

# Elena Glaz

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*Elena Josefovna creates an impression of a self-confident person. Now she is alone, but has many friends.*

*At her home lives a dog, which alleviates her solitude.  
Elena Josefovna is occupied with housekeeping.*

*In the morning you can never catch her at home, as she is a very mobile person.*

*Her flat is very clean.*

*She is vividly interested in the life of the Jewish community.*

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- **My family background**

I, Elena Josefovna Glaz, was born in 1930 in Leningrad. I was the only child in the family. My paternal grandpa, Emmanuel Efimovich Glaz, was a winemaker. He produced wine, cognac, pure alcohol, and champagne. For his champagne he obtained a gold medal in Italy. He didn't have an estate of his own, but worked as a hired winemaker for German colonists in the village of Dyusseldorf.

It was thirty kilometers away from Gyandzha town [till 1804 and in 1918-1935 it was named Gyandzha, in 1804-1918 – Elizavetpol (when the northern part of Azerbaijan became a part of Russia), from 1935 it was Kirovobad, now (after formation of the CIS) - Gyandzha]; in Azerbaijan. He got there from Odessa, where he also was a winemaker.

In Dyusseldorf his family was renting a big house; they had a leasehold vineyard, a large farm: hens, geese, lambs. Grandpa's family was large. There were seven children in it: 3 boys and 4 girls. About 1931 my grandpa moved to his son - my father, - to Leningrad, and brought a lot of wine produced by him. The last bottle of his wine we had drunk in 1974, at my wedding.

Grandpa lived with us for two years, died at 62 and was buried in the Transfiguration cemetery (the Jewish one). I was 3 at that time. My daddy told me that grandpa loved me very much.

My paternal granny was a housewife. She was a semi-literate woman. It seems to me that her name was Elka. They said that after the revolution she and grandpa were going somewhere by



train, on the way granny fell ill with typhus, at one station she was taken off the train and died there.

There were, as I was told, seven kids. The eldest daughter Eva was married to a man, who for some time was a captain on ocean-going ships and then became a winemaker. He was the chief winemaker in Kishinev after the war and used grandpa's recipes, which had gotten into his hands in a way obscure for me.

The second daughter Ida lived her whole life in Gyandzha, worked in the post-office as a telegraphist. She had two sons. The name of the younger son was Rudolf, he was a trumpet player (I don't know where he performed), and the elder was called Boris. I heard Boris was a ruffian. I don't know whether Ida had a husband. Even Rudolf, when he visited me several times, never mentioned his father. Most likely, he deserted Ida and children.

The third daughter Adele got married being very young - at her 18 - and gave birth to a child and died in childbed. Her daughter, who was also named Adele in her honor, was given shelter by Roza, the younger daughter of granny and grandpa.

Roza had graduated from a high school and was a dentist in a governmental polyclinic in Tashkent. She died being over eighty years old. When she took this baby Adele, she was pregnant herself and soon gave birth to son Evgeny.

The eldest son Efim graduated with honours from the Polytechnical Institute in Rome. Then he lived in Baku and during his whole life worked as a mechanic in Baku oil fields. Efim fluently spoke, read and wrote in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani.

The youngest son Alexander in young age was fond of going to mountains with friends and grilling shashliks [sort of kebab; pieces of beef grilled at a skewer]. His friends were mostly Azerbaijanians. In Dyusseldorf there were a few Jews, but many Azerbaijanians and Germans, because there were a lot of German settlements in the Caucasus.

Alexander was a very good administrator. Before the war, during the war (in 1941-1945), and after the war he worked in some company as a supplier. His wife was called Roza, she was Jewish. They had two sons: Ljonya and Edik. After the war Alexander with his family lived in the town of Chernovtsy.

My father Josef was born in 1892 in Dyusseldorf. He finished a secondary school (common, not Jewish) and, odd as it was, sang in a choir of some Orthodox church. In Russia it was hard for a Jew and, what was more, from the Caucasian region, to enter an institute.

So after finishing of a secondary school father went away to Berlin and entered the Medical Institute there in 1911. As grandpa had a big family, which he could hardly support, my father had to pay both for his living and study. He worked as a bartender; in other words, sold beer in a bar. Unfortunately, father didn't succeed in completing his study in Germany.

