

Interview: Reina Pennington and Valentina Flegontovna Kravchenko-Savitskaia
Moscow, 7 May 1993, Kravchenko-Savitskaia's home

Two years after this interview, she was awarded the title Hero of the Russian Federation on 10 April 1995 for her contributions to the war. She died on 15 February 2000 at the age of 83.

This interview has been edited for clarity. Some repetitive statements and exchanges to clarify a word or location are omitted, for example, as well as intermittent small talk with the other family members. Text in italics is notes; text in brackets is clarification.

KS = Valentina Flegontovna Kravchenko-Savitskaia

RJP = Reina Pennington

VR = Vladimir Ravkin, who assisted me in Moscow

The interview tape is missing some minutes; the interview begins with VKS talking about a former night bomber pilot, HSU, who she said was killed in her apartment, apparently by thieves. Unfortunately I do not have the name of that pilot.

RJP Did this happen recently?

KS Yes, it happened recently. In Rostov. I don't know when exactly, but I was just told today . . .

VR returned to her the unpublished regimental history she had given him to photocopy for me.

KS I understand that you are working on a dissertation, right? And you study history? But you may be more interested in the fighters because you served in fighters.

RJP Well, I know more about the fighters, but that's why I need more information about the other units.

KS I will be happy to help. Please Reina -- ask your questions and I will answer them.

RJP Okay. I read the interview that you gave to Anne Noggle and there were several things that I would like to clarify. You talked a little bit how the regiments were formed during the war, and this is been a very difficult topic for me to find information about, about who exactly was involved in a decision to form the women's regiments. I read here, in this book by Migunova, that Raskova sent a special petition to the VVS, and that they took a long time to decide about allowing her to form regiments. She said they got help from this man Alexei Ivanovich Shakhurin. Do you know anything about this?

KS Shakhurin was a minister of the aviation industry and Novikov was commander of Air Forces.

RJP I read in all the memoirs, the women all say that Raskova said she had to go to Stalin personally to get permission to form regiments.

KS I know that she had to ask for it, but I don't know if she went personally or she sent a letter. But why do you say that it is a long time? I wasn't a long time at all. She spoke at the public antifascist meeting here in Moscow in September. And an order came in October!

RJP Because Migunova quotes Raskova as saying, "Here in the VVS this matter has been dragged out for an incredibly long time. I had to appeal to Commissar Alexei Ivanovich Shakhurin, to ask him to speed up the decision on this question."

KS I don't know, maybe that was Migunova's opinion, but I thought it was very quick in the war time.

Note: Kravchenko is only considering the time from Raskova's September speech, but Raskova was probably working on this issue prior to that time -- perhaps as early as June or July, after the German invasion.

RJP Why do you think the decision was made?

KS Because I saw an order.

RJP No, why do you think they decided to create a women's regiment? Why did they issue the order?

KS Because it was Raskova. She was very much respected. She was truly a very talented woman. An irresistible woman. It is too bad that you didn't see her alive. Her photos don't do her justice.

RJP You have many pictures with Raskova (in the album)

KS Yes, these are pre-war pictures, I took them from the family album from her daughter Tanya. She gave them to me to make a copy. If you like any of these pictures please take one as a gift.

RJP Thank you! You know, I only know Raskova from her book *Zapiski Shturmana*. And from the books of other women, from their memoirs.

KS Yes, we all have that, but no one has written anything serious about her.

RJP There is no serious history about any of you, I think.

KS No, there is nothing, nothing. This is why we put our hope in you, Reina. So I am ready to give you anything you need.

RJP I need to pick a photo -- maybe this one.

KS Please take it.

RJP I know this one picture was in a newspaper, but I like this one.

KS Yes, it's good.

RJP This is during the time of her flight--

KS I have a picture when she was coming from the Far East, after being in the taiga, she was very, very thin . . . Where is it? I can't find it. . . . Here it is. This picture was taken in the Far East. After she returned from taiga, she was there for 10 days, she was hungry, she was very weak and very thin. I am a Siberian, and I know what it is like in taiga in September. There is a frost in September, it can be so cold, and she was there.

RJP I lived in Alaska for two years, so I can imagine.

KS I was born in Vladivostok, but I lived in western Siberia. So I imagine how hard it was for her in taiga, it was very cold. It is scary first of all, and also cold.

RJP There was no food --

KS No, of course not--

RJP and no water--

KS Yes. And she lost one boot. She even limped later; we noticed that she limped a little, and Katya Migunova told me that it was because of frostbite. Raskova was greatly respected among us.

RJP Do you remember reading about Raskova at the time of that flight? before the war?

KS At that time there were only newspaper and magazine articles, there were no books, and the only things we knew were the things that she wrote. And there is still nothing about her. So your work, your work will be unique.

RJP It's interesting to me that Raskova wrote her book "Записки Штурмана" in 1939, with a second edition in 1976. And that's all. There should have been many more editions.

KS I don't know why it wasn't republished after the war. It's the same about Grizodubova and Osipenko, there is nothing.

RJP No, there's nothing. And Raskova's book has never been translated into English.

KS No?

RJP Unfortunately. And none of the books about the regiments. Only the first edition of "В небе фронтовом" was translated.

KS Who translated it?

RJP Jean Cottam.

KS We don't know anything about her, right?

RJP Well her translation was published by a University Press. But not many people saw it.

KS Is she young? And that's why no one saw it?

RJP No, she's older than I am. It is interesting -- she is Polish. She was orphaned during the war, and she was in Russia at the end of the war as a child. Then she went to relatives in Canada.

KS I see, it is a very interesting path.

RJP Yes, and she became a historian, and I have corresponded with her. She translated "В небе фронтовом" and bits of articles, but it just didn't receive enough attention. She did not translate Migunova or Raskova.

KS Yes, and Raskova has a separate book "Записки Штурмана" in a little bit different format. And when Migunova wrote, they decided to make it easy and present it as a part two.

RJP Cottam told Anne Noggle that Raskova insisted that all the women's regiments fly only aircraft made in the Soviet Union.

