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Dec. 3, 2024
Essay 5 revision

The Story of My Grandmother's Life

As my grandmother, Nina, says, “The history of the family is the history of the country”. I chose my grandmother for the *Oral History Interview* because she is the oldest and most knowledgeable person in my family. I was fascinated by learning how historical events affected her family and personal life. Nina's childhood and adult life are tightly connected with historical and political events in Russia and the Soviet Union.

My grandmother's childhood was difficult, but she always found a reason to be happy. She had a big family, her parents and eight kids. They all lived in a small house, consisting of only two rooms, but they had a lot of land on which the whole family worked very hard. It was a primary source of food for them. Nevertheless, Nina was one of the few in her village who finished ten grades of school, while most could only finish three. She enjoyed school because it was an opportunity for her to be surrounded by intelligent and educated teachers, whom she still remembers by their full names. My grandmother's favorite classes were Russian language and literature, especially poetry. Also, at school, she met her best friend, with whom she liked singing while her friend played guitar. She moved out of her parents' house as soon as she finished tenth grade and began working in a neighboring village as an administrator at a village club, where cultural and political events were held.

Political and historical events had a significant influence on my grandmother and her family. Nina's father, Parmen, moved to Siberia with his family when he was a child. Stolypin

who was the Prime Minister of Russia, carried out agrarian reforms at the beginning of the 20th century. These reforms provided plots of land for free to all residents, but these plots were in remote regions of the country and there was nothing there except land. No houses, schools, hospitals, or other infrastructure were provided. It was about surviving, and not all were lucky; a lot of people died because of disease, hunger, or the Siberian winter. When Parmen was an adult, he had his own family with Motya and eight kids; then, World War II happened. He was called up to serve. Nina's mother, Motya, worked on the collective farm every day without any time off. She was not paid for this job; only sometimes she could have a little food or feed for the animals. My grandmother was about six or seven years old at this time, and the oldest sibling was twelve. The children were left alone and could only rely on themselves. During World War II, all the harvest that was collected in the village was sent to the front to feed the soldiers. In the village itself, hunger began, and Nina was on the verge of death. Her mother had already sewed her a dress to bury her, but fortunately, Motya managed to find some food and my grandmother survived. In 1989 - 1992 the Soviet Union collapse happened, and it also led to a lot of changes in Nina's life. She struggled to find a job during this period. Food became so expensive that she barely could afford it, but later she found some advantages of this political change. My grandmother considers the main difference between life under the Soviet regime and after its abolition to be freedom of the press and speech. She is also religious, and she needs to be able to go to church, which she could not do during the time of the USSR. This freedom allowed her to read her favorite authors and explore foreign literature as well. Nina has always loved to read, and her bedroom is like a library; she still recites poems by heart.

In conclusion, my grandmother has encountered plenty of challenges since she was a child. All the historical changes that happened in her life made her resilient, smart, and the

kindest, most generous, and sincere person I know. She believes that in the most difficult times, she didn't despair, because any problems can be overcome if one has a goal. I am so thankful for this assignment which gave me a reason to conduct an *Oral History Interview*. As a result, I have obtained valuable information for me and future generations in my family about our history.