Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A.
January 9, 1984.

"From The Book Of Happiness And Sorrow!"

What you are about to read, are memories. Fond memories but many of them are sad. This is why they come at least certain part of them from the "Book of Sorrow". Most of the people who participate in those memories are no longer among ~~xxxxxxxx~~ us but THEIR MEMORY remain here to guide the living.

I don't anticipate these memories will ever be published. Not in my lifetime anyway.

This story is not a work of art. But it is our way in our own words to great once again and remember with affection those old familiar places and to touch them as we would be there

We memorialize here our Dear Parents and Grandparents and all our relatives wherever they may rest.

With all our love we dedicate this story to Jack, Elaine, Andrew and Emily, and all other children and grandchildren in our family, whom we love dearly as well.

It remain our hope that this writing will serve the purpose for which it is intended. "To Remember!"

By
Chester and Anna Mondschein

Part 1

Chapter 1

The Beginning!

I was born 62 years ago, on November 29, 1921. My present name is Chester and I am your father and grandfather. My family name is Mondschein as yours. My given name in Poland was Czesław. My parents, and all my relatives used to call me "Cesiek". My Yiddish or Hebrew name is Tzadok (Cudyk) after my paternal grandfather. My father's name was Jakub (Jacob), Yakob in Hebrew or Yankiel in Yiddish.

My mother's family name was Nussbaum. Her first name was Ester Roza. Family and friends used to call her Rózia. Her Yiddish name was Ester Reisel, and Hebrew name was Shoshana.

Anna, your mother and grandmother came to this world (in Tuchów) two months later on January 31, 1922 as a younger twin by 10 or 15 minutes to her twin sister Frieda. As you already know before we came to United States Anna was "Hania". Her Yiddish or Hebrew name is Hanah Lea. Frieda's name in Poland was Fryda. Her Yiddish (Hebrew) name is "Fradl". Their parents were Abraham (Avrum) Leniower and Franciska (Sarah Feiga) Salomon Leniower, whom all of you knew as your grandma Frances.

The third and the youngest child of Leniowers was another girl Ela (Ethel) born October 29, 1923.

I was my parents only child, born in the middle of night in Cracow, Poland in a room which was part of my uncle Ludwik's and his wife's aunt Rose apartment on Berek Joselewicz Street No. 11. Uncle Ludwik was my mother's brother. My parents used to rent the room from him because of acute shortage of apartments in those days in Cracow. As far as Berek Joselewicz was concerned, Poles named a street after him because he was a Polish-Jewish hero with a rank of colonel who had fought Prussia, Austria and Russia for Poland's independence throughout the years when Poland was partitioned among the above European powers in 1700s.

Both my mother and father came to Cracow from a small town Zbarash in south-eastern Poland. Most of their brothers and sisters on boths sides of the family left Zbarash in those days and settled in Cracow. Mondscheins and Nussbaums new each other well in Zbarash, so probably my mother and father even went to school together.

Abraham Leniower was born in Niedźwiada near Rzeszów, but his roots were in Ropczyce, another small town near Rzeszów.

After his father's death Abraham Leniower took over the family's ranching business. In the days prior to world war one, during and after Leniowers used to own a large spread of land in the village of Karwodrza near a small town Tuchów. It was there, where he met and later married your grandma Frances. They got married in 1919 or 1920.

Many years after my birth I was told by my parents that I was delivered by a ceasarian section, and that my mother almost died while giving birth.

Another complication added much suffering not only to my mother but my early life in this world. The doctor who attended my mother injured with one of his instruments my right eye, which made me blind for the rest of my life.

Our family in Cracow made sure and took me to the best eye specialist in Cracow in those days. He was one Dr. Rosenhauch. He was Jewish and a colonel in Polish army. He wasn't able to save my sight, because if he would try to remove the white spot from my retina it would leave me blind anyway. As I found out later when I grew up, Dr. Rosenhauch was a wonderful person and was always there for me throughout my 17 years in Cracow.