KS Yes, we were even delayed the take off to the front because of it. And you know that the fighters left first from Engels where we [in the 587th] were still training. Then the night bombers left. And we were still waiting for our planes. They offered us "Bostons", this was in Engels. Raskova had to fly to Moscow several times before she brought us the good news about getting the Peshka. At that time there were not enough Peshkas for the male regiments. Only a few had been produced. We got ours from Kazan, from the aviation factory there, they quickly assembled them for us.

RJP I read that at first you were supposed to receive the Su-2.

KS Yes, they gave them to us, only three of them, we learned to fly on them. Yes, we had the Su-2. It was completely different (from the Peshka), it only had two seats and one engine. And the Su-2 was already pretty old at that time. It also had a short range and couldn't carry a large bomb load. But the Peshka could carry a ton of bombs.

RJP So Raskova refused the Su-2.

KS We had them to keep us busy while we were waiting for the Peshkas. And we also had a Pe-2 "Spark," you know the Pe-2 is called a Spark when there is an instructor and a pilot that is being taught, who teaches is called Spark.

RJP "Spark"?

KS It means a couple, when a pilot sits in one seat and his instructor in another. It had dual control. We flew that for awhile; not for long, of course. Pilots were taught how to dive bomb in the Spark.

RJP Were you a pilot before the war?

KS Yes, I was a pilot, I worked as an instructor-pilot at the airclub in Saratov. After I graduated from school, we were sent to different places, and I ended up in Saratov. I was in Saratov only for a year after the aviation school, and I only prepared one group of cadets. The aviation school I graduated from had focus in navigation, and that is why they made me a navigator right away [in Raskova's group].

RJP How many flying hours did you have, before the war?

KS Before the war not a lot, 700 I think. 724 to be exact.

RJP Was this a lot or was this typical?

KS It was considered a lot, because I was at the airclub at first, and then I went to the aviation school, and I flew there. And then I flew in the Saratov airclub.

RJP In the Po-2?

KS In the Po-2, yes.

RJP Where did you attend aviation school?

KS It was an Osoaviakhim school, in Kherson, on the Black Sea. Many girls who trained at Kherson went to Raskova.

RJP Did you go to Raskova's group from Saratov?

KS Yes, I received a telegram and it commanded me to go to Raskova's command, to Moscow.

RJP How did you feel about that?

KS I felt first of all, men had already been taken to the front. And young cadets were coming to my group [and then sent to the front]. I wanted very much to go to the front myself. When I received this telegram, I was very proud, I walked around with my nose in the air, as we say in Russia.

If you remember we were all like that, when we were still Young Pioneers, then Komsomol members, you probably don't know, there was the GTO badge. It meant Ready for Labor and Defense, yes and there were two stages: first was track and field athletics, and the second was a militarized one. The second stage included parachute jumps and shooting. And we even had to be the "Budennovtsy," we had to ride horses. In shooting we were called "Voroshilovskis," we had to pass tests.

RJP So what was it like when you arrived in Moscow?

KS Well, first of all, it was very difficult to get to Moscow. I went from Kuibyshev through Saratov and through Penza. I flew in a "Douglas" and there was a Pole who organized the Polish Army, who flew in the "Douglas." General Berling, his name was General Berling. He was flying from Kuibyshev, he landed in Saratov. I was waiting at the aerodrome, waiting to catch a flight with anyone, and I asked him to take me, and they took me.

RJP Were you the only one to go from Saratov to Moscow at that time?

KS Yes, I was the only one to go to Moscow from Saratov. Then when we got to Engels where we trained, it was very close to Saratov, across the Volga. When we arrived at Engels for training, girls from Saratov from my airclub who became cadets arrived there as well. Here is Engels and here is Saratov, all you had to do is cross the Volga. And these girls who were cadets, we took them and I taught them to be navigators. Unfortunately they all died except Raya Aronova. Only Raya survived the war, but then she died as well, she is gone now.

RJP So you got a ride with General Berling--

KS Yes, and maybe I shouldn't mention this, but the whole way he was feeling sick, and his orderly often went to the tail of the plane to throw up, and it was so funny to me. I was in uniform and thought that this was such a man. This is how I arrived to Moscow.

Can you imagine Moscow of October 1941? The front was very near, that was October 7th or 8th. I arrived on October 13th, and we landed in Vnukovo, and I didn't know where to go. And then I met someone, I don't remember his name, but he was a Muscovite, and he arrived as well. He took me to his apartment, and left me with his grandmother, and went somewhere, he was from some government office. I stayed there overnight.

RJP Where did you meet this person?

KS At Vnkukovo. We had to get to the city and there were no buses. It shows how people helped each other.

RJP And what was Moscow like at that time, how did it look in the streets? *[I was thinking of the panic at that time, but she took my question literally.]*

KS It was dark, and I couldn't see anything because it was evening when we arrived, but in the morning the weather was quite good. And in Sokol metro station, I ran into a friend from school who was studying in the Physical Education Institute in Moscow. She became a partisan later, and she was hanged here near Moscow, and there is a book about her. I say, "Vera, come with me" [to join Raskova's unit] because she had attended the airclub in my town where I came from. And she says, "No, I won't go." And I

thought she was a coward . . . but it turned out that she had already been recruited by the Komsomol in the partisan group, and she could not tell me, it was a secret.

Her name was Vera Voloshina. I have that book about her. I can't see it from here, it must be that little red book, if you can reach it . . . no, it's not it. That one . . . Vera Voloshina and Yura Dvuzhil'niy, they both died. Vera and Yura were in the same class with me. They were newlyweds. But he was killed in Belorussia, a Hero of the Soviet Union, and she was hanged not far from Moscow.

Our friendship is described in this book.

Those are very pretty daffodils you brought; did you think of that, Volodya?

VR No, it was Reina, she always says that we need to get something [to bring to the interviews], unfortunately we could not get anything else.

KS Yes, flowers are the most important thing in life of a person, even an old person.

KS At first Frolov wrote a book only about Vera called *Our Vera*. And then, when he found Yuri Dvuzhilny, he wrote a book about both of them. Here's the part about Yura Dvuzhil'niy.

