photo album and videotaped Ilusha's graduation. This film will pass to the next generations of our siblings.

Ilusha decided to serve in the Israeli army for a year before looking for a job. Graduate of a Jewish school, he is a great Israeli patriot, and he was firm in his decision. We did not even try arguing against it. We know that Israeli patriotism is a noble feeling, and deep in our souls we are all proud of him. Naturally, we worry about him and pray to God for his timely and safe return.

I blessed him when we parted and every time I light candles I

pray for him. Let us rely on God's grace.

On May the 29th Jos took us to Pavel's graduation ceremony. There were 250 graduates there. The ceremony took place in a beautiful garden, and everything was very nice and solemn.

We took but a few photos, and could not even get Pavel in his gown, for straight from stage they marched to the office where they had to dispense with the gowns and received diplomas. Pavlik came back to us with his diploma, I held it up, facing the camera, and they took our picture.

Pavlik said: «Well, Grandma, now we have three doctors in the family». Our daughter is a dentist, our son is Doctor of Chemistry, and Pavlik is Doctor of Laws.

Now he is preparing for his Bar Exam which is a very difficult examination – and then we'll have to pray for a good job for him. We are happy that our second grandson Ilya also found the right path.

As for our youngest grandson Dan, he says that in 2 years he'll finish school, get into college, and then – 4 more years and we'll be able to attend his graduation ceremony.

Thus, our efforts bear fruit in our grandchildren.

At this point I'd like to finish my memoirs. Now I will re-read everything from the beginning and make additions if necessary.

* * *

**MY MOTHER'S LIFE AFTER FINISHING THE BOOK
1993 – 1998**

Written by daughter Inna Bakker

My mother finished writing the memoirs in the summer of 1993. Here are some of the wonderful, as well as sad events in the life of our big family:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| May 1995 | Bat Mitzvah of Hannah, daughter of Don and Sharron Baker in California. I took my father and my mother with her motorized wheelchair there for the celebration. We visited San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and Las Vegas. |
| June 8, 1995 | Death of George Baker at age 90 – brother #2. We visited him a few days before his death. He recognized us and said in Russian: «I am glad to see you.» He had strong bonds and great devotion to his brothers and sisters throughout his life. |
| June 25, 1995 | Middle grandson Ilya Grozovsky married Stephanie Levy in a beautiful wedding ceremony that all enjoyed. Joyce and Gary Rifkind, Don, Sharron, Hannah and Josh Baker came from California. |
| November 6, 1995 | Tragic death of Don Baker at age 50 in California. My mother and father spent time with him that summer in his home and in New York. |
| May 1997 | A big celebration of my parents' 60 th Wedding Anniversary, attended by relatives from Russia, Israel and California. |
| January 1998 | Mama had a very difficult surgery; almost died but she pulled through to enjoy another six months of a joyful life. |
| May 1998 | 61st Wedding Anniversary. |
| May 9, 1998 | First great grandson born – Max Grozovsky. Such «Naches»! The last photo of my mother one week before she passed away was of her holding Max. |
| June 8, 1998 | Lunch with all the brothers and sisters and their spouses in Brooklyn. Visit of brother Senya with wife Fira from Israel, having honored Joyce and Gary Rifkind by planting trees in Israel. |
| June 28, 1998 | Instant death while swimming in lake. Her beloved husband Mark was next to her.
What a loss for us and for all who knew her. |

Summer 1996

Once in a great while, one experiences a divine inspiration in the lives of two people. Three years ago, during my first visit to Camp Block, I noticed a smiling pleasant-looking gentleman maneuvering a wheelchair occupied by an equally pleasant-looking woman. My immediate impression was the oneness that emanated from the pair, the concerned caring man and the perceptive, determined-looking woman. Last year, observing their presence, I continued to admire his tender care.

This year, on July 7, I noticed a lovely bouquet of roses. I went over to congratulate them and was warmed by their candor. I learned much to my pleasing that they have already celebrated 59 years of marriage after a two-month courtship in the former Soviet Union. For 16 years they have been guests at Camp Block, and for 16 years on her birthday, July 7th, she has received roses from her husband. But accompanying the roses are declarations of love, affection, caring and devotion, one for the other.

In our present era of marriage and disillusionment, try to meet Sofia and Mark Bekker, proud parents of two professional children and three grandchildren.

59 years together prove the divine human experience.