My mother's recovery took a long time. In meantime my aunt Mala, wife of my uncle Gabriel my mother's brother took care of me. Our family in Cracow was very close, and I remember all of them always being around.

As our family in Cracow was always there, when we needed them, the girls family in Tuchow the Salomons were always there as well. Both their grandmothers were alive. Grandma Mariam Salomon in Tuchów and grandma Gitl Leniower in Stykow.

Chapter 1

The Beginning!

Grandma Mariam in Tuchów was always much closer to the girls who throughout the years had spent much more time in Tuchów then with their grandma Gitl in Styków.

Nobody remembers those early days in Tuchów, except a story about a wicked woman with an ugly daughter, who once saw on the street a maid pushing a baby buggy where Frieda and Hania slept peacefuly. As the story went, this woman while looking at the girls and praising their beauty, evidently had cursed them, because the girls got blue on their faces immeddiatly andfoamy spit kept coming out from their mouth'. But as it was a custom then grandma Frances have sent the maid to call the evil woman back so she could remove the spell off the children by looking at them. And when she left Frieda and Hania got better immediatly.

Ofcourse Jack already knows the story about the "Kozie bobkies" (goat manure) which Hania as a little girl mistook for dark cherries.

Another incident took place when Ela was still a baby in a crib. Grandma Frances treated Frieda and Hania with cookies. They in turn wanted to share them with their baby sister and stuffed some cookies in Ela's mouth. When she started chocking Frieda and Hania told grandma that Ela likes her cookies very much.

Back in Cracow soon after my birth my parents finally had found an apartment on Krupnicza street No.16. (Barley street)

I don't remember at all anything about Krupnicza street until I was 4 years old. My first recollection goes back to the time when young and old people in Cracow fell victims to Scarlatina (Scarlet fever) epidemic. Hospitals were overcrowded, and I remember very well, when a horse pulled ambulance arrived to take me to St. Lazar hospital on Nicolaus Kopernik street. (The same Kopernik who in XV century discovered that it was earth spinning aroung sun.) I still can see the wagen covered with straw inside and white sheet supplied by my mother. I spent 6 weeks in this hospital, seeing my parents and relatives peaking through the windows. Nobody was allowed inside.

Another flash of those days, brings into my mind a day, when my father went first time to work at his new job, and later I can still see him bringing home his first pay in a small bag.

As a child I never expriensed a love of grandparents. Parents of my father were long death when I was born and so was my mother's mother. My maternal grandfather David Leib Nussbaum was still alive and passed away in 1926 or 1927 but I never had a pleasure to meet him.

Chapter 2

The Salomons!

Salomons came to Tuchów, nobody realy knows when. Maybe even two centuries ago. They settled there because the owners of Tuchów and a vast area around the town practically invited them to settle and work there. The noble people of Tuchów the Potulicki family, wouldn't allow any other Jews to live there, except those whose name was Salomon. As years went by other Salomons not related at all to the first Salomons made Tuchów their home. The noble family Potulicki in later years up to the outbreak of second world war kept living in Tuchow even thou they didn't own the town no more, still buying goods from great grandmother's Mariam Salomon dry goods store.

Anything and everything in Tuchów conected with Judaism and Jewish life started with Salomons. They were the funders of the local synagogue, donated most of the Torahs and other Holly Books and Scriptures. Ofcourse following the holocaust there are no more Jews in Tuchów. The synagogue and all what was in it was burned down out by Germans. Where the Salomon house and the dry goods store stood, now a day is a large potato field.