RJP Published in Kemerovo? Where is that?

KS It is a city in the western Siberia, near Novosibirsk. We studied in Tomsk. I graduated from the Tomsk Industrial Institute. I am an ordinary technician. I had finished the airclub there and then I left.

RJP This will probably be difficult for me to find in the United States.

VR I give it to you. Because I'll die and they'll just throw everything away.

RJP I could copy it and give it back to you. It's about your friend and I know it's dear to you.

KS I have the other book about Vera, *Nasha Vera*, so if you need it . . .

RJP But here it talks about your friendship and all of that--

KS Vera was posthumously awarded the Order of the Patriotic War, it was presented to her mother. It was after the book was published.

RJP That's so interesting! What happened after the meeting? After you met Vera in the "Sokol" station?

VR We went our separate ways; I was in a hurry to get where I was going, and she could not tell me that she was going to the partisans. It was just an accidental meeting. She left, and later she crossed the front line [into enemy territory], it says there probably twice. She could ski very well like all Siberians. But she was killed in December or maybe in late November.

RJP In '41?

KS 1941, that's when she was killed.

RJP So what happened when you got to the Zhukovsky Academy?

KS It was near the station. When I arrived, the credentials committee was starting. What is a credentials committee? It is when they accept you based on ideological reliability. Marina Raskova and Kazarinova were in that commission, you probably know.

RJP Kazarinova -- Militsa or [Tamara]--

KS Militsa Aleksandrovna, yes, and then there was the commissar, Eliseeva. Yes, and there were some other armament engineers sitting there, armament engineer Volova was there, and there was someone else there I didn't see, and we were very worried that they might not accept us.

And there were a lot of worries because some pilots were assigned as navigators, of course it was not very . . . but I didn't regret it later. Because I always flew in the lead aircraft, and that was more interesting than if I flew as a pilot but as a wingman.

RJP Because you were the navigator for the regiment commander?

KS At first I was the navigator for a squadron commander, and then I was promoted, and I flew with Markov.

RJP Who did you fly with when you were flying with the squadron commander?

KS It was a captain (later major) Timofeeva, Evgeniia. She was second squadron commander. Timofeeva was one of the favorites in the regiment; everyone loved her very much. She was a little older than we were. She was also a mother; she had two children who were in the occupied territory. She treated all of us very warmly.

RJP How did it happen that Timofeeva was in a different place when the Germans occupied her town?

KS Because she had flown here when Raskova sent the call out, she came here, and only then Germans occupied that town.

RJP That's terrible . . .

KS Her son Vovka and daughter Hadya were left with their grandmother. We all knew because she was always worried about them.

RJP Did they survive the war?

KS They were in Vinnitsa, and as soon as it was liberated, the regiment commander gave her leave, so that she could go there. When she was leaving, we collected everything we had extra such as boots and sweaters, and gave it to her.

RJP Was that in 1943 or 44?

KS 1943.

RJP And what did she find in Vinnitsa?

KS She found her grandmother, and she found her children. They had a tough time, but they survived. Timofeeva just died last year.

RJP And her husband?

KS Her first husband was killed in the beginning of the war, there's a book that writes about it. Maybe in *V nebe frontovom*, where it talks about Timofeeva She had a second husband who died recently.

Both of her children became doctors, and a granddaughter is also a doctor. They all became doctors, no one wanted to fly. One of them is a surgeon, the other is a therapist, I can't recall which is which. I'm having to remember a hundred years back!

RJP So you were accepted in the navigator group?

KS Yes, I was admitted as a navigator, I calmed down, what else could I do? At the end of October we relocated to Engels. And on November 7th we took the oath. We swore to protect the motherland to the last drop of blood.

RJP Were you actually part of the military at this time?

KS Yes, we became soldiers on November 7th, and we were assigned ranks, some would be junior lieutenants, some were lieutenants, some sergeants.

RJP Were all the navigators sergeants?

KS No, there were officers and enlisted ranks among all the different groups.

RJP How did they decide who received officer's rank and who was a sergeant?

KS The flight crew were all officers, except for radio-gunners; navigators and pilots were officers. The gunners were sergeants or senior sergeants. The ground crews were mostly enlisted, the mechanics were just privates.

RJP When did you find out what kind of aircraft you would be flying?

KS When did we find out that we are going to be flying on Pe's? When did they divide us into regiments, yes?

RJP Did you know from the beginning there would be three different regiments?

KS No. in the very beginning we had a common group number 122. At first we thought who would go where, who would go to the night bombers, which would fly the Po-2, there was no need to prepare them, because they already were trained. Everyone could fly the Po-2. So they formed them first. The staff made lists of who

would go to that regiment. Then we received Yaks, and the fighters were assigned. Everybody wanted to fly fighters; the Po-2, not so much. But when we found out that Raskova would command the third regiment, our regiment, then we wanted to stay with her.

RJP How did they decide which navigators went to the Po-2 or the Pe-2?

KS We had a special instructor for navigation training, a man. Most of the navigators were [university] students so maybe that was how they decided. They were young; we called them "Shturmanyata" (Little Navigators). Little Navigators, yes, and those who had less training went there, but those who had some navigator training, they were assigned to the Pe-2. Especially the graduates of the Kherson school.

[looking at photos] I saw Galia here. I wanted to show you one Little Navigator. I had a little navigator somewhere here. This is Galia, do you see how the little navigators wrote to me, if you can read this . . . I was the eldest among them, and they gave me then this nickname, this picture was 1941. They wrote "from brother-rabbit", and rabbit was a nickname, it didn't appear just like that, it had a special reason. By the way, this is Markov's future wife [Galia].

Let me tell you how this "Brother-rabbit" came about. When we were taken to Engels we were transported in special heated train cars. The cars are like this, there are bunks like this, so all of us are there-- we were packed in. And we had nothing to eat. Usually we were just given herring and water.

And at one station where we stopped, we saw cabbages like this [big], fresh cabbage. It was covered a little, like so, but we jumped out of the car anyway. We carried cabbages to our car, and everyone began to eat this cabbage like rabbits.

