

Outstanding Geneticist and more than just a Wife

Elena Aleksandrovna Timoféeff-Ressovsky

[21 June 1898 - 29 April 1973]



Special Scientific Achievements

Due to the adventurous academic life of her husband, Elena Aleksandrovna Timoféeff-Ressovsky always remained in his shadow, although both of them published studies on *Drosophila genetics and radioactive contamination of ground and water*. During 20 years of research in Berlin, she became one of an internationally recognized geneticist.

1898 Born in Moscow on June 21. (according to the Julian calendar, June 8); among many siblings she grows up in a sheltered environment and receives an excellent school education.

1917 Studies of biology and zoology in Moscow, where she meets and marries Nikolaj Timoféeff-Ressovsky in 1922.

1923 Birth of son Dimitrij (†1945).

1925 Following an invitation, the Timoféeff-Ressovskys travel to Berlin with their son to do research on genetics in the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut* for Brain Research (KWI).

1927 Birth of son Andrej.

1929 Nikolaj Timoféeff-Ressovsky becomes head of his own department for Experimental Genetics, where Elena works as assistant.

1931 The *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut* for Brain Research moves into the new building in Berlin-Buch.

The working conditions in the KWI are advantageous for female scientists. Cécile Vogt worked at this institute as a department head. In addition, Elena Timoféeff-Ressovsky, Estera Tenenbaum, Stella Rose, Rosa Schragenheim, Irmgard Leux and Getrud Soeken were among the female scientists who worked at this institute.

1933 Elena is officially removed from her assistant position due to the pressure of the Nazis against so-called „double earners“. However, she continues working in the laboratory of her husband.

1937 The Department for Experimental Genetics is independent and linked to the KWI only spatially. Marguerite Vogt works on her dissertation in the department of Timoféeff-Ressovsky and receives her doctorate in 1937.

1943 Son Dimitrij is arrested because of activities against the Nazis.

1945 Dimitrij is killed in the concentration camp Mauthausen.

In autumn of the same year, Elena's husband is arrested by the Russian NKWD ("The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs") in Berlin-Buch and taken to Moscow to the infamous prison Lubjanka, then sentenced to imprisonment and interned in a camp in Kazakhstan. Another department of the NKWD, which seeks his assistance and active cooperation in atomic research, finds him after a year. He is released from the camp and committed to collaborating on the Soviet atomic bomb project.

1946/1947 Elena works as assistant at the Zoological Institute in the department of Hans Nachtsheim at the University of Berlin.

1947 Elena Timoféeff-Ressovsky and her son Andrej travel to the Ural, where – in the meantime – Nikolaj is collaborating on the Soviet atomic bomb project. The couple works together in the project in Sungul focusing on research into radiation damage.

1955 The Timoféeff-Ressovskys are permitted to travel and publish scientific materials once again but only within the USSR.

1955 - 1964 Together with her husband, Elena works in the Department of Radiobiology and Biophysics at the Institute for Biology Sverdlovsk (Academy of Sciences in the USSR). Here, Elena works on her thesis for the State Doctorate (habilitation).

1964 - 1973 Retiree (*Konsultant*) in the laboratory in the Department of Radiobiology and Genetics at the Institute for Medical Radiology in Obninsk near Moscow. The lab is led by N. Timoféeff-Ressovsky.

1973 Elena dies on April 29.