In 1914, as everybody knows, World War I burst out and all Russian nationals were sent away from Germany. My father arrived in Kiev and entered the medical department of the Kiev State University. He graduated from it in 1917.

At that university he met my mum.

My maternal granny's name was Sofia Samuelovna Landa (nee: Kalihman). She was an uneducated woman, worked as a seamstress in her early years. Granny had two sisters: Ekaterina and Rebecca. Granny was almost twenty years older than her sisters. Most likely, her father lacked money to pay for her education.

When her sisters grew up a little he was rich enough to send the two of them to study. It is the reason why my granny, the only one of the three sisters, didn't get a higher education.

Unfortunately, I'm not aware of what Jewish traditions they followed and of things concerning their Jewish experiences. At the Soviet regime it wasn't customary to talk about such things, and I wasn't told a word about this.

Ekaterina was born in 1892. She had graduated from some institution of higher education [I don't know exactly, which one and when], became a lawyer, went to work to Leningrad. In Leningrad she was a member of the Leningrad Bar of Lawyers and dealt with criminal cases. She was single. She had a lot of gold things and money.

In November 1941, at the time of blockade, she was murdered by neighbours and they got hold of all her valuables. Rebecca was born in Odessa in 1893. She graduated from a medical institute, in youth worked in choleraic barracks. Then she became a specialist in virology and microbiology, and for many years was a senior scientist of the Institute of Vaccines and Serums in Moscow.

She invented a whole series of vaccines, that saved lives of a great number of people. Rebecca participated in creation of vaccines against spotted fever, typhoid; in the development of gramizidine, by means of which they cure gas-gangrene.

My maternal grandpa's name was Josef Landa. He was a steward in some landowner's estate. He and my granny lived in a village in the territory of Bessarabia [a region, which occupies a part of Moldavia and the southern part of Odessa region] Now it is called Pridnestrovie. Somewhere after 1905, after bourgeois-democratic revolution, peasants rebelled. They scorched the estate, but the landowner accused my grandpa of that. Grandpa couldn't stand all this disgrace and committed suicide.

He left a widow with four children, who didn't have any speciality or skills at all. All kids were very small. I suppose, the eldest son was 14 and my mum - 12. However surprising it was, all four children including my mum managed to obtain a higher education. In her old age granny lived at her eldest son Henrik's in Odessa. Granny died in the 1960s, at a very old age.

She was around 90 years old, but nobody knew her exact age as she kept it back. To what extent my grannies and grandpas were pious, what Jewish traditions they followed, I have no idea. Parents didn't tell me anything about that.

The eldest son, Henrik Landa, doctor of medical sciences, venerologist-dermatologist, lived in Odessa. His younger daughter died at the age of about twelve because of some disease. His son Garik during the war had graduated from the Military-Medical Academy in Samarkand City, then went to the front and perished. He was buried in the territory of Belorussia in a communal grave.

The youngest son Boris had graduated from a Pharmaceutical Institute, was a pharmacist and worked as a head pharmacist of a large pharmacy in Zhitomir. His daughter Nyura now lives in New York. The youngest daughter Zinaida was a highly educated librarian and managed one of the largest libraries in Donetsk. Her daughter Ira has graduated here, in Leningrad, from the Financial-Economic Institute and at present lives in Israel.

At the war time all my aunts and uncles, who lived in Ukraine (particularly in Zhitomir, Odessa), were in Siberia (in Leninsk Kuznetsky) at evacuation and so they didn't suffer from the Holocaust.

My mum was born in 1905 in a village in Bessarabia. She had finished a secondary school (common, not Jewish one) with honours and entered the medical department of the Kiev State University. As granny was left alone with four children, she was not able to help her daughter. Mum worked in a zemstvo [a local administration body in the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries], in what position - I don't know.

Mum became a first year student at the time when my father was a third-year student - of the same department, - and in 1917 they got married. At the beginning of 1918 my parents left for the Red Army. The father was already a doctor, and the mother had time to complete only three years and became a military medical attendant. During the whole Civil War my parents fought on the South Front.