*Health Under Fire
By Sylvia Seedman*

She slowly steers her mechanical wheelchair to the lake-front, disrobes, hobbles to the edges, painfully descends the steps and into the water. She swims quickly like a fish.

Accolades to the swimmer.



Please attend a celebration
in honor of
Sofia and Mark BECKER
Date May 4th 1997
Time 4 P.M.
Place "COLONIAL MANSION"
1925 Bath Ave. Brooklyn, N.Y.
Hosted by Igor and Jolene
R.S.V.P. 4212-787-6425, by 4.15,
Black tie.

1937



60
лет
любви

1997



Софа и Марк Беккер

Сердечно поздравляем наших чудесных родителей,
бабушку и дедушку с прекрасным юбилеем -
Бриллиантовой Свадьбой!
Мы благодарим вас за вашу преданную любовь, мудрость,
помощь, веру и теплоту.
Желаем вам долгих счастливых лет жизни.
Вы нам очень нужны всегда. Любящие дети, внуки и их семьи.



**60 wedding anniversary.
Sofa and Mark with children and grandchildren.
May 1997, New York.**

INNA BAKKER, D.D.S.

98 Havilands Lane
White Plains, New York 10605

Telephone: (914) 948-0074

Fax: (914) 946-7205

April 4, 1997

Mayor and Mrs. Rudolph Giuliani
Grace Mansion
New York, NY 10028

Dear Ms. Hanover and Mayor Giuliani,

I am writing to you on behalf of my parents Sofia and Mark Bekker, who are inviting you to their 60th wedding anniversary celebration. A personal invitation is enclosed.

Our family came to the United States of America approximately 20 years ago. We are part of the large Russian Jewish community in New York. We are doing well and contributing to the American society. Most of us are Republicans and we voted for you with great pleasure.

My mother is 83 years old and my father is 88 years old. They learned to speak English since they came and continue to improve their skills in writing and speaking English. Both are professionals and very well educated. They are veterans of World War II. They have had a very special loving marriage for 60 years and have always been in the center of family, friends and community.

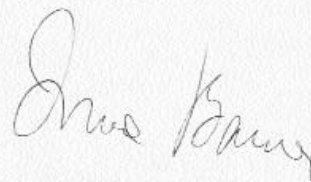
On May 4, 1997, during the anniversary celebration, we will have four witnesses who were at their wedding 60 years ago in 1937 in Leningrad, Russia. They are my father's brothers and sisters who now live in New York.

It would be a great honor for my parents to have an American civil marriage ceremony and certificate, since they love, bless and thank America every day. The whole family would be privileged to have you share with us in this very special and rare celebration.

Incidentally, Ms. Hanover, I met and spoke with you briefly about the Russian community at the Real Estate Board of New York conference on February 7, 1997 at the Hilton Hotel.

We hope that you both will be able to accept our invitation to my parents's 60th wedding anniversary celebration on May 4, 1997.

Respectfully,





THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

May 4, 1997

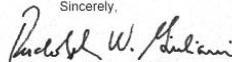
Dear Mr. & Mrs. Bekker:

I write to wish you a happy wedding anniversary.

This is a time for the two of you to celebrate the joys and blessings of your life together over the last 60 years.

Congratulations and best wishes for a joyous celebration.

Sincerely,


Rudolph W. Giuliani
Mayor

May 1, 1997

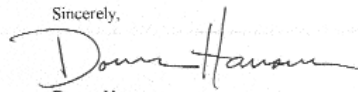
Inna Bakker, DDS
98 Havilands Lane
White Plains, New York 10608

Dear Dr. Bakker:

Thank you for inviting me to your parent's 60th wedding anniversary. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments that cannot be changed, I will not be able to attend.

Mr. and Mrs. Mark Bekker have achieved what is not easy for many. They came to a new country and made a new life for themselves, and their family. I hope the strength that helped them persevere through these changes, keeps them going strong for many years to come. Please convey my heartfelt best wishes to your parents. May they celebrate many more wedding anniversaries!

Sincerely,



Donna Hanover
First Lady, City of New York

DH:cj

Дорогие мои юбиляры!

Под звон Кремлевских курантов примите самые искренние поздравления из далекой Москвы!

У нас сейчас глубокая ночь, но я мысленно праздную вместе с Вами! Ваш юбилей чудо! Ваша семья - живая легенда "Саги о Беккерах". Ваша любовь, отношения друг к другу, к детям, родным и близким - пример, достойный подражания!

