

Interview with Lydia Lang in Oxford, Ohio, USA –August 26, 2019

About her husband Anton Lang:

Georgy was married four times. Georgy sent money to Vera Lang (Anton's mother) in Germany until WWII.

Anton & Lydia met Anton's step-sister, Irene Lang(?), a physicist, twice in St. Petersburg (dates unknown, c. 1970-1980?), at least one of these meetings was at Irene's home. Lydia remembers Irene as a non-talkative, heavy smoker whose husband did the majority of hosting & speaking, and that Irene sat "as a guest" in her own home, just smoking and barely speaking.

Lydia has no recollection of any knowledge of Georgy's ancestors.

Lydia says that Anton & his mother spent four years (at the family dacha) in Finland after leaving Russia. After Finland, Anton & his mother moved to Berlin (or Labes, Pommern?) when Anton was approx. 14-years old. To Anton's German-based relatives: Anton had an aunt who married a German man, a "landowner". Anton's mother took a job as a nurse in Berlin. Anton studied at the University of Berlin (Humboldt), graduating high in his class.

Anton & Lydia married in Berlin in 1946.

Vera Lang emigrated to Montreal (Canada) via boat, as she feared to fly (she went there following Anton & Lydia's relocation there, when Anton was offered a position at McGill University) –Lydia says that was 1949. Vera then followed them to Los Angeles, where she eventually died (c. 1956?) and was buried in San Francisco (where there was a large Russian community that she was somehow connected to).

Lydia was supposedly pregnant with Peter (their 1stchild) when they emigrated to Canada (Peter was born on 21 March 1949).By the way, Anton's Wikipedia entry is incorrect in that it says they moved to Canada with Peter; Peter was born in Canada. Then they moved to California when "Peter was 4-years old" (Michael Lang was born in Los Angeles on 6 December 1953; Irene Lang was born on 6 December 1958 in Tübingen, Germany, while the family was there for Anton's sabbatical).

Lydia's family history

(Due to dementia and probably Lydia's young age when she was still living with her father's age, some information about her mother's and father's family is mixed. MvdH are remarks by Masha Alexandra van der Heyde)

Her family was from St. Petersburg, upper class, rich.

Lydia's mother: Elena Jakowleff (maiden name), profession: fashion model

Lydia's grandfather(?): Vladimir (Lydia: "very rich in St. Petersburg, a millionaire")

Lydia's grandmother: no information

Elena's siblings: Viktor, Boris, Georg, Kyrill, Eugenia(ie, Lydia's aunt & uncles).

Eugenia married Gustav Holzwarth and they had a son, Arnold

Lydia lost touch with her family, except her mother, after moving to Canada.

Elena's 1st husband: Theodore Kamendrovsky (they divorced in Paris after Kamendrovsky was arrested for possessing a gun, and then was exiled to Belgium –apparently, he was very jealous of Elena's model/social-life; Kamendrovsky later moved to Germany, but not to Berlin, and then married a German woman).

Elena's 2nd husband: Michael Zacharow (an engineer for AEG in Berlin), married in Berlin; Zacharow was a long-time friend of the family, who all thought he would marry Eugenia, but he married Elena instead. Family lore says that Elena "stole" Zacharow from her sister.

Elena & Michael Zacharow moved to Sao Paulo after the war (1947 or '48) after being denied entry into the USA because Zacharow had (once had?) tuberculosis.

Lydia was born in Bonn, Germany, on 5 April 1924, where her grandparents owned a bank. [*Several newspaper articles mention Feodor Sr. – 'Father' in my story – to have become an assistant director of a bank in Bonn- MvdH*]. As a 4-year old child, Lydia's family moved to Paris for ten years, where they started a (successful) Russian restaurant [*Djiguite MvdH*] (at which Lydia's aunt & uncles all worked, as well as Theodore Kamendrovsky, who was the maître d'hotel and "an alcoholic").

Vladimir [*Yakowleff MvdH*] was also in the sausage manufacturing business (apparently quite successful; Lydia: "They imported sheep intestines from Turkey"), with factories in St. Denis (which Michael visited in 1958), Berlin, and Casablanca. They also had a country ("weekend") home in Buchov, Germany [*It is mentioned with Vladimir Yakovlev's information at his burial in Tegel that they lived in Berlin-Bukhov MvdH*]. What's unclear here is: Did Vladimir (who died in Paris, date unknown; buried at a "Russian cemetery in Paris, next to a famous ballet dancer" –Lydia - also keep a home in Paris after the family moved to Berlin? [*Vladimir her grandfather on mother's side was buried in Tegel, Berlin. Her other grandfather Feodor Sr. was buried in Paris next to a famous ballet dancer MvdH*]

–Lydia says he had a "dual residency". Lydia said that Vladimir left the sausage business his four sons, who then ruined the business. Perhaps when Michael (& family) visited the Paris factory it was already operated by the four sons? It is unknown why their Paris restaurant ceased and when the entire family moved to Berlin. [*The Paris restaurant belonged to the Kamendrovsky family, not the Yakowleff family. It ceased due to the Nazi's. Only Elena and little Lydia moved back to her family in Berlin, where her mother's family had stayed/ MvdH*]

Lydia's aunt & uncles: one aunt, four uncles—all moved to Berlin, too, and lived in one, large flat (with Vladimir & Elena?), nearby Vladimir's factory. *[I don't know whether this is about Lydia's mother's or father's family. Feodor Sr.'s family did all live together. MvdH]*

WWII –Lydia lived (at Kaiserdamm13) in Berlin during WWII (her grandfather “left the room anytime Hitler spoke on the radio”). The family (and Anton) were “stateless”. Lydia worked as a secretary for a “physicist” named Sommer (“He had a big Packard” automobile),but Sommer fled Berlin when the Russian army entered Berlin, ending Lydia's employment.

Anton, to my knowledge, spent the war at a satellite laboratory of the Max Planck Institute, somewhere in the German countryside (and Lydia & he communicated only by letters during the war). When the Russian army ‘liberated’ Berlin, they treated Lydia's family well, giving them food, happy to find Russian speakers in Berlin (although Elena kept Lydia hidden in the basement anytime Russian soldiers would visit).