In the south they served until 1922. In 1922 my father was transferred to serve in Leningrad. At that time many people left Leningrad as there was not enough food, and there were a lot of empty flats. No one wanted to buy them, because no one wanted to live in a poorly supplied, non-heated city. So flats were easy to get, and my parents were able to get a large flat cheaply. It was more than 200 sq. m. flat on Ryleeva Street (at the corner with Mayakovskaya Street) on the second floor, not far from the caserns, in which my father was serving.

My mum began to work in some organization, I don't know exactly where. At the same time she had finally completed the medical institute, obtained a doctor's diploma. Then for 13 years mum worked for free (simultaneously with her regular job, for which she was paid) only in order to obtain good knowledge in biochemistry.

In 1935 mum defended her Ph.D. thesis in biochemistry and became a candidate of medical science. She was one of the first candidates of medical science in the Soviet Union.

My dad served nearly until 1933 or 1934. Then he was demobilized; for a year and a half or for two years he worked in the "Red Vyborzhets" factory [in Leningrad] at a medical and sanitary unit; there he completed courses and became a gynecologist. His further life was connected with the Snegirova maternity hospital. He worked there as a surgeon and before the war was a deputy head doctor.

Legends were narrated about my father. He was a wonderful surgeon: healed patients in absolutely hopeless cases. He performed so difficult operations, as, for example, in the cases of cancerous diseases, and after these operations patients lived for many years. He took them out from the other world. Many women owed him their lives.

Besides, he was a wonderful accoucheur. He was very tall, 185 cm; he had large wide hands and with these hands he took out babies and they survived, were normal. There were no complications, which we can often see now.

- **During the war**

When the war burst out, the head doctor of the Snegirov maternity hospital left for evacuation in the very first days of the war, so father became the head doctor of this maternity hospital instead of her. Besides, he was mobilized to the Local Air-Raid Defence. There he served in a very high position: he was the chief of medsanservice [medical and sanitary service] of the Central city district. He was engaged in such a work, as, for example, rescuing the people who were stuck under the ruins of destroyed buildings after bombings.

Moreover, he himself took up the spade – he was an untiring person. When it was needed to take out corpses during starvation, he himself loaded them into a truck. When in spring it was needed to clear Leningrad of the mud, he took up crow-bar and worked on the street together with his colleagues, setting them an example; not being afraid to mar his hands (he was a surgeon, you know).

In Snegirov maternity hospital during the war he not only operated, not only cured patients, not only attended at the deliveries (and both women and babies survived, however odd it was, at that starvation period), but also repaired water-supply system and electric wiring. There were no men – they were at the front, and he took the place of all men, who previously maintained the maternity hospital. He worked as an electrician and as a metalworker as well, and as anyone who was needed.

All maternity hospital's staff had survived in general. The father also organized production of a fir tincture in his hospital, which allowed to avoid scurvy; though he himself did not succeeded to keeping off of it – all his teeth had fully come out. They cooked some nutrient mixtures. This way people survived.

In this hospital there were 200 additional beds for wounded women or those women, who fell sick as a result of overcooling. Father served these 200 patients, treated them, and these people pulled through and recovered. Besides, in all hospitals [in Leningrad] father operated on all women with cavity wounds, in other words, wounds in the abdominal cavity. In 1943 my father defended the Ph.D. thesis, became the candidate of medical science.

My father was more than once recommended for high governmental awards, in particular, for the Order of Lenin. But he finally received only the Medal for the Defence of Leningrad, the one that a lot of people had, too. It was happened so because, first, he was a Jew, and secondly he had a very independent character. As soon as the war ended, the former head doctor of the Snegirov maternity hospital came back and my father was immediately discharged and transferred to the position of Head of department to the hospital named after Kujbishev.

- **After the war**

After the war my father was very seriously ill. The exertion of blockade days, hard work and his former disease had adversely affected his health. After the war he had, most likely, up to dozen of microinfarcts, a serious insult, after which he, however odd it was, successfully operated for some time. But in 1953 he died. He was buried in the Transfiguration Cemetery, not far from the synagogue.

In 1935 mum defended her Ph.D. thesis and began to work in the Brain Institute (now it is the Physiology Institute) as a scientist. There they were engaged in biochemical investigations, carried out experiments on animals, mostly on rabbits, and thus they worked till the beginning of the war. By that time mother had completed her thesis for a Doctor's degree, but she didn't have enough time not only to defend it, but even to submit it. The war burst out, and at the wartime all these documents disappeared.