Пусть продлится еще очень очень долго Ваша совместная жизнь. Хотя ваш долгий семейный путь не был усыпан только розами, Вы сумели поймать жар-птицу под названием "счастье". Я желаю Вам бесконечного счастья, огромного здоровья, благополучия, жизнерадостности, всего самого доброго!

*Ирочка
Москва, 1997*

** * **

My dear heroes of the day!

To the sound of Kremlin chimes, I am sending you my most sincere greetings from the distant Moscow!

It is middle of the night here, but my thoughts are with you. Your anniversary is a miracle. Your family is a live legend - The Bekker Saga! Your love for each other, for your children, for all your relatives and friends is an example worth following!

May you live long and long together! You did not walk your path on roses, but you managed to capture the Fire-bird called Happiness. I wish you endless happiness, great health, well-being, joy, and everything good!

*Irochka
Moscow, 1997
(Betty's daughter)*

May 2nd, 1997.

Our dear guests, dear relatives and friends!

Most of you have attended our 45th, 50th and 55th anniversary receptions.

I and my dear beloved husband have always cherished our wedding anniversaries as our biggest family holidays. Today we honor 60 years of our great love for each other, devotion and happiness.

I am grateful to my husband for our life together; for his tenderness and warmth that I've felt every day of our married life and continue to feel now, in spite of the fact that we've grown «slightly» older and look 'slightly' worn. Mark always tells me that in his eyes I look just as I looked in the first days of our marriage.

I want to thank the entire Bekker family for our good and friendly relationships. My good feelings for every person out of more than a hundred of you have never ceased.

We want to thank our children and grandchildren for their love and attention. They tend to us very tenderly, especially now when we are old and frail.

We are happy to have our guests from Leningrad – such as Mark's youngest sister Raiechka who was 16 when Mark and I married.

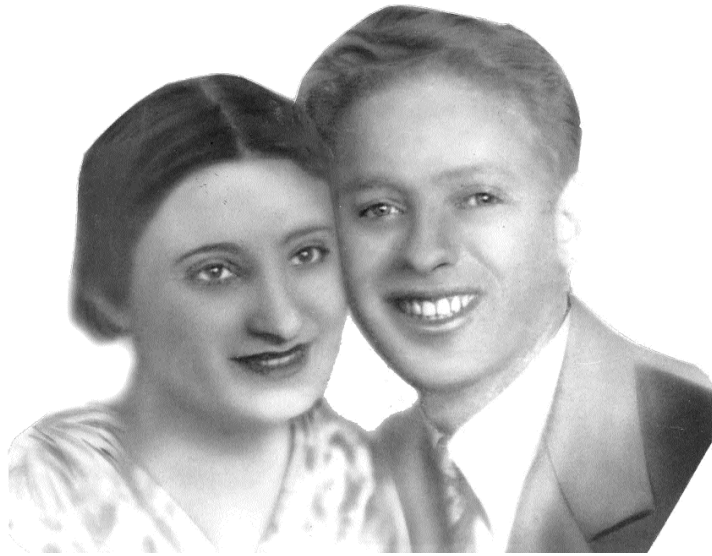
Our niece Bellochka also came from Leningrad, as well as our nephew Leva with his wife Allochka. Our niece Joyce and her husband Gary came from California. My cousin Beba came from Israel.

We are happy to see you all and we are happy to have this occasion celebrated here, in America, in this wonderful country that undoubtedly helped to prolong our lives.

We wish you all, especially younger people, to live as long as we have lived and to carry your love and respect for each other into your Diamond anniversary.

Sofia Bekker

Sofa and Mark. Love affair for 61 years 1937 – 1998



Sofa's younger sister Valia next door. 1940.



