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NOTES ON PETRO MYKHAILOVYCH TOMCHUK: FATHER AND SCIENTIST

This is the first time, I am writing about my father. I am not a writer, and I do not need to write long texts. In the relatively short time between colleagues' idea of publication and the deadline when you need to have a finished manuscript, it is difficult to describe a person. I tried to collect my memories of my father and the stories, either associated with him or that he sometimes shared. The human brain tends to retain what impresses it, namely, the bright and dark moments of life.

Keywords: Petro Tomchuk, the Institute of Physics.

Childhood

My father was born sometime between October and December 1933 in a village which, at the time of his birth, was located almost on the border between Poland and Ukraine. The date inaccuracy is a result of the tradition that was quite widespread in those days in villages: to register newborn children in a church not immediately, but in a certain time. For children born at the end of a year, registration was almost always postponed till the beginning of the next year, so that the next year would appear in the birth record. I read somewhere that this “trick” supposedly gave more time before the already grown boy could be taken to the recruits. Nobody, neither the father’s mother, nor his brother or sister, remembered the exact date of his birth. So, the father may have lived to his 91st birthday.

The village was old, founded in the 15th or 16th century, quite large and rich. In the village, there was a stone church, a manor house, the remnants of defensive ramparts, and underground passages from the times of the Terebovlya principedom. My father’s childhood included the annexation of Western Ukraine to the USSR, World War II, the post-war Holodomor, repressions, and collectivization. A lot of peasants simply did not survive. At that time, my father was small and therefore perceived even ter-

rible events through the prism of a child’s world outlook.

Toward the end of the Soviet Union and in the first years of independent Ukraine, we often went to my father’s native village. Usually, this happened during holidays (Christmas, Easter, Green Holidays, and others). We could not help visiting all relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and friends. At the table, we mostly recalled common events from our childhood. Many of them cannot be evaluated without knowing specific people or places. My memories of conversations at those times are somewhat fragmentary, but each of them impressed me in its own way and remained in my memory, because it revealed different aspects of the environment, where my father grew up. The brightest of them are as follows.

- My father once recalled that, when he was still very young, he and other children hid in the field, because the Polish noblemen Horodyski were driving by on their way to their palace.
- Near the family house, just outside the garden, there was a large pond (about a kilometer long). My father always swam well.
- When a child, everyone went to church. One of the clergymen who collected money at the end of the service had a tonsure, and the children standing on top stages tried to hit it with coins. Therefore, the clergyman always walked, looking up.
- Once during the war, Kovpak people came to their house and asked for food. The times were hungry, but at that time, the village specialized to some extent in the production of oil (sunflower and hemp). Therefore, my father’s mother put a bowl of oil and bread on the table. And they ate everything,

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without measure. The villagers later told how those Kovpak people moved through the forest toward the district center: one of them led the horses along the road, whereas all the others moved through the bushes. But, thank God, there were no consequences. People said that there were several similar stories in the region with a terrible ending.

- My father often mentioned the famine. He remembered, for example, that everyone in the family had already begun to swell from hunger, and only the appearance of the first berries and mushrooms saved them from death.

- At that time, the school was in a neighboring town. For many years, in any weather, my father had been going to school through the forest (about 7 km one way).

- My grandfather was a craftsman, probably a woodworker. My father remembered that they had many neatly hung and laid out tools. They could be taken and applied, but, it was important that each of them was put back in its place. The habit of order remained with him for the rest of his life.

- In the family, a story was told about a suitcase with books that either my grandfather or my great-grandfather had hidden during the revolution perturbations. They had died before they could tell where the hiding place was. The suitcase was never found, and it is probably still there.

- There was a legend in our village that a message from the times of the Cossack uprisings was buried under the old linden trees in the alley in front of the church. The alley was destroyed by heavy machinery in the last years of the USSR, but I managed to remember it.

In his memoirs, my father told about certain stupid and dangerous actions from his childhood, without hiding them, and they became an example for me of what not to do.

- One day in the war, an armored train was derailed near the village. Then, for years, children from the village found cartridges, shells, and mines in the swampy area, where the train overturned. One of his childhood friends lost a finger playing with them. My father told me that once he could not light the stove at home, so he brought a cap of gunpowder and poured it on the wood. Thank God, the burning gunpowder only forced all the jugs to take off into the air, but there was no other damage.