Mum went with me to the evacuation. During the war we lived in Tashkent [capital of Uzbekistan]. There mum started working at a military hospital right away. She was the head of the clinical laboratory and ran the ward with those with cerebral wounds (probably because previously she worked in the Brain Institute).

In October 1943 father sent us an invitation and we started for Leningrad. Without an invitation they wouldn't let you in Leningrad, especially because the blockade wasn't called off at that time, it was October. The trip took us a very long time, because it was very difficult to obtain tickets. We arrived on January 30, 1944, in 3 days after breaking the blockade.

Mum got a job in a very high position of a senior scientist at the Medical Science Academy. They set great goals before her, but she worked there not for long – until 1949.

In 1949 they launched the so-called “Campaign against cosmopolitans”, in other words, a state anti-Semitism. Mum was discharged. She wasn't hired for any job, though she was a prominent researcher. In these two years, when she didn't work, mum wrote a large quantity of very interesting biochemical research works. Then she got a job of a laboratory technician in the First Medical Institute, in the department of biochemistry. Having been a laboratory technician and getting only 400 roubles, mum had trained several candidates of science.

In 1957 my mum fell ill. She had a very serious insult and after two years' illness she died. My mother was awarded with a great many awards, very few people in the war were honoured in the same way. She had two medals: for the Victory over Germany and for the Valorous Work in the Great Patriotic War. Such a combination was very rare.

### • Growing up and recent years

Now I want speak about my childhood. From my 6 years old I had a governess. Her name was Elizaveta Nicolaevna, she was a noblewoman. She taught me to play the piano, to speak and read in French, taught geography and arithmetic, so I went directly to the second form at school. In addition to a governess we had a nurse.

Nurse's name was Anastasia Alexandrovna Galaktionova, she was Russian, from a rural family. I called her granny, because parents were at work from morning till evening, and she was with me



all the time. Parents were very busy with their work and lacked time for me.

We didn't observe any Jewish holidays. It was very dangerous – for this they could exile a person to a prison camp or simply discharge from work. But we had a neighbor, who loved my mum. His name was Yury Mikhailovich Alshuler, he was a commercial manager in a secret munitions factory, though he was a Jew and not the party member. They didn't discharge him as he was a very good administrator. He visited synagogue, knew Yiddish. He procured matzo from the synagogue and gave some to mum. At the time it was very difficult to get matzo, and if it was not for our neighbor we would not be able to taste it. I don't know whether father was disappointed with Yury Mikhailovich paying addresses to her. But mum loved him (I mean Dad) very much, and he knew of it.

My nurse was an Orthodox believer, a very pious person, and she observed all the Orthodox holidays, so we observed them with her as well. Of all Jewish holidays we knew only about Pesach, because our neighbor used to bring matzo on Pesach, and we ate it with pleasure. My nurse knew how to cook gefilte fish, but at that time I was unaware that it was a Jewish dish. I learned about it much later, from some acquaintances, when I was already grown up. And daddy cooked stewed fish in oil with vegetables and called this dish «Jewish fish». Mum didn't cook anything of Jewish cuisine, she liked to bake biscuits. But she told me about the Jewish dish cymes and explained, of what it could be made. Neither she nor anyone else in our family cooked cymes. Nurse died in 1970. She was 90.

At our home there was a cult of Stalin. Father smoked a similar curved pipe as Stalin did, wore the same army-type jacket, the same whiskers. My nurse didn't like Stalin, but father liked him very much. We, certainly, knew of repressions, but all the same we trusted Stalin.

Before the Great Patriotic War I had completed 4 forms. At the outbreak of war I was evacuated with mum to Tashkent in 1941. There I entered a local school, and from March 1942 I began to work in a chemistry laboratory in parallel with studying at school. I worked as a junior laboratory technician. My work was to prepare excrement tests, urine tests, that is to say the most dirty work, and washing of the laboratory glassware. I was engaged in it for more than one and a half-year. Though I was a child, they made the same demands of me as of all the others. I had to maintain a severe discipline.