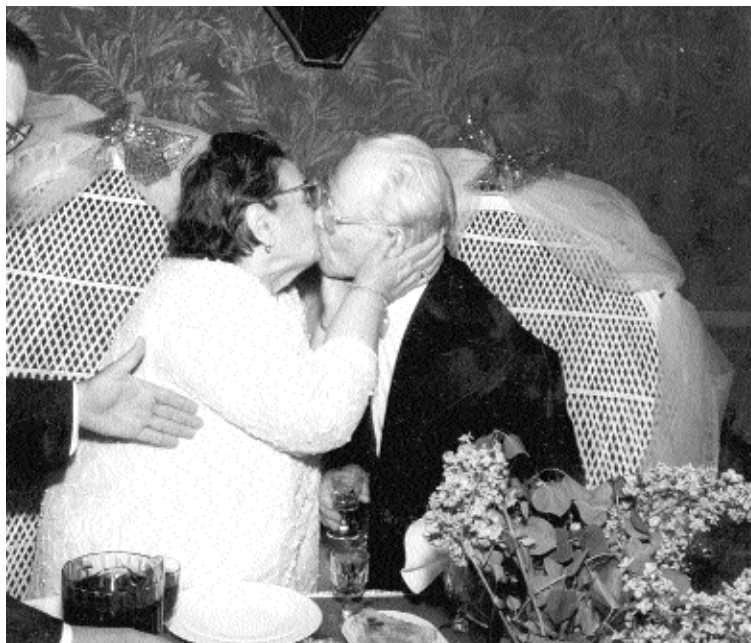
1948



1958



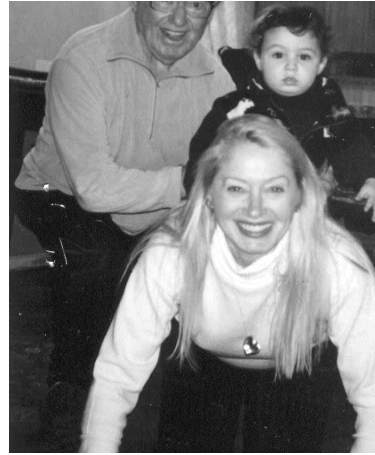
1990



1997



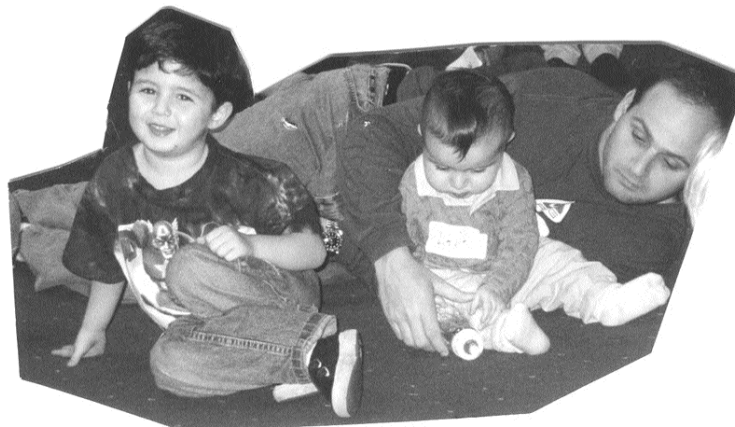
**Ilya's marriage to
Stephanie. June 25, 1995.**



**Mark with
great grandson
Max.
May 1997.**



**Inna with grandsons Max
and Levitt. 2002.**



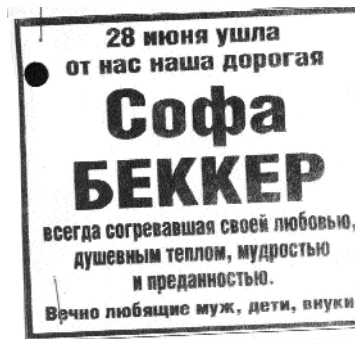
Ilya with his sons Max and Levitt.



**Lunch with Joyce, Gar, and family – 3 weeks before Sofa's death.
June 1998.**



**Last photo of Sofa – 3 days before death.
Mark, great granddaughter-in-law Stephanie and first great grandson
Max. June 24, 1998.**



He
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Be
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He
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BECKER—Sofia. Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, and its Sisterhood mourn the passing of the beloved mother of their devoted member, Dr. Inna Bakker, and extend heartfelt condolences to all the members of the bereaved family.
Rabbi Haskel Lookstein
Fred Distenfeld, President

Памяти сестры Софы Беккер

Потеря ножом полоснула,
Тревога заснуть не даёт,
Вновь горечь утраты проснулась
И чувство сиротства растёт.

Нет, днями та боль не стихает,
Чем дальше, тем память острей.
Одну за другой раскрывает
Картины свидания с ней.

Нас очень немного осталось
От дружной огромной семьи.
Давно ли она разrostалась,
Что всех сосчитать не могли!