Our story of Salomons begins in year 1830, or close to it, with grandma Frances' grandfather Sigmund Salomon. He was married twice and used to have two sons from each of his two wives. We don't know the name of his first wife. But from an old pictures and stories told by grandma Frances we assume that his second wife was bubie Harisia. A very well dressed woman who in her old age used to spent many summer evenings and Saturday afternoon sitting and resting in her easy chair in front of her house, insisting to be kissed on her hands by passing grandchildren, for which she used to reward them with a "gratzar" (an Austrian coin, equivalent to a penny). Grandma Frances didn't like to kiss grandma Harisia's hand and she didn't want her "gratzar"always looking for ways not to walk by Harisia's home.

Sigmund's sons with his first wife were Chaim David and Lazar. Harisia gave him Leon and Joseph and two daughters as well (names not available)

Lazar Salomon had a son Sigmund. He was a very rich man and as his father before him was married twice. Son Sigmund was married also and used to live in Vienna. There is still a possibility that his two daughters are alive, one in England and the other in Israel. Lazar's first wife was Balka and their daughter was Doba who later married Sol Kail from Tarnow. Doba and Sol used to be rich as well and had two children. A son Roman who studied to become a doctor and married during the war. Germans killed him and his marriage lasted eight months only. His sister Tusia was a high school student when she perished together with her parents.

Chaim David Salomon (Anna's grandfather) was a highly educated man. Before Marrying Mariam Goldman he was married to a woman who left him and their young son who later died from a heart attack at the young age of 17.

Chaim David was a religious but modern man. He was the local banker in Tuchów, an avid Zionist and a very good friend of the funder of modern Zionism Theodor Herzl. They kept in touch almost to the last days of their lives. Both died not to far apart. In a matter of facts Theodor Herzl lived from 1860 to 1904 and Chaim David Salomon passed away in 1905 only 42 years old.

Mariam and Chaim David had two daughters; Franciska born on August 5, 1893, Helen (Chaya) twelve years younger from grandma Frances born only a short time before her father passed away. He left his wife and daughters secured and well prepared to go on. Great grandma Mariam's dry goods store was her husbands way to make sure that his family would have a worry free and prosperous life.

Anna's grandfather was a philantroper, helping people all the time, and after his death his wife kept the good deeds going helping people with money without interest and making sure that young couples about to get married would be outfited and ready to start on their own. Mariam Salomon and her daughter Helen perished in gas chambers of Auschwitz.. Helen's husband of couple of years survived with us in Soviet Union. He remarried after the war, has two sons, and they all live in New York City.

Chapter 3

The Salomons!

Leon and Joseph and their two sisters children of the second wife of Sigmund Salomon at some point got married. Leon and his wife used to live in Cracow. Never had any children and their only companion was a dog they used to call "Gogo".

Joseph Salomon and his wife Fela used to live in Cracow as well. Lolek and Edwin were their sons. I knew Edwin in Cracow before the war. He was a very quiet young man. Who would suspect then, that in faraway future I will meet and marry his cousin. Joseph's wife Fela perished in holocaust. Edwin and his father both have died in Soviet Union. Lolek survived in Soviet Union and returned to Poland not to long after liberation in 1945. In Tarnów he met the former wife of eight months of Dr. Roman Kail who perished in holocaust. Both of them succeeded in claiming fortunes of Salomon and Kail families. A lot of that fortune used to belong to grandma Frances, but at that time there was nobody in Tuchów and Tarnów to challenge Lolek and his new wife. At the time we arrived from Soviet Union one year later, it was already to late to do anything about it.

We don't know the names of Sigmund Salomon's daughters from second marriage. We know for sure that one of them used to live in Polish resort town of Krynica in Carpathian Mountains with her son Dolek who studied medicine in Italy. Another thing is sure as well. Both women and their families perished in holocaust.

There used to be many other families in Tuchów and Tarnów related to Salomons. Two sisters Balka and Ida Riegelhaupt were not only cousins but very good friends of grandma Frances. Their brother Lazar Riegelhaupt used to be our neighbour in Cracow. He was married to Rifka and because of their children we had been quite friendly with them for many years.