We spent a very hard time there. We lived in a hospital territory in a former room for school zoological circle. It was a 6-meter room, and 4 persons were living in it. There was a roof, but wasn't any ceiling. Water dripped from the roof and there was neither heating, nor even light. We slept in clothes. To say the truth, we moved there to live in spring and lived there till summer, so we didn't experience a bad cold. In a few months we were given a decent room, once more for several persons.

Mum for some time was a nutritionist and had to taste food before it was given to wounded men. So she had a right to get the complete dinner of a wounded person. That dinner was quite good: there was soup and small cutlets with macaroni and potatoes or porridge. The patients were given both butter and sugar. Of course, they were very small helpings, but they were given to people three times a day. However, mum couldn't eat, because she knew I was hungry. It was impossible to carry out something from there. If someone was caught with a single potato or a small cutlet

taken out, he would be either put to prison or shot. And according to ration cards we had only some bread – a kilogram of bread a day for two persons. Potatoes were already a delicacy for us. We boiled it and ate with unpeeled.

Later my mum was fired from the position of a nutritionist, because there was a boss who wanted to take her place. Mum was transferred to a hospital near Tashkent. There we remained from the middle of September till the end of October, i.e. about two months. The bread ration we had was, in my opinion, 700 or even 600 grams [per day]. We lived half-starving, though there was a large subsidiary farm and hospital officials were given a ration in water-melons, melons, tomatoes, but when you eat those without bread, you become even hungrier.

For some time I worked in a drugstore there – wrapped powders up, then I was fired out, - a boss saw me and said I was still a child, and children were not allowed to do such a work. The only place, where I was accepted, was that subsidiary farm. The work was to gather remainders of tomatoes. I gathered these tomatoes and for it I was given a big water-melon and some kinds of vegetables. I couldn't go to school (I needed to go to the seventh form), because one had to go there far enough – well, may be, 5 or 7 kilometres along the irrigation ditch. The attitude there – not only towards Jews, but towards all the evacuees on the whole, - was not very good, so I didn't go to school.

When we came back to Leningrad in winter of 1944, I went to school again. I was admitted at daddy's request, he had a great authority in his district. I was admitted into the seventh form. I studied there for three years. It was a very good school, number 189 of Dzerzhinsky district. We had wonderful teachers, who had stayed there during the whole blockade. This school was operating during the whole blockade; and I was the only person in my 7th form who didn't stay in Leningrad at the blockade.

While I studied in it I didn't feel any bad attitude towards evacuees. There were both Russians and Jews. There were two girls – Raya Gulyak and Ahya Lis, who were pure-blooded Jewesses. They attended the school during the whole blockade. There, in school, pupils were fed up, they were given one plateful of soup. I don't know how many people had died in that school during the blockade.

In 1947 I finished school with a gold medal. I had an opportunity to enter any VUZ [institution of higher education] of the city without any exams and interlocution. At that time it was very difficult to obtain a gold medal. Of our fifty persons [in the two parallel classes] there were one gold medal (mine) and two silver ones. Later that school was disbanded (it was long after; at that time I was already working), and now there is a physics and mathematics lyceum in this school, a very famous one. This school is a very old one, recently they celebrated its 250th anniversary.

I entered the Polytechnical Institute, electro-mechanics department, the speciality “automation and telemechanics”. After the first year I became a member of a students' construction brigade (the first in the Soviet Union), I joined it voluntarily, because I was a member of the Komsomol with firm ideological principles. The place we went to was called Alakusa, and now, I believe, it is called Gavrilovskoe [it's in the Leningrad region]. Alakusa is a Finnish word. And there we built a local electric power station and pulled wires from that electric power station to villages, and also installed electrical equipment in the houses.



I was finishing institute in 1953. We had to defend our graduation theses in December. But they chose 6 persons of our group, one - the son of a person subjected to repressions, and five Jews, and said: "You will defend your theses in February". The rest of our group had defended their theses and obtained diplomas, and we were put off to February.

Besides, at my pre-graduation practical work I was engaged in automation of one secret engineering procedure, which was called electrochemical treatment of metal. This procedure was a secret one, and I had to defend my thesis in the "closed" meeting [that is to say, that defence of the thesis had to take place under the secret conditions: only a limited number of experts were to attend]. But two weeks before the defence I was told that I would defend my thesis in the "public" meeting, and I promptly had to alter it and to throw away approximately one third of materials. It was done because it was not allowed to give a Jew an excellent mark, and they expressly invented me obstacles. But nevertheless, I defended my thesis with mark "five".