Then the chief of staff Kazarinova showed up. And she made us carry back the pieces that we hadn't eaten yet. But at the very next station, apparently Raskova took some measures, they greeted us and there we were fed some kind of hot soup. Nice and hot.

We were "rabbits" until the end of the war. "Brother-rabbits, everybody come here!" Yes, until the end of the war, and even today we say brother-rabbits, especially Katya Musatova.

RJP Musatova? Musatova-Fedotova?

KS Fedotova, she says "Bratsy-kroliki" in a loud voice even now.

RJP You were on the train for ten days.

KS Yes, yes, it seemed an eternity to us until we got there, yes, ten days. We were very close, but we kept stopping, because they were bombing something near the

Volga. We were let through only if Raskova went to the station, and when they recognized Raskova, they tried to let us through right away. They let us through, because the whole country knew her, the whole country. Like Gagarin, like how they knew Gagarin later, so they knew our Raskova.

RJP Was she better known than people like Osipenko and Grizodubova?

KS Yes. And you know why? Because of the incident in taiga and how bravely she handled it when she was alone in taiga. It made her stand out from the others. And she was very humble.

So, what else?

RJP Okay, ten days, you got to Engels; when did they decide on the forming regiments, when did the girls know, how long were you at Engels before they started to split into different groups for the regiments?

KS When did we find out? I will tell you now, the U-2s left in May, the fighters in April of 1942. The fighters left in April of 1942. And Raskova herself accompanied the U-2s and Bershanskaia to the Don Front. They landed near the village of Morozovskaia. Then she returned, and we were the only remaining regiment. That is how it was.

RJP And you had to wait for a few months.

KS Yes, we received the Peshkas in October. No, no, no, maybe a little earlier.

RJP I can look it up.

KS Yes, you can look it up. I think we received them in October. And in December we went to the Western front at first, then we were shifted to Stalingrad. In general, one squadron was based in Lopatino, the second, in Kirzhach. Raskova flew to them in Kirzhach but she lived with us in Lopatino.

RJP Why did they divide the two squadrons at different bases?

KS You know what, at first, first of all, because the airfields were small. Yes, and we had dugouts, there was simply nowhere to live, some kind of storage facility was adapted for this large dugout. Maybe it was a root cellar. These airfields were not stationary, they were temporary.

So once when Marina was in Kirzhach, she flew to Moscow for some reason, I don't remember, well, probably to get new orders, right? And she gave us, the second squadron, an order to fly to Stalingrad; she wasn't with us at that time. and then she sent the first squadron from Kirzhach to join with us at an airfield at Razboishchina, near the Volga. Razboishchina, do you know where it is? Saratov is here and on the other side is Razboishchina. *[Kravchenko may be confused about the details; see below.]*

Raskova stayed there with three planes, there were three planes that needed repair. The crews of those planes also stayed there. The weather was bad, it was nonflying weather. Nevertheless she flew with those three planes. we were near Stalingrad at that time, and she had to land in Razboishchina. She only flew a short distance and crashed.

By the way, by the way, her navigator was the person who had taught us at Engels and assigned us to regiments. Captain Khil', he was Ukrainian. He went with her.

RJP So he died with Raskova.

KS They died together, they all died. There was a squadron engineer on board, and there was her gunner-radio operator Yerofeev. Yes, there were four people and they were all killed.

The impact was, how to describe it, a head-on collision, because there were the mountains. Visibility was close to zero. Nine other planes crashed at that time, two shturmoviki, and a fighter of some kind. In general, there was such . . . You cannot imagine what a snow blowing from Kazakhstan here to the Volga is, you never saw such a snow charge [снежный заряд].

RJP What is a snow charge, is it a blizzard?

KS It's the kind of blizzard that hits you like a solid wall. It talks about this snow charge in one of our books. It was just the other side of Karokolpakia, it is where Kazakhstan begins, and the wind comes from these steppes. There is always wind in Volgograd, Stalingrad.

Do you want to go to Stalingrad?

RJP I'm going on Tuesday.

KS You're going? Who are you going with?

RJP With Pasportnikova. And her husband, and Volodia.

KS That's good. I was worried that you go by yourself.

RJP No. One of the things we plan to do is drive out to see where the airfields used to be. I want to see those places, where the aerodromes used to be, even if they are not there anymore.

KS I don't know if you will be able to find it. There was one airfield I remember called Gumrak. The first one. Yes, during the war. Maybe they were temporary. Yes, Gumrak, then Sovkhoz. Pasportnikova probably knows. We were based there, and then at lake Elton. A little to the north of Volgograd, lake Elton. We were there in winter and we landed on it. Then we had two more airfields, but they were very small, one was in

a village Novogeorgievka, and a railroad station on the other side of Karabidaevka, but now it is called something else.

RJP I know that most of those airfields were temporary, and they're not there anymore.

KS Yes, yes.

RJP I just want to see what the countryside is like. Pasportnikova said that we are going to stay in a dormitory right next to an airfield.

KS Near an airfield? and what airfield is she taking you to?

RJP I'm not sure. It's a new town that did not exist back then, but she says there is a famous [industrial] pipe factory there. She said it is near where the airfield used to be.

KS That must be the fighters' airfield. I've been talking about bomber airfields, but I know you're more interested in the fighters.

RJP You said that you landed on a frozen lake.

KS Yes.

RJP Did they have skis on the airplanes?

KS No, no, no, on the wheels. But the surface was very smooth. We often landed onto a deep snow, what else could we do? We reduced the landing speed, and we landed.

RJP It must have been very difficult, it must have dragged the airplane around.

KS No; there was a danger that you might dig in with the nose, but we managed. It was good on the lake, there was ice.

RJP The snow was not deep on the lake?

KS Almost no snow, it was windy all the time and it blew everything off. But we needed a long landing run.

RJP So what was the feeling in the regiment when they heard about Raskova's death?

KS It is better not to tell about this.

RJP I read that some people thought the regiment might be dissolved, because she had died . . .