Balka Riegelhaupt was married to Silverstein. She and her husband and children perished during the war. Ida Riegelhaupt married Henry Lehr. In 1939 before the war they emigrated to United States. They had two sons Stanley and Richard.

In Riegelhaupt's home before the war I met Balka Silverstein's daughter Irene and Ida Lehr's son Richard.

Chapter 4

Goldmans and Rosenblums!

According to old notes which still are in possession of children of Rosenblums and Pearlman families in New York, Goldman name was mentioned for the first time about 150 or 160 years ago. A note which Pauline Pearlman, whose maiden name was Rosenblum left with her daughter Mariam revels for the first time a name Mariam Goldman who was an aunt to grandma Frances' mother Mariam Salomon.

The first Mariam Goldman married a Rosenblum. There is no mention about his first name. Mariam Goldman's brother was Michael Goldman (Mechek) who later married a woman whose name was Florence. Evidently her Jewish name was "Fradl", because Frieda was named after her.

Mariam Goldman Rosenblum and her husband had a son Louis who came to New York City in 1880.

Florence and Michael Goldman were parents to 5 children. Four daughters and one son. The oldest child was daughter Hencia, then in not particular order were daughters Mariam (grandma Frances' mother), Fela who later in United States was known as Fanny, Rózia (who was Rose while living in New York) and the youngest was son Marcus (who used to live in New York 5 years before returning to Poland).

So as you can see from the above line-up Rosnblums and Goldmans were related twice. Not only Mariam Goldman Rosnblum was an aunt to grandma Frances' mother, her son Louis Rosenblum was her cousin who married in New York her sister Rose another cousin.

As far as Anna is concerned the first Micheal Goldman was her great-grandfather. Rose Rosnblum was her great aunt. Louis Rosenblum Was first cousin to to his wife Rose and her sister grandma Mariam, second cousin to grandma Frances, and third cousin to Anna.

As you can see the name Mariam has a long following in Goldman-Rosenblum families. Let say for the modern generations it started with Mariam Goldman, then was passed on to another Mariam Goldman (grandma Frances' mother) and then to Mariam Pearlman, daughter of Pauline Rosenblum and Sol Pearlman. In a matter of facts Mariam Pearlman's second name is Florence (Fradl) after another great-grandmother Florence Goldman.

Back in Tuchów Michael Goldman was still a young man, when he died, leaving Florence to raise and take care of their five children. She wasn't rich but lucky in a way.

Going back in centuries in Poland and many European countries as well, there was this law allowing towns and cities to collect toll from peasants and merchants who used to bring in their produce, poultry, and wares for sale during market days. It was the same idea as now-a-day authorities collect fees for entering new bridges and highways. Town elders in those days used to select a convinient spot on the road leading to town just for the purpuse of collecting tolls. The name of such a place was and probably still is "rogatka"(roadgate). As it happened Florence Goldman's house was located in such convinient place. Towns officials designated her as the official toll collector, which became the main source of her income.

It seems that Fela (Fanny) was the first to leave Tuchow. How she found herself in San Francisko we don't know. (Our cousin Mariam Groce, Pauline Pearlman's daughter promised to sent to us more information about the family as soon as possible. It might take a long time, but as soon as the information will arrive we will attach it to this story.)

According to grandma Frances, Fanny survived the great earthquake of 1906 in San Francisco. She informed the family in Tuchów about her survival by writing a letter on a piece of paper she had found in ruins of a home after the disaster.

In San Francisco Fanny married Simon Hodes and had two children Sam and Pauline, who married respectively a sister and a brother, Ann and Harvey Reiss. Harvey was a doctor, Sam an engineer. Pauline had two children; Helen and Julian. Helen married Harald Baker and had two children; Jean and Richard. They in turn have children.

Chapter 4 (cont)

Goldmans and Rosenblums!

Sam and Ann had three children, Frances, Melvin and Irvine. Melvin and Irvine have families as well. And again at this point cousin Mariam from New York writes that she shell chart it all out and send along to us, one of these days.