И вот уже горстка осталась,
И те разбрелись кто куда.
Так «Родина-мать» разбросалась
Своими детьми навсегда.

И тихо идя по дороге
По кладбищу в дальнем краю,
Одна от родного порога,
Родная, я рядом стою.

Никто мою боль не утешит,
Никто моих слёз не утрёт,
Лишь муж её старый, безгрешный,
Ту боль мою, верно, поймет.

*Женя Гутман,
двоюродная сестра
Нью-Йорк, 1998.*



Sofa's cousin Zhenia Gutman —
author of poem — with her
husband Lev Molot. New York.

MY FATHER'S LIFE AFTER MY MOTHER PASSED AWAY
1998 – 2002

Written by daughter Inna Bakker

My father became a widower at the age of 90, after 61 years of a very happy marriage. He was heart-broken but his spirit was strong.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| November 1998 | Wedding of Jennie and Michael in Maui, Hawaii (daughter of Ed and Snookie Baker). I took my father to Maui for the celebration. We toured the island as well as Los Angeles on the way back. |
| 1998 – 2001 | Struggle with loneliness. He started to learn computers at 90 with his young friend Jeff from the Jewish Organization Dorot and started to type my mother's memoirs. |
| February 13, 2000 | Death of Lev Grozovsky. |
| August 25, 2000 | Big celebration of his 92 nd birthday and the 29 th birthday of his grandson Ilya Grozovsky. |
| March 2001 | Bat Mitzvah of Lauren – daughter of Beverly and Ken Victor in San Diego. I took my father to San Diego for the celebration and the gathering of the family. |
| April 19, 2001 | Second great-grandson born – Levitt Grozovsky – named in memory of his grandfather Lev. |
| August 25, 2001 | Celebration of father's 93 rd birthday. |
| September 11, 2001 | The attack and destruction of the World Trade Center by Arab terrorists. My father watched the horror and devastation on TV. He became sick the next day. |
| October 1, 2001 | Marriage to a very nice woman Berta Teplitsky. He was 93, the oldest man in City Hall to register for marriage. |
| January 28, 2002 | Death of Mark Bekker. My father loved life very much and always said to everybody «Enjoy Life»

What a loss for us and for everyone who knew him.
Jos and I are orphans. |

Тост Софы в честь Марка

25 августа 1983.

Дорогие родные и друзья!

Сегодня мы празднуем большой юбилей – 75-летие со дня рождения моего дорогого Марка.

Говорить о Марке можно и нужно – много хорошего. Но чтобы не задерживать надолго ваше внимание и не заговорить вас с начала нашего торжества, я пока скажу коротко.

Я прошу всех наших гостей выпить за здоровье и долголетие Марка – этого совершенно уникального человека: доброго, мягкого, внимательного и терпеливого к людям и, в то же время, человека с огромной силой воли. Я же лично благодарна Богу и судьбе, пославшей мне в лице Марка такого мужа и друга. Спасибо тебе, мой дорогой и любимый, за твою безграничную любовь и ласку, внимание и заботу, за твой огромный оптимизм, который, кстати, я переняла от тебя за долгие годы нашей совместной жизни. Спасибо за наших детей и внуков и за все хорошее, что было, есть и, надеюсь, будет у нас до конца нашей жизни. Спасибо, что ты есть на свете.

За тебя, дорогой, я поднимаю этот бокал !

* * *

Sofa's toast to honor Mark

August 25, 1983

Dear relatives and friends!

Today we are celebrating a great occasion – my dear Mark's 75th birthday!

We all know Mark as a great person. I'll say a few words to give our celebration a start.

I am asking all of you to raise your glasses and drink to Mark's health. He is a unique person, kind, gentle, caring and patient; at the same time, he is a man of iron will.

I'd like to thank God and my destiny for having Mark as a husband and a friend. Thank you, my treasured and beloved, for your endless love, care and attention. For your boundless optimism. In our many years together I learned to view life as happily as you do. Thank you for our children and grandchildren, for all goodness that we had and that is still ahead of us, I hope.

Thank you for being you. Cheers Mark!



**Mark is a veteran of the Second World War,
1939 – 1945**

**Mark is 92 year old – the eldest of the Bekker family.
August 25, 2000.**



Дорогой Марк, мой брат!

Этот адрес посвящается самому уважаемому из всех уважаемых граждан России и Америки. Самому достойному из достойнейших семьи Беккер, любимому брату и дяде – Марку Иосифовичу Беккер в день его рождения.