- Another time, my father cast a mace of lead (it was either a pastime or a fashion among the village boys). He made a mold for the mace using thick paper, but the paper burned through anyway. The molten lead got on his leg and caused a severe burn. The wound did not heal for about half a year, and the mark on his skin remained for life.

I remember a small story, but it stuck in my memory. As I said, my father went to school in a neighboring town, and often with a friend. In the last grade (or in one of the senior ones), this friend smoked cigarettes. Of course, he could not buy or get them somewhere; therefore, he often looked for cigarette butts. Once, when they were walking through the town, my father noticed a large cigarette butt and said to his friend, "Look, what a bull!" It so happened that a local beggar was sitting next to the cigarette butt and took this phrase for himself. He began to loudly indignate, so the guys had to quickly leave from there, because it was impossible to explain something.

Student Life

A little less was remembered by my father about his student years at Chernivtsi University: there were fewer opportunities. The post-war years were hungry. My father talked about the student life, studies, and funny situations. A certain common background that I felt in many of those memories was that few if any people took the construction of communism really seriously.

- Once, at a lecture on scientific communism, the lecturer's pants began to slip. Continuing the lecture, the lecturer put his hands in his pockets and, by twisting his torso, tried to imperceptibly pull them higher, as if it were nothing specific. But there was a specificity: at that moment, the lecturer was talking about the "revolutionary situation", which Lenin formulated as "the bottoms don't want and the tops cannot live in the old way". The explanations, which sounded synchronously with the movements of the lecturer's body, perfectly illustrated the problem and allowed not only my father, but also me, to remember the definition.

- A traditional oral or additional question on exams, like that on scientific communism, was the following one: "What decision did the Nth Congress (of the Communist Party of the USSR – translator's remark) make concerning the issue of XXX?" Students

in the audience prompted their fellow student standing at the board by spreading their arms to the sides and then lowering their arms down. The matter is that all the decisions of that congress (and maybe other congresses as well) sounded in Russian like “*rasshirit’* (to spread)... and *uglubit’* (to deepen)...”.

- Activists regularly went from room to room in the dormitory and checked, among other things, the political decoration of the rooms. A complaint about the lack of sufficient political content was made concerning the room, where my father lived. So, my father’s neighbor went to a shop, bought photos of all the members of the Politburo, and hung them on the walls. During the next inspection, the commission said that it was too much and some of the photos should be removed. Then the neighbor said that he liked them all, and let the commission itself say which members of the Politburo the commission did not like. The issue of political design was resolved, and their room was never bothered by such questions again.

- There were also funny moments. For instance, the students liked to gather in a group somewhere in the town center and look upward. Passers-by also began to scrutinize the sky in order to see what was going on there. The students gradually left, but the crowd remained standing for a long time.

One of the last father’s memories of the university was a summer military camp, where students mastered the military profession. Such camps are a powerful source of funny stories. In general, the drill bypassed my father, because he had large feet, exactly the same size as the colonel’s, and the colonel immediately expropriated his boots. Of course, nobody demanded that a “soldier” line up or march in slippers.

Another funny incident happened in the same camp. During the firing of the howitzer, my father was assigned to monitor the recoil (a separate person watches how the gun moves away and returns to its place after each shot, and loudly announces, “The recoil is normal”). The sun was shining. My father was kneeling, his head bowed to the ground, and, covering his ears with his hands, he shouted after each “bang”, “The recoil is normal”. A commission headed by a general approached them, saw this scene, and everything could have ended badly, but the commission simply laughed after the general did; the general had a normal sense of humor.