Rózia (Rose) second daughter of Florence and Michael Goldman was sent to New York in the mid 1880s when she was 16 to help her older sister Fanny then expecting her second child. Fanny's first child died as a very young infant and Florence ~~kgrxxaxxgrxxndmxxhxxx~~ was determend that the next baby in faraway America survive.

Rose was married in New York to her cousin Louis Rosenblum. She had not known him in Tuchów but met him there.

Dr. Joe Rosenblum was the first child of Rose and Louis Rosenblum. He was born in New York, but then him and his mother went back to Tuchów and lived there for a year or so. Ofcourse Rose was really anxious that her parents see her first born child, but the truth is that she went because financial set backs made it impossible for Rosenblums to stay together at that time. The U.S.A suffered a severe depression in 1893 and times were hard for several years thereafter. Louis Rosenblum stayed in New York alone and managed to save enough money to get a second start. Rose and her son Joe rejoined him and they were able to re-establish a household.

The family in New York still keep in touch with today's generation of couisns in San Francisco (Fanny's great great grandson).

After the earthquake of 1906 Fanny, her husband Simon Hodes and children Sam and Pauline and Pauline's fiance Harvey Reiss all came east and lived with Rosenblums, because they lost their homes in the San Francisco earthquake. They stayed there over a year and then went back to San Francisco.

Cousin Mariam Groce from New York, wrote us in a letter that she still has in her possession a small journal or diary dated 1879. It is written in Polish, and she says that a friend of her will translate it. She has no idea who wrote it. She can not decipher any names, and hopes that perhaps the contents will be of interest.

Mariam has as well a small clue to generations before Florence and Michael Goldman. The clue is in the name"Lunk", which her mother our cousin Pauline Pearlman remembered but was not able to indentify.

The only son of Florence and Michael Goldman Marcus according to cousin Mariam at a certain time visited his sister Rose in New York with his wife Regina. But according to grandma Frances, Marcus spent five years in New York working and living with his sister Rose. Maybe Regina, his wife just visited with him there for a while.

Marcus and Regina had four children all born in Tuchów. Two boys and two girls. The oldest boy died very young and shortly after this tragedy Marcus left for New York.

Evidently after five years Marcus got lonesome after his family and returned to Poland. As far as we know he became seriously ill and died shortly after his return. Later Regina and her children moved from Tuchów to Tarnów. During the second world war Regina perished in a concentration camp. Her daughters Pela and Rózia (the same names as Fanny's and Rose's before leaving to America) perished in holocaust as well. Pela in Cracow and Rózia in Przemyśl. Their brother Mechek tried together with a friend to cross to Soviet side, but Germans caught up with him and executed him on the spot.

After Rose returned to New York with her oldest son Joe to join her husband, they had three more children. Sons Milton and Harry and daughter Pauline. Ofcourse all of them first cousins of grandma Frances.

As other immigrants of that era Rosenblums kept working hard to give their children best education possible. As you alredy know Joe Rosenblum became a doctor and his brothers Milton and Harry graduated from law school. Daughter Pauline married Sol Peralman a successful lawyer as well who for a period of time served as a labor relations judge in New York City.

Chapter 4 (cont)

Goldmans and Rosenblums!

Milton Rosenblum married Sid Kammerman and together with his brother Harald who never married used to be law partners in Kammerman's (Sid's brother) law firm. Sid and Milton never had children. Harald Rosenblum died two yeras after our arrival in New York. We met him only briefly.

Milton Rosenblum passed away just about 10 or 12 years ago. It is possible that his wife Sid is still alive.

Pauline Pearlman and Milton Rosenblum were the people mostly responsible in helping our family after the end of the war in Poland and Austria and then instrumental in bringing all of us to America.