Из далёкого Санкт-Петербурга мы, твои родные, поздравляем тебя с днём рождения.

Ты родился в большой, прекрасной семье, где нас детей было 10 человек, а ты был четвертый.

Но, надо отдать тебе должное, во многом ты стал первым.

– Первое место ты занял как лучший муж, прекрасный отец и добрый дедушка.

– Первое место ты занял за создание образцово-показательной семьи.

– Первое место ты занял за оптимизм, любовь к жизни и неугасающую энергию.

– Первое место ты занял за ум, красоту, доброту и любовь.

Так держать до 120 в окружении любящих детей, внуков и правнуков!

Здоровья, хорошего, веселого праздника!

Обнимаем, целуем

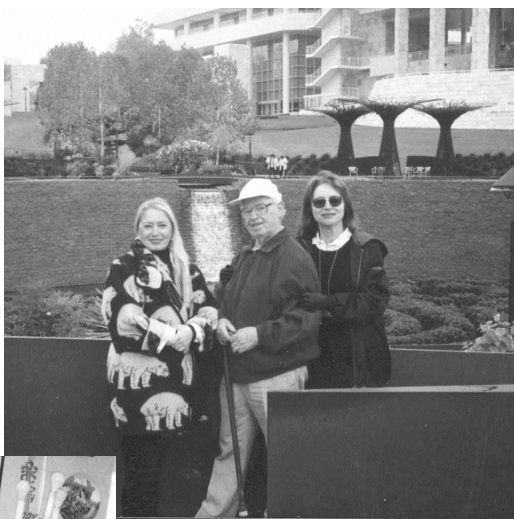
Рая, дети.

**Text of the birthday card
sent to Mark by his sister Raia for his 92-nd anniversary.**



Mark playing with oldest great grandson Max.

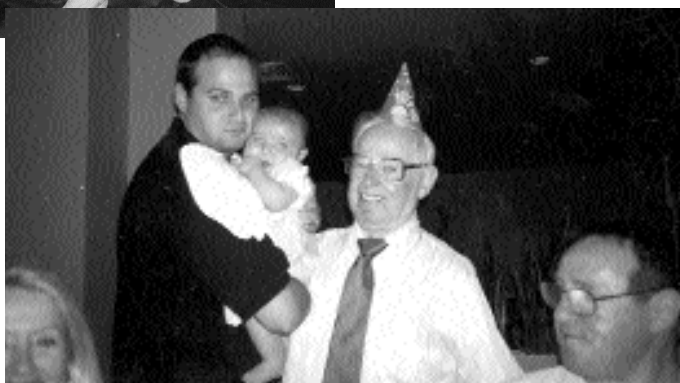




**Mark with Inna and life long
friend Raia Treyzon.
Los Angeles, November 1995.**



**Mark with Tanya Amelina,
Inna's life long friend.
November 2001, New York.**



**At Mark's 93rd birthday with second great grandson Levitt, grandson
Ilya, daughter Inna and son Joseph. August 25, 2001, New York.**



**Mark is playing chess with his young friend Jeff.
Photo is on the cover of the Newsletter from Dorot – jewish organisation for aged. 2002, New York.**



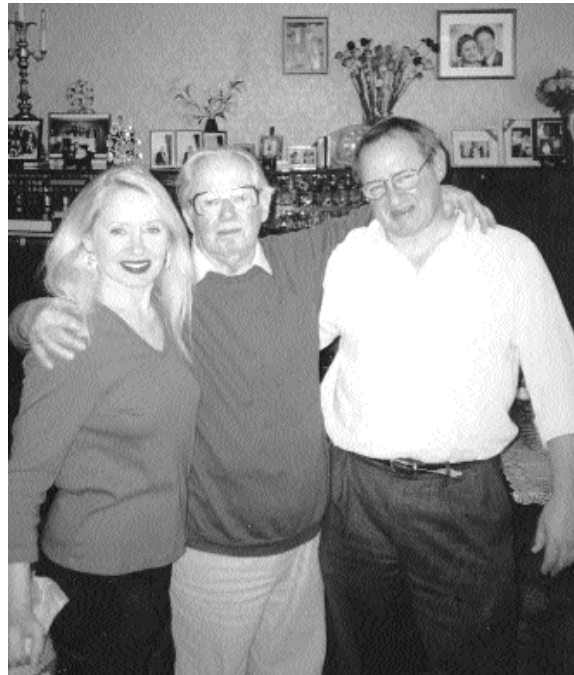
Mark started to learn computer at 90 years old.