During their studies, the university students were supposed to receive teaching experience. For this pur-

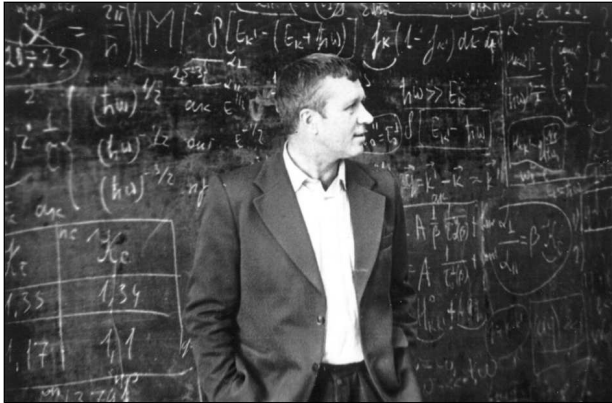


During the graduate studies, 1959. Top row (left to right): I.M. Dykman, E.I. Tolpygo, K.B. Tolpygo, I.G. Zaslavs’ka, Yu.I. Gorkun, S.I. Pekar, and others; bottom row (right to left): E.I. Rashba, B.E. Tsekvava, P.M. Tomchuk, O.A. Demydenko, D.I. Abakarov, and others. Photo courtesy of Andriy Oleksiyovych Demydenko, the son of O.A. Demydenko (sitting next to P.M. Tomchuk on the left) and Z.O. Demydenko (second from the left in the bottom row)

pose, they ran classes in schools. One of those lessons had to be “open”, i.e., not only the regular teacher was present, but also other teachers and someone from the school administration. As far as the father remembered, during such a lesson, he talked about inertia, mass, and phenomena related to them. For illustration, a small weight tied to a rope was used: the weight was lifted by the rope either slowly or by jerking it sharply. My father explained the phenomenon’s essence, explained what he would do during the demonstration, and described how, where, and why the rope should break. However, the rope was rotten, it was tied many times, and the demonstration gave the result opposite to what was expected. A classic “visit” effect happened! The children had fun, the teachers frowned, and later my father said, jokingly or seriously, that he had then realized that he liked theoretical physics more than experimental physics.

Postgraduate Studies, Beginning of Scientific Activity

After graduating with honors from the university in 1957, my father looked for a postgraduate study, in Kyiv and Kharkiv. It seems that he even managed to pass the Landau/Lifshits theoretical minimum, but



Petro Mykhailovych Tomchuk, 1972



Petro Mykhailovych with his wife Leonida Vasylivna and son Bohdan, 1978

my father was robbed, and there was no money to live in Kharkiv and wait a few weeks for an official answer. Such surprises can radically change a person's life. My father went to Kyiv and entered the postgraduate studies in the specialty "theoretical physics" at the Institute of Physics of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR (now the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), where he worked all his life. Probably, his colleagues can tell this story more accurately.

I don't know much about his life in those times. I heard some stories about his life in the dormitory (the building is still preserved), about some human relations, seminars, and traditional volleyball games during the lunch break.

Kyiv Letter

I learned one of the stories of those times in the late 1980s from my classmate who heard it on Ra-

dio "Svoboda". It turned out that my father was one of the signatories of the protest letter of 139 persons (the so-called Kyiv Letter). In 1968, a public letter in defense of the victims of political repression was sent to Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Pidirny. The letter particularly emphasized the injustice of the trial of V'yacheslav Chornovil. The signatories of the letter appealed to the Soviet leadership to listen to the people who were later called the first Soviet dissidents. The letter was sent at the times, when the Soviet troops invaded the Czechoslovak Republic and the fight against the dissident movement was intensified. Among the signatories, there were many colleagues whom I later met: Bondar, Sarbey, Sitenko, and many others. The Central Committee, of course, sent the letter to the "places" (and to the institute) to deal with the troublemakers. My father once told me with a smile that, seemingly, the director met him somewhere in the corridor and invited him to a meeting to embarrass the signatories, but he refused and said, "I have signed this letter too."

From the 1960s to the Early 1970s

I don't know much about this period. I heard a lot of conversations, some names were mentioned, but a name without a face is poorly preserved in my memory. I only have a vague feeling that those were the times of enormous shifts in science, the times of bright enthusiasm and progress. At that time, my father married my mother. She was also a physicist, but worked at the Institute for Nuclear Research. And I appeared. In the late 1970s, we moved from the "guesthouse" on "Salyut" (a town region near the cinema Salyut (Salute)—translator's remark) to a new apartment on Lomonosova Street (now Yulii Zdanovs'koi Street), where my father lived and worked till the end of his life.