KS I don't know. We didn't have such thoughts. Our commissar Eliseeva gathered us into a big dugout and told us what had happened. To tell you the truth, everyone just cried. We cried, and at that moment we were not lieutenants, we were just girls. Of course at that time, it seemed like a disaster. She truly did have an effect on our regiment. Maybe everything would have been different without Raskova.

And then our regiment leadership appealed to Grizodubova and asked her to take over the regiment.

RJP Who took over [immediately] after Raskova's death?

KS Zhenia Timofeeva, a commander of the second squadron, the one I flew with.

RJP Timofeeva.

KS Yes, and we flew and bombed the Tractor Factory [in Stalingrad] with her.

RJP So you continued to fight throughout this period, you had combat missions during this time--

KS Yes yes yes, and Markov arrived at the end of February,

RJP What did Grizodubova say when Timofeeva contacted her?

KS She did not answer, she did not answer.

RJP She didn't answer?

KS No. She came to Engels once when we were in Engels. Katya Migunova and I were on duty near the start line, I was standing out there with a signal flag. Yes, I overheard them [Raskova and Grizodubova], I felt uncomfortable listening to what are the two celebrities talked about. I heard fragments: [Grizodubova asked]"What are you going to do with these broads?" And Grizodubova tried to invite Raskova to her regiment, to make her a navigator of that regiment.

RJP So that was the reason Grizodubova came to Engels, in order to invite Raskova?

KS Yes, that was probably the reason. But Raskova had the idea that all the women must fight. So she refused, and they never met again after that.

RJP So you don't think that Grizodubova cared whether other women pilots got to fly or not?

KS She wanted to be the only Hero. Then suddenly there are hundreds [of Heroes]. She was jealous. Because of this I told you on the phone not to go to her funeral.

RJP Was this discussion between Grizodubova and Raskova, was it angry, what was the emotion?

KS No, it was out on the field, at the airfield, it wasn't angry. I could only hear what Grizodubova said, I did not hear what Marina said. But it made me scared.

RJP You were afraid?

KS Yes, when I heard them, I was afraid.

RJP Why?

KS I thought maybe Grizodubova would take Raskova with her, And we hadn't even got to the front yet.

RJP Were Raskova and Grizodubova very friendly with each other?

KS No.

RJP Only comrades?

KS Yes, they were simply colleagues in that one flight. She flew once with Grizodubova, and twice with Osipenko. *[Note: Raskova flew at least twice with Grizodubova.]*

KS Grizodubova could not handle the fame, she was spoiled by it. There's a proverb . . . there's a word for that kind of vanity, I don't remember what it is.

RJP So you didn't really want Grizodubova to accept the offer to become your commander?

KS No, but we didn't want to get a man to be our commander.

RJP And there wasn't really another woman . . .

KS There were no other candidates. Osipenko could have done it, but she was dead. We didn't want a man. But Valentin Vasil'evich [Markov] became a "woman" himself later. He was a very gentle man.

RJP Does you think he would describe himself that way? that he became a "woman"?

KS You know, he wrote about it in the introduction to a book, but I will tell you. Yes, he wrote that he was horrified when he was called to GUK [Главное управление кадров/the main office of cadres] in Moscow. He decided that it was a punishment, he took it as a punishment.

RJP He had been wounded, is that correct?

KS Yes, there were a lot of losses in his regiment. He was wounded and his navigator was wounded. And after he got out of the hospital, he went to the GUK to get his new assignment.

RJP He had already been a commander of a regiment?

KS Yes, he was, of course he was. I have a very good reference about him somewhere, he dictated it to me himself, we were good friends.

RJP You were his navigator through the rest of the war. Do you remember seeing his picture at the regimental lunch? They put his picture up on the table.

KS There is a paper that describes where he was, what he did - everything. Where did I put it? I just saw it recently.

RJP Why didn't they send him back to his first regiment?

KS That regiment was destroyed and disbanded, because there was no one left there, they were the ones to receive the first hits.

RJP Where did they fight, the first regiment?

KS I am looking for where he was, it was Staraia Russa [near Novgorod], that was the place where he began the war. I wrote everything down on purpose, he dictated it to me himself. Not too long before his death. I said to him, "Val, you tell me everything, you never know, it may come in handy." And he told me, and I wrote it down somewhere and I think I need to keep it, I saw it quite recently.

RJP Did he also fly the Pe-2 in that regiment? Or was he wounded while flying the SB?

KS Yes, the Pe -2, they were among the first ones to fly Pe -2. They were stationed near Leningrad before the war. Yes, and when the war began, do you know what bombers they flew? Why were they defeated? They had such low-speed aircraft, SB bombers, SB, yes, it was called a high-speed bomber. СБ– скоростной бомбардировщик. First of all, it was weakly armed, and then it had a slow, 350 kilometers per hour speed. They were all shot down right away. They had huge losses, but they kept flying. It also had two engines [like the Pe-2]. But the tail was supported by one keel, while the Peshka had two of them.

[looking around her apartment] It is weird that I don't have that paper somewhere. [She gave me a copy of a regimental album?]

RJP Who made this souvenir for you?

KS Zhenia Ogiev made it for me, he was an armorer. He was a technician in the first squadron.

RJP Is this the only one or did all the veterans get a copy?

KS No, he made copies for someone else, I believe he made a copy for Valentin Vasil'yevich, I think he made three copies. I can't remember for who he made a third one, maybe for Nadya Fedutenko.

RJP You should donate this to a museum eventually.

KS To a museum? They'll lose everything there, they've lost everything in our museums. We have a lot, for example, in Lithuania, in Lithuania we had a museum, it is now gone. Yes, and there were letters and everything, documents, and now there is no museum there anymore, and everything is lost.

RJP Something like this must not be lost! So Markov came to the regiment--

KS Yes, Markov arrived to the regiment, it was frosty, fires were burning. We, of course, still, we are still so to speak . . . he was greeted very badly. Yes, we were silent. Yes, it was a dead silence, and he was telling us something, we were in formation.

RJP When you said "frosty", were you talking about the weather or their attitude?

KS Both. We did meet him like that, yes. And he arrived in some kind of yellow leather jacket with a short fur. He was very tall and skinny. We didn't like him. But later he said that he was very embarrassed and didn't know where to look, couldn't look at us.