Cousin Joe Rosenblum and his lovely wife Eve were our first hosts in New York. They helped us a lot to overcome our first "greenhorns" jitters. They had tried their best to make our stay pleasant by inviting us to their home for dinners. They took us on a tours of New York.

Robert and Judy, Joe's and Eve's children were young adults attending university when we met them. Some few years later Judy married her childhood friend Arthur Schreier, son of family friends of Joe's and Eve's. Arthur eventually became a psychiatrist. Now they are both retaired and live in an extrimly lovely small home in the Berkshire Mountains in western Massachusets in a little town Savoy, where Judy does gardening and part time volunteer work in an historic house in nearby Lenox. Arthur does wood carving. They used to spent winters in a home in southern Portugal, which they have recently sold.

Judy and Arthur had two daughters. The older Ellen is married to Tom Alexander and they live in Seattle, Washington. She is non-practicing lawyer and helps her husband to operate a very successful highway and bridge building and repair business. Ellen and Tom have two daughters (and one stepdaughter, who lives with her mother in Boston). Ofcourse you met Diane the younger daughter of Judy and Arthur who studied art here in Kansas City for couple of years in 1972. Diane has been dead about nine years now. Although there is no way to know for sure, some relatives suspect that her death was drug related.

Judy's brother Robert left New York many years ago. He lives in San Diego and is married to a multiplely divorced woman and has several stepchildren. He is apparently quite happy and very busy operating a travel agency and a bridge club.

Pauline Pearlman and her husband Sol used to have their home in the country in a place called Cranbury, near Trenton, New Jersey an inheritance left to them by their father Pearlman. We visited this beautiful place in 1951, shortly after our arrival in United States, Their son Louis and his family still live there in their own new home.

Pauline's daughter Mariam is married to Raymond Grace and still live in their home at 223 Guion Drive in Mamaroneck, New York. We visited them and saw the house during our last visit in New York in 1968. I hope you remember them, since they came to see us with their three young daughters in early 1960s while traveling by car to Mexico, southwest and west coast.

Mariam and Ray spend 3 or 4 months each winter in Florida in the condominium of Ray's late parents. Ofcourse you remember the twins Nancy and Nora now 37 years old. Both have Phd's but only Nora has managed to get married. Her husband is Lawrence Kaplan, a pediatrician associated with the Harvard Medical School. They have two children, Josiah 6 years old and Pauline 2 years old. They live in a small old but charmingly restored house in Hingham, a lovely old village southeast of Boston. Nora does some part time teaching and writing in her field of anthropology.

Nancy has a very small apartment in Manhattan and works as far as we know, for The New York State Arts Council. The youngest Susan now 35 has been teaching in the art department at the University of Maine in Orino, a small relatively isolated town in which she is likely to remain,

Louis, Mariam's brother, who I imagine is a lawyer as his father before him is already retired. He met and married Elissa when he stayed for nine months in Israel in early 1960s.

Chapter 4 (cont)

Goldmans and Rosenblums!

Staying and meeting Elissa in Israel for ~~kmi~~ Louis Perlman was ~~as~~ unusual considering that she was a nice Jewish girl from Singapore and Louis was neither religious nor Zionistic.

Ellisa is one of six children three of whom live in Sidney, Australia, the other two having remained in Singapore with her parents.

Ellisa is working as a reference librarian at the Princeton Public Library. Louis and Ellisa have an adopted daughter Ruth, a lovely person who is a junior in Goucher College near Baltimore, Maryland. She is majoring in sociology and hopes to teach and do consulting. Their son Paul just transfered from the local public high school which had become overcrowded, to nearby private prep school where he seems much happier. He also plays football. Allthough the "giant" of the family at 5,11 and 175 ~~l~~bs., he has learned that among football players, this is not very big at all.

The last time we saw Pauline and Sol Pearlman, was in 1965 while attending Larry Amaterdam's Bar-Mitzvah in Cleveland. Pauline died few months later and so did her husband Sol, few months after his wife.