Mark loved to go to Rabbi S.Orenstein's synagogue.



**Men of the family:
Mark, son Joseph, grandsons Paul, Ilya, Dan and great grandson Max.**



**Last photo of Mark
with daughter Inna and son Joseph – one month before his death on
January 28, 2002.**

Our father Mark Bekker

8.25.1908 – 1.28.2002

He was a very loving, energetic, happy, sharp 93 years young, healthy man on September 10, 2001.

He came from wonderful Russian Jewish parents who had 10 children – 7 boys and 3 girls. The family was poor financially but rich emotionally and spiritually. He was an eternal student of life, always learning, reading, thinking and helping others every moment. Our father had the most happy and devoted marriage with our mother for 61 years.

He was an officer in the Soviet Army, fought in 2 wars: in 1939 with Finland and 1941 – 1945 with Nazi Germany, had many medals and awards for outstanding bravery.

Our father was a professional who was broadly educated, full of love for people, family, friends and the world. Our parents emigrated to America in 1978, they loved this blessed country and said that America prolonged their life by another 20 years. He learned English, studied Judaism and attended synagogue regularly.

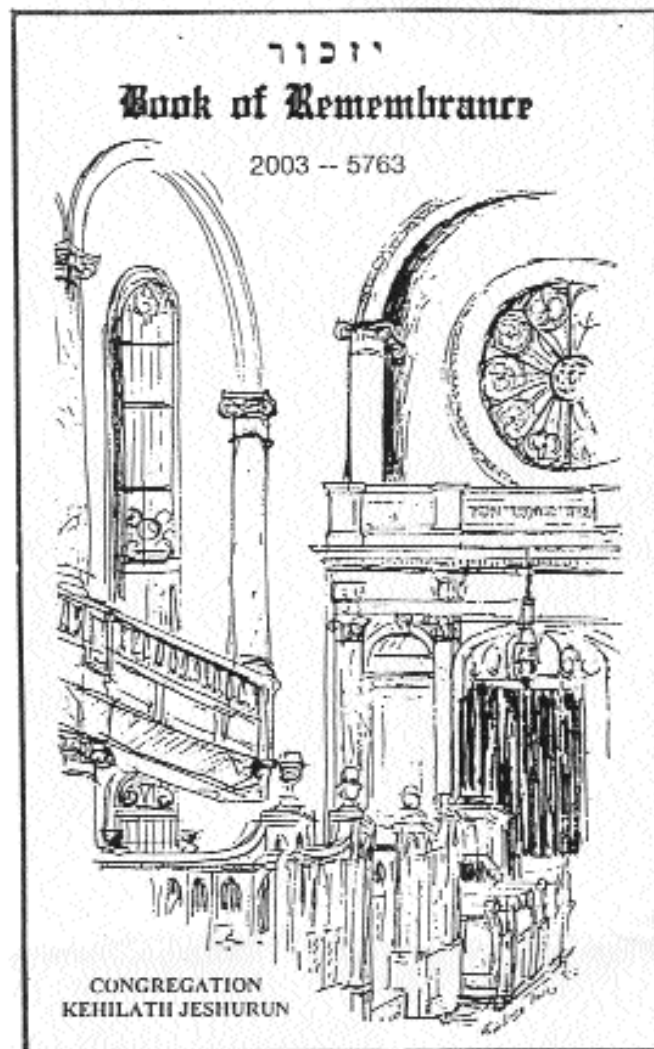
On Sept 11, 2001 he watched on TV the destruction and horror with pain, disbelief and anger: «how can they do this to us?» It brought back the memories of the devastation of WWII. The following day he got very sick and was diagnosed with brain cancer.

Probably, it took this enormous emotional shock to cause the collapse of his immune system and to bring out his dormant cancer.

We lost our father 4 1/2 months later on January 28, 2002.

May his memory be blessed.

Daughter Inna and son Joseph



Dr. Inna Bakker and Family	Sofia Bekker Mark Bekker
Mr. and Mrs. Liya Grozovsky	Lev Grozovsky Miriam Amram Sophia Bekker Mark Bekker Sara levy



Opening of the monument to Mark Bekker – one year after his death.
January 28, 2003.



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Inna Bakker

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