Active Life and Sport

It is difficult to say whether this was due to a natural inclination or a habit that developed in time, but my father always maintained a good physical condition. The life in a village from the childhood naturally stimulates the physical development, but my father's childhood was, in a sense, extreme. As far as I can remember, all his life, except for, probably, the last 15 years, my father jogged 5–7 km around the Holiiv Lakes every day in the morning. Then, he

went to work, also very often on foot (4 km one way with a rather large altitude difference). He also practiced yoga: he stood on his head and pulled in his stomach. Even when my father was close to the age of 80, he stood on his head several times a week. At work, many colleagues and he would play volleyball during their lunch break.

From my father's stories about those times, life at the institute was in full swing: people were permanently coming and going both day and night, discussing something, drinking coffee, playing chess, calculating; there was a permanent motion. At home, we still have a chessboard with a donation inscription stating that my father was the institute's blitz champion (with signatures and a seal).

From the Late 1970s to the Early 1980s

These were difficult times for my father. My mother was diagnosed with an incomprehensible illness. She temporarily lost her sight, and her limbs became paralysed. Finally, multiple sclerosis was diagnosed. My mother spent quite a long time in various hospitals. At some moment, it happened that my mother was in the hospital, I was in another hospital undergoing a planned operation, and my father was running between us. Additionally, my father's finger became infected, and its condition worsened every day. The finger was anesthetized several times and cleaned almost to the bone, but it got to the point that a council met and decided to amputate the finger. My father even agreed, but since we were all in hospitals, the operation was postponed for several days. During that time, the finger began to heal, and the organism coped with the infection.

Single Father

My mother could not overcome the disease. At my grandmother's request, she was buried in her native village in the Rivne region. From my childhood memories, my grandmother lived with us for probably six months after my mother's death. She permanently walked around the house and cried, "Who did you leave us for?.." These are hard memories.

I think that my father introduced a strict discipline to himself at that time in response to life's hardships.

- He woke me up in the morning and took me to school.



The team that was awarded the State Prize in 1986. Top row (left to right): Yu.F. Komnyk, S.O. Nepiiko, P.M. Tomchuk, R.D. Fedorovych; bottom row (left to right): O.G. Sarbey, G.A. Katrych, P.G. Borzyak

- Whenever possible, he ran his 7 km and took a shower. Whenever possible, he walked 4 km to work and the same distance back home in the evening.

- He picked me up from school in the evening (for children whose parents worked, there was an opportunity to stay at school after the lessons and do their homework).

- He cooked dinner. He often brought me some part of a decommissioned device, and I spent the whole evening disassembling it in the corridor. This fascinated me, and he could calmly do the cooking.

- After the evening cartoon, we went to bed and, as long as I was unable to read, he read me books. At first, these were children's books, and then – very quickly – Jules Verne, Dumas, Conan Doyle ...

- Finally, we fell asleep (I thought so). However, later, I found out that every day, my father got up and worked for a few more hours in his study at home. Generally speaking, I slept well, but sometimes I woke up and went to the toilet. And I remember my father's back bent over the table, his figure lit only by a table lamp, and the sound of a pen scratching on paper, under which I fell asleep again. Almost till the 1990s, my father wrote or made calculations using an ordinary ink pen (by dipping it into an inkwell, as he used to do at school).

The work never stopped, and very often on weekends, my father's colleagues came to visit. Bohdan

Lev and Yevhen Bilotsky were those who came very often. Actually, I suspect that almost all his colleagues came, more or less often. Everything happened quite domestically: work, discussions, a coffee break, more work, and a few “goodbye” chess games with chess enthusiasts.

Very often on weekends, if there were no scheduled meetings, we went to a scientific bookstore at the intersection of Mykhaila Kotsiubynskogo and Bohdana Khmelnytskogo streets. Even then, my father had collected a rather good scientific library in his home study.

The intensive work did not remain unnoticed. In 1986, my father became a laureate of the State Prize in Science and Engineering. I learned about this award and many others much later and accidentally, because my father was not one to brag. At the time of receiving the award, I was far away due to the Chernobyl disaster.

