

Ronny Sheyn-Kuznetsova



That's me when I was in the second year of Tomsk Engineering and Construction Institute. I had my picture taken to send it to my mother, who was still in exile. The photo was taken in Tomsk in 1955.

In 1953 I entered the construction institute. I always tried to avoid social and Komsomol events at the institute. All of us students were forced to attend Soviet demonstrations. We tried to escape that as we were poorly dressed and it was cold. At times we could avoid them.

I was fond of parachuting in the institute. I jumped from a plane, not from a tower. It was interesting. The plane was small and open. There was a cockpit in the front and an open space for jumpers behind. The sky-divers had to get on a wing to make a jump. Parachute straps were fastened in the cockpit. My first jump was in winter time as I thought it would be better for my legs if I jumped on the snow bank. I was very light so I was dragged along. Some people caught and stopped me. I remember that after the jump I was given a meat patty.

Life was hard from a material standpoint. The scholarship was miserable. Mother couldn't assist, but Aunt Masha helped out a little bit. My roommates in the hostels were as indigent as I was. The room was made for four, but seven people lived in it. We did chores together.

I think our scholarship was 200 rubles, I don't remember exactly. Each of us gave 150 for common expenses, 50 was left for oneself. We bought potatoes, cabbage and such things for the collected money. Every day we bought canned meat and beans. Our daily lunch consisted of soup with canned meat and beans. The soup was for seven people. There was enough bread at that time.

For dessert we had tea with sugar, each of us got one teaspoon of sugar. Later my roommates got parcels with food. It was mostly pig fat. In the evening we fried potatoes in pig fat and had tea with

rusks, which were also sent to the girls.

Aunt Masha sent me 100 rubles every month. I spent them to buy paper for drawing, pencils and notebooks. Sometimes my stockings were spoiled and I had to buy new ones. There were other contingencies.

We did our homework at the table in turns. We had to put large sheets of paper and there was no space in the room even in the aisles between the beds. We got by somehow. We put some rods on the backs on the bed and a board on top of it and made the so-called table for drawing.

There was one lamp for all and we had to draw in poor light conditions. We became short-sighted because of that. Those who went to bed pulled the blanket over their heads, so that the light wouldn't disturb them. We slept until lunch as it seemed to us that it was still dark and the night was not over.