Because I was Jewish, they deprived me of the opportunity to graduate with honours. My mates, who had the same marks but were not Jews, had obtained red diplomas, and I hadn't. I had 85% of excellent marks in my diploma and three "satisfactories": for drawing, sketching and resistance of materials. Though at that time there weren't any marks for drawing and resistance of materials at all. There was simply the mark called "passed". And it was an examination for sketching, indeed. But it was permitted to repeat the examination for those who had such good marks as I had.

They generally gave not a very difficult task and good marks for re-examination. But they gave me such a complicated task, that I was not able to fulfil it. As a result three satisfactory marks remained and I was given an ordinary diploma, without honours. Because Jews were not allowed to obtain red diplomas -with honours - and especially in such a specialization as "automation".

When in the end of February we were given assignments [all high-school graduates were necessarily assigned to work at a certain enterprise], nearly all my institute fellow students got good appointments - in Leningrad, in Moscow region, at plants and institutes. And at the very end we six were called and informed: "And for you we haven't got any job". And we went away. I went to Moscow to strive for our assignment, and finally we got an appointment for all six of us. They separated us and sent to different locations. One - to Magnitogorsk, two - to Kansk, two - to Krasnoturinsk.

I went to Krasnoturinsk, it was a wholly industrial town. A large aluminium plant, and around it - a small town, where the managing staff of that plant lived. Convicts from the nearby prison camp and exiled Germans were mainly working at that plant. Germans lived in wooden houses, which one could hardly call houses - it was somewhat between a cattle-shed and a barn. There wasn't any work at my speciality and I was sent to the Urals Aluminium Plant, to the town of Kamensk-Uralsk. It is 100 kilometres to the south of Sverdlovsk.

Having received the news about my father's death in 1953, I obtained a transfer to the Leningrad Institute of Aluminium & Magnesium Industry. I began working at this institute. It was very good to work there, we were a wonderful collective. But safety measures were poorly observed there and several times I nearly poisoned myself with quicksilver and chlorine, and once I spilled a titanium solution over myself.

I worked in this Aluminium & Magnesium Institute for three years. It was the period of probation, for which a junior specialist had to work. So after three years I started trying to get a job in some other place. It was already the year of 1956, but all the same anywhere I addressed I was rejected. At first, while I was talking to them on the phone, they said: "Yes, yes, please come, we need such a specialist". And I must mention that I have a typically Jewish appearance. So when I came, they would say: "Sorry, but we have just taken another person into this position".

One my very distant relative had assisted me to acquire a job in the Research Institute of Telephone Communications, where I worked for almost 35 years. I started on the job in September 1957 and quit in 1995. I was engaged in electronic telephony and at the same time translated texts from English and French. I was considered a very good translator. My husband and me provided with translations practically the whole department of the scientific and technical information. My husband worked at the same institute as a translator from German. We got married in 1974. My husband was Russian. He was born in 1940 in Belozersk town of Vologodskaya Region. His mother was an actress, father – a theater producer. His father had perished at the front in 1944 during the offensive at Berlin. My husband was born an invalid, he had a serious form of an infantine cerebral palsy.

After the war my husband studied at the Leningrad State University and lived in the house of invalids. He studied for 10 years, as he was an invalid and could take an academic leave as many times as he wanted. Once he took an academic leave for 3 years and completed the three-year courses of German in the House of Culture named after Dzerzhinsky.

He was very gifted in foreign languages. Though he was an invalid, he didn't become exasperated and had a very nice character. He was a very kind person.

My husband died in 1991 and was buried in the Transfiguration Cemetery near my parents. We had no children.

My parents and I were very assimilated and my Jewish origin meant very little to me. I was never interested in anything concerning Jewish life. About the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s I was told by some of my acquaintances that they distributed provisions in the Jewish charitable organization on Ryleeva Street. As at that time my financial position wasn't very good I went to this organization. Soon I got to know of Hesed. For the first time I went there for provisions as well. Now I seldom visit Hesed, mainly for holiday presents or medicines. But in Hesed I learned much about Jewish holidays and traditions and now I don't feel myself estranged from Jewish life.