Chernobyl Disaster

My father became aware of the Chernobyl disaster on the night of the event. Physicists were those few people who immediately understood the potential risks and the scale of the problem. On the disaster night, my class and I were on a hike and got caught in the rain. When I returned home on Sunday, my father took all my clothes, sent me to wash, and, as I came to know later, checked himself all my things for radioactivity. I had not gone to school since Monday, and I remember how strange it was that there was nobody in the courtyard of our “academic” building, while a normal life continued in the neighboring ones.

A week later, we left for my father’s native village. There was also a moment there, the importance of which I learned about years later. The authorities sent out a directive on the sanitary control of visitors to all districts. We were summoned to the district hospital, something was measured there with a dosimeter for a long time, and then we were released. As my father said years later, the device went off scale. The specialists went out into the field and made sure that it was simply a malfunctioning device.

This catastrophe considerably changed our lives. For half a year, I studied in the district center in my father’s homeland. After returning to Kyiv, a new routine appeared that protected us from the risks of radioactive contamination. For years, several times a week, we went to get spring water for drinking and

cooking. At least once a week, we cleaned everywhere with a vacuum cleaner. Every day or every other day, my father wiped the dust with a wet rag.

Business Trips

In addition to what was already written above about those years, my experiences associated with my father’s business trips to conferences or defenses have stuck in my memory. I was always a little anxious when he was absent. From his stories, the trips were frequently a source of adventures. As I wrote, when he looked for a graduate school, he was robbed. Much later, at one of the conferences, he gave his plane ticket to an older, respectable colleague who urgently needed to return to Kyiv, whereas he himself was supposed to return the next day. However, everything went awry: either there was no ticket at all, or there was a ticket, but not for the required date. So, they agreed that my father would fly on a technical flight. I don’t remember all the details, but there were problems associated with the flight and the weather, and my father flew around several cities to get home. At every point, it was unclear when and how everything would be resolved. Those trips included an oriental flavor, earthquakes, snow-covered passes, and 40-degree heat.

Toward the end of the 1980s, the authorities gradually began to allow scientists to travel abroad: first to socialist countries, and later to the West. Trips to conferences in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany were uneventful. My father had known Polish since his childhood, many people in the Czech Republic at that time still understood Russian, and father studied German at school, so, at least he could get his bearings or ask a question.

Once my father was at a party at the home of his German colleague. Everyone had already dispersed into groups, discussing something. My father was sitting in an armchair, and at the other end of the room was a cat: all German-like, with a ribbon around its neck. Suddenly, my father said, “Deutsche Katza, komm zu hier” (“German cat, come here”). The cat stood up and walked very solemnly across the room to him. This event caused laughter and excitement in the entire audience.

Another time, at a conference in the late 1980s, my father entered a store in the center of Montreal and met there a neighbor from our floor. At that time, such trips were very rare, and meeting a neigh-



Presentation of the State Prize of Ukraine, 1995. Left to right: P.M. Tomchuk, M.K. Sheikman, B.E. Paton, N.B. Luk'yanchynova, L.D. Kuchma, T.V. Torchynska, and others

bor on the other side of the planet seemed almost unbelievable.

Once, rushing to catch a plane, maybe to Tbilisi, my father mistakenly took my passport from the drawer. Neither he, nor the police, nor the flight attendant noticed it, although the photo was completely different (my hair formed a huge hat on my head). My father flew in normally. He noticed the mistake only when checking into the hotel. In those days, airplane hijackings happened, and not long before, there was such an incident near the border with Turkey. So, my father decided not to take risks. One of the conference organizers took him to the airport chief, where my father told his story. As one might imagine, the colorful Georgian said, "Well, why are you so, dear?" and issued his permission.

From the Late 1980s to the 1990s

That was the time of perturbations and hopes. The beginning of perestroika, the opening of closed archives, the emergence of independence movements, the collapse of the Soviet Union ... A new facet had

opened in the life of scientific intelligentsia: scientists were actively interested in the history of Ukraine and closed archives. The home library was replenished with modern books on the history of Ukraine and memoirs of dissidents.

An interesting moment: against the background of uncertainty about the future and economic difficulties, esotericism flourished. I recall several such moments from my father's stories.