First of all, he brought his own navigator, the one with whom he flew before he brought his own with him. Yes, because he needed to know how to get to the regiment in the first place. Yes, he was afraid when he arrived there. But there was our commissar, our commissar Eliseeva, she was a very good person, she somehow, you know, tried to persuade us, to tried to talk him into understanding us, in general, she improved our relationship. Yes, and little by little she . . . and when he saw and realized that our girls could fly well, he calmed down, because at first he couldn't even imagine that.

RJP So how did he choose you as his navigator?

KS I don't know why he chose me. His navigator Nikitin was wounded badly. Yes, and when he was wounded he did not return to our unit. He was badly wounded, and how did [he choose me], it was an order, that was all. In the order I was named Markov's navigator for some reason. Maybe he knew that I flew with Zhenia Timofeeva as lead aircraft, or maybe Zhenia recommended me.

RJP Did he fly with different crews? Did Markov fly with different crews in order to get to know the people or evaluate them?

KS No. No, he probably knew and saw, but no, I didn't fly with him before this. But it was a pleasure to fly with him, he did not interfere with my work. He trusted me completely.

RJP What was your first mission with Markov?

KS With Markov? I think it was during the Belorussian operation, and the mission was to knock out some artillery mortar positions in the woods, not in the cities at first, there were not many towns in Belorussia.

Let me tell you something: one of our flights was a failure. During one of the flights, we hit the wrong spot. And do you know why? Because the war had changed the area so much, and we were flying according to the prewar maps. We only had prewar maps, you understand? For example, there is a forest here on the map, but it is no longer actually there. The configuration of the woods changed.

And so we missed once.

RJP Only once?

KS Just once, just once. On the other hand, once we saved our regiment altogether, saved them from shame, as we all say. I wrote about this in *V nebe frontovom* in the first edition. When the division commander was leading, and he wanted to go to a certain place, I said "no," come on here is our target, and yet he says "maybe you re-targeted" and I said "I don't know, but we don't have time to argue -- we're flying *there*."

Yes, and you know, after every mission, we got a snapshot, a photo, otherwise they didn't count it.

RJP Did you take the pictures from your own aircraft?

KS Yes, we took the picture after we would drop the bombs, otherwise they didn't count it.

RJP Did you have to make the second pass over the target to get the picture?

KS No, you drop bombs, then you adjust your camera through the optic aim, and when you see the bombs explode, you just take pictures. It was the most ... right away, right away ... and that was when you could get hit because it goes strictly, you can't waggle the wings, nothing, so that the picture would turn out. It was the moment we were the most vulnerable because we couldn't maneuver. There was no maneuvering [until the photos were taken].

RJP Yes, and this was the duty of the navigator?

KS Yes, it was the duty of the navigator.

Here is the award letter that they wrote for me, I got it from the staff office. They wrote which groups I led there and everything else.

RJP Please tell me if you get tired, if you want a break.

KS No, but would you like to have some tea?

RJP Yes, thank you!

KS Let's have some, let me warm it up, we can talk while it warms up.

RJP What does it mean to bomb according to the leader?

KS To bomb by the leader, we always bombed according to the leader. According to the leader--when the leader dropped his bombs the others drop their bombs. We were always flying in the lead position. Valentin Vasil'evich and I would lead, and there would be one flight with us, and another two flights, like geese flying, you know? It is called a wedge.

We lead them to the target. Yes, and in general the leader aims, the way it should be. Then I open the hatches--

RJP The bomb bay doors?

KS Yes, the place where the bombs will come out, and all the navigators watch my aircraft, as soon as my hatches open, they open theirs. Then they continue watching us, both pilots and navigators. Then I push a button and the bombs are dropped. And then they push their buttons as well. So I take the front part of the target, the forward edge, and they cover the rest of it, the series moves forward on the target area. Because there is some period of time before they see it, and so we cover the target. and so the leader is always responsible for the accuracy of the bombing.

RJP So you had a very heavy responsibility.

KS Serious, serious, and therefore I was very serious, they still think that I am a serious person. Yes indeed, and, before that, of course, before the flight, I check them all so that they know the exact route. The maps were prepared, the target was drawn on everyone's maps, because we might get shot down before we reach the target. Yes, we can be shot down, so our substitute is on our right, and it will take our position and lead the others. It was often Fomicheva who was the second leader.

RJP If the leader was shot down then someone else had to be ready to take their place.

KS Every aircraft had bombsights and cameras. We take photographs and give an obligatory task to the navigators who are following behind, so that if something goes wrong for me, they will duplicate my photographs.

RJP I think there was a story you were about to tell me?

KS Let's talk now about how our regiment was accepted at the front, in that kind of male environment. We already spoke about Markov [arriving], so I'll start there. We were assigned to a division. There were two regiments of men, and ours. The division command and everyone else greeted us, you could say, with apprehension. So when there was a short break after the Battle of Stalingrad, Markov arranged tactical training flights. It was in Tambov. It was a demonstration so that all the men would see how we fly, how we form up, how we land, and everything else. After that their attitude changed, of course.

Yes, and in general, many pilots from those regiments, they always tried to get to know our girls. But first of all it was a professional friendship.

Our commander Markov later told me he and the division commander agreed that we should only be given the same missions as the other regiment, without exception. So the regimental commander made sure that the missions would be the

same. If the division was going after some target, all three regiments should be included. So that there would be no special treatment. We just needed to establish ourselves, to prove our abilities.

The result was that in 1943 first a male regiment [in our division] was awarded the Guards rank, then second was ours, and the third was the other male regiment. We were in the middle. Not the best, but not the worst either.

We were on very good terms with these regiments, and after the war we got a lot of suitors from there, and there were marriages. By my count, 18 families were formed. Including Chapligina.

RJP Chapligina too?

KS Yes, she too.

KS In general, officers with officers, of course, and sergeants with sergeants, everything was by rank.

What else? This is how our life went by, like a dream.

RJP In his interview with Anne Noggle, Markov talked a little bit about some people who helped him learn how to deal with women in the regiment.

