

Tamara Koblik With Student Of The Kishinev Medical College.



This is me (2nd on the left in the 2nd row) with student of the Kishinev Medical College. This photo was taken in Kharkov in 1956. We are on our way back from the virgin land. Our train stopped at the freight station. It was a longer stop and we took to get photographed. On my left is Lida Glukhovskaya, I don't know where she is now, on my right is Grisha Zhytnik, he has passed away. Lusia Derkach is among other girls at the bottom. The others are from a different Faculty and I

don't remember their names.

In 1954 I submitted my documents and were admitted to the Pediatric Faculty of Medical College in Kishinev. All I had to make my living was my stipend. Occasionally mama sent me jam that was actually my basic food. One of my senior co-students used to say: 'Tamara, you won't last long on jam'. I had to spend many hours studying in college. It was easier a little with special subjects that I studied at the school, like anatomy, but I had to spend more time studying general subjects, like physics and chemistry. Anyway, this was wonderful time and I enjoyed studying in my college. I lived in the hostel and was an active Komsomol member.

During the period of the 'doctors' plot' I was just a girl and didn't understand much, but when it came to the 20th Congress in 1956, and they published Khrushchev's speech denouncing all Stalin's deeds, I was shocked. However, I was still actively involved in the Komsomol activities. I went to work at the virgin lands twice: in 1955, after my second year in college, and in 1956 - after the third year. [In 1954-1960 Khrushchev's Virgin Lands program began - the intensive irrigation of the Kazakh steppe, Siberia, the Ural and the Volga region to develop agriculture. 41.8 million hectares of land were newly ploughed. Komsomol members took an active part in this work.] When there was the popular in those times song 'Zdravstvuy zemlia tselinaya' [Hello Virgin Land] on radio - my mama used to cry, when she heard the words of this song, her heart was tearing apart. We went to the Pavlodar and Petropavlovsk regions in Kazakhstan. We worked hard there. We worked at the grain elevator constructing the grain dryer. I was a group supervisor in our crew.

In the evening we arranged dancing parties with local girls and boys. We particularly liked Sasha Dubrovskiy, a local boy. After finishing the 10th form he went to work at the truck shop. This shop sold soap, toothpaste, tinned food, stationary, envelopes, all kinds of small items. Sasha also brought us our mail from the post office. In the evening he came there with his friend, who played the accordion, and we danced. We occasionally received parcels with fruit from Moldavia. Sasha was born and grew up in Kazakhstan and had never tried pears. The girls decided: if one of us received pears, we would give them to Sasha. Somebody received two pears and we gave them to Sasha to try.

Once one of our girls felt severely ill, and I accompanied her to Pavlodar. I took her to her train and went to the market where they sold grapes - 25 rubles per kilo. I asked 200 grams, gave the vendor 5 rubles and she gave me 20 kopeck change. I wore a cotton wool jacket and tarpaulin boots like all virgin land workers. I took this bunch of grapes and threw away few rotten grapes. The vendor looked at me and said: 'Girl, where do you come from that you eat grapes like this?' I replied: 'Two weeks from now I will buy two kilos for 5 rubles, 2.40 rubles per kilo, and will get 20 kopeck change. - Ah, I see'. After my first time in the virgin lands I was awarded a badge, an official one, with a certificate and I have a medal for the second year - 'For opening up the virgin lands'. I bought a coat for the money I earned during the second trip there.