- Muscovites came to the institute to make a report at a seminar. And my father told that about 10–20 min after the seminar had begun, when having heard about torsion fields and energy-free interaction, theoretical physicists started to leave the auditorium. It was very difficult for them to even listen to such nonsense.

- Another time, some enthusiast wrote and published (probably at his own expense) a book on quantum medicine and presented it to Paton (Borys Paton, President of the NAS of Ukraine at that time—translator's remark). Paton gave it to the director of the Institute of Physics, who, in turn, gave it to



Father and son, in Petro Mykhailovych's office, 2004



Petro Mykhailovych in his office, 2006

my father for an unofficial refereeing. There is a certain type of scientists who like to rewrite some well-known phenomenon in their own special terms and notations. This book was an example of an extreme manifestation of such a phenomenon.

Quite regularly, and in the 2000s as well, my father received letters from people who believed that they had discovered violations of certain fundamental laws of physics. Such cases were mainly a result of

nonunderstanding of the nature of the specific phenomenon or the limits of applicability (the closedness of the system, the statistical character of the law, and so forth).

In the 1990s, the active scientific work continued, and my father was awarded the second State Prize, now of independent Ukraine, and later the title of Honored Worker in Science and Engineering. The administrative work was added as well: my father headed the expert council of the State Committee for Scientific and Technological Development. The meetings were held quite regularly, and he returned home late.

From the Late 1990s to the 2000s

It so happened that, from the mid-1990s, I was engaged in science, and then worked abroad. My generalized feeling of those times is the struggle of science for survival. Funding was unstable, and a lot of time was taken up by administrative issues (the struggle for grants, long-term business trips of employees). In a way, my change from science to civilian activity was also caused by one of those crises: the USA and Japan withdrew from the ITER project (as it turned out later, they simply paused and partially revised the project). So, the prospects for scientific activity became very difficult, and many colleagues looked for new topics. It seems to me that my father was worried that I had left science, which I had entered being inspired by his example. At first, the situation seemed temporary (I thought so too), but later the routine and the situation in science won. I know for sure that my father was very worried whenever a graduate student or a colleague left the institute. In recent years, this happened mostly because the scholarship was not enough for life, whereas the parallel work took all the time.

During the years, certain traditions have developed at the department and the institute as a whole. The colleagues celebrated birthdays and holidays together in the department or in the library. I was always impressed by the sense of human relations and mutual support at the institute and in the academic environment in general.

On the Attitude Toward and Death

We were always together, and I think that my father felt my fear of losing the person closest to him. We always avoided the topic of death. A certain contrast



Photo with colleagues and disciples on Petro Mykhailovych's 75th anniversary, 2009. Left to right: S.S. Rozhkov, B.I. Lev, K.V. Usenko, A.O. Snarsky, M.I. Grygorchuk, P.M. Gorley, O.O. Chumak, P.M. Tomchuk, V.M. Bondar, V.M. Gorshkov, V.A. Shenderovsky, O.E. Levshyn, O.V. Kondrachuk; sitting: A.I. Shchedrin

were our trips to the village, where the attitude toward life and death was more neutral. During the visits, a large part of the news exchange was who died and why, and, thank God, who got married or was born.

In the village, older people often liked to stand near the fences or sit on a bench and exchange a few phrases with everyone who passed by. My father mentioned several times about such an old woman who stood in her yard near the fence; after exchanging such news or when being asked about her health, she said to him, "Son, something must torture anyone..." This phrase was remembered, and we mentioned it several times.

As far as I know, my father really had one foot in the grave three times in his life. For the first time, it was when he was still a little boy and experienced hunger. This changed him for the rest of his life. He always made sure that food did not spoil, and he never threw food away.