KS Yes, I was with him when he gave that interview, and he talked about that. He was honest about everything; he said everything correctly.

RJP He didn't mention many names, but he said one of the people who helped him was the head of the liaison service. Or maybe communications.

KS I don't know, maybe he talked to someone privately, but I can't recall who. We had an arms engineer, a communication engineer, a regimental communications engineer, and engineer of the special equipment. The communications engineer was Meriuts, she was a Moldovian.

RJP Is that the person he was talking about, Meriuts?

KS Maybe, she was older than us, and she had children. But I don't know, she was a peculiar kind of person.

RJP He said three people were especially helpful.

KS One was certainly Eliseeva. And I think he mentioned Timofeeva. And he mentioned an engineer, the regimental engineer, but he didn't say which one. Here he is, in the album, they are all here, Stepanov was a very serious person. Here is Stepanov, and Eliseeva, in general the senior commanders helped him, because there wasn't much they didn't know.

We had different dreams, those of us who flew in the air. They understood the reality better.

RJP What were your dreams?

KS Well, dreams to fly, to strike so hard that our glory would spread around the country. And the dream to shoot down an enemy plane. And to win, to win.

KS By the way, about Galia Nikitina, Chapligina . . . Chapligina needs to say a little, did you have time to speak to her [during the reunion lunch]?

RJP Not yet, but I really want to.

KS She had a very interesting role. For example, if a crew was shot down, we told her where the plane had crashed and she would fly there in her little plane, land on some field, and sometimes she would bring all three persons in a rucksack . . .

RJP In a Po-2?

KS In a Po-2, and when there were dead bodies, she found the pieces, gathered them, hands, legs, a head, it was a very hard job.

RJP So if it was a whole body, she would have to lift it?

KS There was always a mechanic who flew with her in case something happened with the plane, and if it was on our territory or next to some village, they would get in touch with the local authorities... and we always buried the ones we found. Sometimes she couldn't find anything. Then she flew several times, she searched and asked around. She was a master of her plane, she could land on a very small area. She could have been a combat pilot, but she worshiped Raskova, and so she stayed with her.

[the next bit was garbled. I think that Kravchenko says Raskova sent Chapligina to see her (Raskova's) daughter, as a proxy.]

KS She was such a trusted person. So that is what Galia did. She flew a Po-2 at first, and then she switched to a UT-1, UT-2, it was more maneuverable, but she liked the Po-2. It was a training plane, such a little plane.

RJP Markov also said that your regiment's doctor helped him a lot.

KS That was Ponomareva Mariia Ivanovna, she was the oldest person in the regiment. She was a good psychologist, and she knew about girls, she knew how to talk to them. And so Markov never yelled or raised his voice at us, but he scolded the men.

RJP Do you know what other kind of advice Ponomareva gave to him?

KS Well, you know, there are also such things here, purely for women, you know. She kept a calendar and knew when we, when I, should not be assigned to a flight. But we lied about it terribly and she could not do anything about it.

RJP I wondered whether they considered women and men to be different physically in this regard.

KS Ponomareva thought so.

RJP What did you think?

KS We didn't, it didn't affect us. Because we were young, but maybe there were one or two people who had a pathology. And most importantly, she probably convinced him [Markov] that he couldn't scream at us, because we would get offended right away.

I flew many times with Markov, and he trusted me completely about how to reach the target, because his main goal was that no one would get shot down. He was always worried about the wingmen. He even interrupted my work sometimes, he constantly asked, where is Egorova, where is [garbled], where is Fedotova? But I had no time for that, when I had to aim. It seems to me he loved all of us, it seems to me so. He was only 31 when he arrived at our regiment. He wasn't too old, 31 is nothing, it's not a lot, right?

RJP Yes. Did you realize when he fell in love with Dzhunkovskaia?

KS It happened in December of 1943, the end of the war was near. Yes, we did notice.

RJP Did he try to hide it?

KS He began to find fault with her, to point out mistakes. He tried to hide his feelings.

RJP But she knew?

KS She probably knew, yes. Let me tell you, when it was, it was December of 1943, we were based near El'nia. And you know, there was a pause in the battles. And they went, there was a small town not far, Dorogobosh. I think it was Dorogobosh, it is a very small town. And they went to a rest home, there were rest homes there. Yes, they went, Varia Krivonogova, Galia, he, and someone else, about five people, they went for ten days to rest. And Galia went to Moscow. Klara Dubkova was also there, and took her civilian dresses and shoes. And her [Galia's?] shoes, she had such tiny feet, size 33, she was such a graceful girl, graceful. Later Valia (Markov) said, "When I saw her [Galia] she looked like a doll" when he saw her in civilian clothes. I think that was when he fell in love with her. But it could have been earlier. Galia was very shapely, she held herself like a ballerina.

I was always responsible for our regimental banner, I received all three banners from the regimental commander, and Galia was my assistant. Galia Al'khovskaia and

Galia Dzhunkovskaia were my assistants. They were both so slender, not me of course, but they were slender, and I held the banner.

[showing us a photo] And here is Katerina standing with me, and here stands Galia [Dzhunkovskaia], see how she stands, like a soldier, right? She is on the far left. Yes, like a soldier. And after the war they were on Sakhalin Island for a long time, she studied, she went to a pedagogical institute. By the way, she taught English. You know, in general she was the head of the family. Yes, Valia was subordinate to her, you can't say otherwise.

RJP This is an interesting question, because one of the debates going on in America now is that if women and men work together in the same regiment, it will be disruptive, because people will fall in love with each other.

KS Well you know it must be concealed, you can't let it show. But you know that the war will end, and you hope that at the end of the war . . . Didn't anyone fall in love with you where you worked? I can't believe it didn't happen!

RJP Well, perhaps it's inevitable when people work together. The question is, does it disrupt the work?

KS Yes, that's it. For them -- No, on the contrary. They tried even harder to show each other how well they worked. I think you know this very well.

RJP Well, I also look at the case of Liliia Litviak and Alexei Solomatin.