Before talking about the second time, I have to describe my father's attitude to medicine. He was always an adherent of minimal medical intervention. He said that you cannot put your organism under manual control. When he was prescribed some kind of



In the village in Ternopil region, 2008

treatment, he refused it relatively quickly, because it did more harm than good in his case. My father lived with atrial fibrillation all his life – or rather, at least the last 40 years – which may explain such an effect of pharmaceuticals in his case. He tried to treat some abnormalities or diseases with folk methods. For example, he regulated blood pressure problems by means of walks and coffee: if you have a tickle in the throat, then take a spoonful of honey or



In the lobby on the third floor of the Institute of Physics near Petro Mykhailovych's office, together with the staff of the Department of Theoretical Physics, 2018. Left to right: E.V. Stolyarov, A.M. Sokolov, V.M. Starkov, I.S. Gandzha, P.M. Tomchuk, O.O. Chumak, V.A. Shenderovsky, O.V. Polevets'ka, I.L. Bazyk, S.B. Chernyshuk, Y.V. Sedlets'ky, V.V. Gozhenko, V.M. Pergamenshchyk

a drop of cognac... Because of this approach, he only went to doctors in special cases. In the early 2000s, in the spring, my father fell ill, probably with the flu, and felt very weak (it was difficult for him to climb even a few steps to the elevator), so, he decided to go to the hospital in Feofania, where he was assigned as a corresponding member of the NASU. My father was examined and sent home, but he fainted in the hospital corridor. Fortunately, the resuscitation team was nearby, and they saved him. My father was diagnosed with severe anemia. He was prescribed treatment, and gradually he returned to normal life, but the disease remained with him forever.

The last incident occurred about fifteen years ago. It is impossible to clarify all the circumstances, but, on his way home, my father either stumbled or felt dizzy, and he fell on the spiral staircase in the central building of the institute. Although the times were hard (a 4- or 3-day working week, and there were few people in the institute), my father was quickly found and urgently admitted to Feofania with

a huge hematoma on his head, a completely crushed shoulder, and all that on the anemia background. I remember that the doctor warned me, "You understand: age, condition; he may not survive the operation." But my father was sure: the operation must be done. Six weeks in the hospital, an artificial joint, long rehabilitation, but my father returned to almost normal life.

I would like to emphasize the role of his colleagues. They helped, accompanied, visited, and brought things and products. As I remember, Stas Chernyshuk, who found my father in the institute after the fall, did not leave him in the period, when my father was hospitalized.

COVID, War

COVID did a lot of damage. My father suspected that he and many colleagues at the institute had contracted COVID. Most colleagues and my father experienced what is called the post-COVID syndrome

(fatigue, pain). My father and his colleagues had to quickly adapt to remote work. Fortunately, I could help him at least with computer issues. We communicated daily via the Internet. Against the background of COVID-induced restrictions (e.g., the inability to visit a doctor), my father's eyesight deteriorated substantially closer to the end of the pandemic. Doctors could not do anything. My father did not give up. With his colleagues, he prepared articles based on earlier calculations and developed new ideas. Almost without a break, one disaster was followed by another, the full-scale war.

As long as I can remember, my father had a positive attitude toward life, and he almost always had a slight smile on his face. Even in his last years, against the background of the war and his health, which began to deteriorate, he told me, "There is meaning in living, as long as it is interesting to live." Till his last days, he followed the events in the world and science, joined online seminars, meetings, and participated in votes during scientific councils.

In the last weeks/months of his life, he worried about me, about the fact that he had not straightened out our things. Against the background of the

stroke consequences, the last months of his life were more difficult. In calmer moments, he wanted to return home. On one of the occasions, when the nurse, as always politely and calmly, reminded, "Petro Mykhailovych, you are at home, in your office...", my father clarified, "To the village". Now, he is resting there ...

I sincerely thank all the family, friends, disciples, colleagues, and acquaintances who were with him during those difficult times.

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Translated from Ukrainian by O.I. Voitenko

Б. Томчук

НОТАТКИ ПРО ПЕТРА МИХАЙЛОВИЧА
ТОМЧУКА: БАТЬКА І НАУКОВЦЯ

Я вперше пишу про батька. Я не письменник і в роботі не маю потреби в написанні великих текстів. За відносно короткий проміжок часу між ідеєю колег про публікацію і терміном, коли потрібно мати вже готовий рукопис, важко описати людину. Я спробував зібрати свої спогади про батька й історії, з ним пов'язані чи якими він деколи ділився. Людський мозок має тенденцію зберігати те, що вразило: світлі й темні моменти життя.

Ключові слова: Петро Томчук, Інститут фізики.