KS I don't know, how the girls interpret it now. But you understand that you can't think for someone else. And it was always possible to die, not only because the one you love dies. Why is that death has to be a reason, right? But those girls tell it that way. The girls interpret it now that Liliia was so affected by his death that she also died. But she died not in the same day, some time passed before she died.

RJP Two or three months.

KS I don't know, but Lil'ka was quite a serious girl. She was very pretty, men really fell in love with her. She was also very small and slender. She was pale, like a mouse.

RJP She was obviously quite a good pilot, so it didn't seem affect her work.

KS Undoubtedly, undoubtedly.

RJP If she was in love with Solomatin, she still flew with him.

KS The fighters accepted only the best pilots, because there is only a pilot in the plane, and he needs to be the navigator and the pilot.

RJP Markov also said that nobody wrote about your regiment during the war, there were no articles or publicity.

KS No. They didn't write about us, I don't know why, but even the war correspondents were not allowed to see us. I don't know why. The girls say that we were some kind of secret, but there was nothing secret, it's just that the corps commander decided that way, so that there would be no rumors. Maybe that was it, so that people didn't talk too much. It didn't bother us that they didn't write about us then, but now I want you to write about us.

RJP It's time.

KS And then, that we had a privilege, that is, how we differed from the guys, from the men's regiments. First of all, we had a very good discipline, because we were not forced to fight. It wasn't compulsory discipline, but the desire to be first. In the men's regiments some would drink too much, some would be absent without leave. We didn't have any of that.

Also it was always very clean in our dugouts. We did embroidery there, napkins, even our foot cloths. Especially when we got to Germany, we found a lot of colorful thread. Different colors, very good quality. We did not stop being women in this regard.

RJP Did you know the French pilots of Normandie-Nieman squadron? I think they were at one time based near you.

KS How did we know each other? They escorted us near Smolensk. Yes, they were fighter escorts for us. They covered us from the German Focke-Wulfs. They escorted us, and once Lelia Sholokhova was forced to land at their airfield because of bad weather. Yes, it was an emergency landing. So her crew met them.

RJP Who was that?

KS Lelia Sholokhova and Valia Volkova. And the French pilots were very much surprised that she was able to land such a plane in such weather. We all met here in Moscow after the war, and later they wrote: "If we could gather all the flowers we would lay them at your feet" as the French say. I think it was 1970, it was an anniversary of the Victory, probably in the 1970, or maybe in 1965 or even in 1960, I can't remember. It was some anniversary of the Victory that they came here. I even have a picture somewhere, would you like me to find a picture where Katya Fedotova stands next to our Germans? *[I believe she meant the French pilots]*

RJP If it's not too difficult.

KS Goodness, of course it's not difficult, just wait a minute, somewhere I have a "Friends-Comrades" (album), this is the front, this is my "Friends-Comrades", yes, we will quickly find it. Here is our Eliseeva after the war. And here we are carrying our banner -- Katya Fedotova and Galia Dzhun.

RJP That's you holding the banner in the middle?

KS Yes, I don't know why, but I was appointed as a standard-bearer, it was completely unexpected for me. And these are our girls at some meeting. I have two copies and I can give you one.

Here they are. Here are the French, let me . . . Is something written on the back? This is our postwar meetings. You can have this copy. The back just says "The meeting of the 125th regiment with the French pilots of Normandie-Nieman regiment." And there is Kazarinova, standing, so you can keep it, and this is Katia Migunova, did you see her? Katia, and Zhenia Timofeeva.

So many friends . . . and where have they gone? Then you say, why feel sorry for them? As soon as you die, it will all be thrown away . . . Nobody will want to keep it.

RJP You can send it all to me. I would keep it.

KS Here is Vera Voloshina, my friend, she is with partisans. And here are our girls—Pugacheva . . .

RJP I am working with the Smithsonian museum of aviation and space, this museum is in America. They are building a collection about women in aviation.

KS So we need to find some pictures for you.

RJP When I finish my dissertation, I'll be giving them all the interview tapes. But they would also love photographs.

KS Of course, I will give you everything I can.

RJP If there is no one, if it's really true that nobody here wants them, the Smithsonian would be a good place for them.

KS To tell you the truth, only one of my granddaughters is interested a little bit, but I will give it to you. Here are the U-2 girls Gasheva, Meklin—a Hero of the Soviet Union, you probably know that, but maybe you don't. Anyway, I know that I have it somewhere . . .

RJP And your last name during the war--

KS Kravchenko.

RJP And your husband is Savitskiy?

KS Yes. He died early, in 1952.

RJP That's sad . . .

[discussion between Kravchenko and my assistant, Volodia, about the town of Yoshkar-Ola]

KS We flew there. I flew there with Katya Fedotova and Zhenia Timofeeva for replenishment in 1944. We flew there in 1944 and got nine new crews.

RJP Would you mind signing the back of this picture for me?

KS How do you spell your name?

[I spelled it for her]

KS Reina, that sounds Latvian, doesn't it?

RJP No, it is a Spanish name. My grandmother was Spanish.

KS Really?!

RJP It means queen.

KS So interesting!

RJP This is Raskova?

KS Yes this is also Raskova, here she is sitting. Can I give you some pictures of Raskova? Here she is, very pretty, sitting among the children.

RJP Well I think maybe that's all my questions.

KS Okay. I will definitely gather some pictures for you, I have some from the front, and these ones from after the war. Here is the division commander and our Markov, and they are thinking what to do with us, and everyone is laughing. This picture is from Valentin Vasil'evich. They are thinking, What should we do with these girls?

RJP Is Markov on the right?

KS Yes, on the right. And the other one is the division commander, he is in charge. There are not many left from after the war, I will pick some for you. It is all valuable to me, but when I think that all of this will be thrown away, I am ready to give it away.

RJP I can pay to have copies made.

KS No need. This is the division commander who came to our regiment with his navigator. We crowded into the staff dugout, many of our girls.

[discussion of the release form and signature]

RJP What really pleases me about making tapes is that in fifty or a hundred years someone will go back and actually hear you tell this story.

KS Angels' voices . . . we will be in heaven.