If I am not mistaken Dr. Joe Rosenblum passed away in 1975. We will always remember him for his kindness and the cup carved out of stone in which his mother used to cook for him cream of wheat while visiting in Tuchów when he was a little boy. He proudly was showing off the cup to us when we came to New York. His wife Eve still attended Larry Amsterdam's wedding in Philadelphia in 1977 and died not to long after.

The last of the Goldman sisters who stayed with her mother in Tuchów was Hencia. Like many other members of the Goldman family she probably was born in the second half of ~~18~~ 1800s. Later she married a wealthy man Traitel Rotter. There was a story circulating about him, how ~~x~~ particular he was about choosing a right woman for himself. He used to drive his coachman crazy after so many "bekuks" (meetings) with prospective wives which ended in fiascos. But after the meeting with Hencia, the coachman was the first to say, that she was the woman Traitel would marry. And so it happened.

Traitel and Hencia accumulated a large fortune which made possible for them and their family to have very good lives for many years to come. They used to live in Jasło and owned a large mill, a lumber yard, couple of restaurants and had a permission from government as well to distribute alcohol.

Traitel Rotter died some years before the second world war. His wife Hencia with help of her sons continued to operate their successful business in Jasło. They all perished in holocaust, except the youngest son Monek who with his wife Lonka and son Simon survived in Soviet Union. Before leaving in September 1939 they left their daughter Rena with grandma Hencia who perished with the rest of the Rotter family as well.

Chapter 5
Rotters and Bluts!

The Traitel Rotters had four children. Three sons and one daughter. The oldest child was Sigmund, whom they called Zissie in Yiddish. For a short period of time he was engaged to your grandma Frances, but they broke off the engagement, because grandma didn't like him enough.

Some years later Sigmung married Minia. They had two children; Tadek and daughter Dana. Dana and her parents perished in holocaust, most likely in Belzec extermination camp, where most of the Jews from Jaslo lost their lives. Son Tadek survived the war in Soviet Union. He studied later and recived a degree of Doctor of Dentistry. He lives in Israel and as far as we know enjoy there a reputation as a very good dental surgeon. He is married to Ela, born Wisiorowski from Warsaw. They have a daughter Justina born in Wroclaw (Breslau) in Poland in 1952. She is married to Dr. Shlomo Kruk from Romania whom she met while attending medical school in Padwa, Italy.

Second child of Rotters was daughter Hinda, who married Chaim Shlomo Blut, a religious man who spoke fluently four foreign languages but never learned how to speak perfect Polish. He was a well dressed man who used to walk around town with a fancy cane.

Hinda and Chaim Shlomo Blut had four children. The first one was son Mandel (named after his uncle, third child of Traitel and Hencia Rotter). He was a member of the International Brigade and took part as such in the Spanish civil war 1936-1938 and lost his life there while fighting.

Bluts second son was Michael, who used to live in Paris with his wife Eva. They perished in holocaust.

Daughter Regina was their third child. She was 18 or 19 years old in September 1939. She was murdered with her parents in the Belzec extermination camp as well.

The youngest child of Bluts was Tadek. He survived the war under the name of Tadeusz Juszczyk, thanks to family Zdzislaw Truskolaski. Mrs. Truskolaski was Tadek's chemistry profesor in Jaslo gimnazium. (The life of Tadek Juszczyk-Blut in occupied Poland and his visit to extermination camp in Belzec in 1988 is recalled later in this writing).

Those righteous Poles used to risk their lives in order to save their Jewish neighbours. Israeli government had honored the family Truskolaski, but Polish authorities wouldn't give them permission to travel to Israel.

Tadek spent his post-war years living and working in Kudowa, a resort community on Polish-Czech border, as forestry engineer a profession he learned during the war. Later he emigrated to Israel, where he works in the same profession for the Israeli government.

In Israel Tadek married Dorotha born Golowieszko, a medical doctor who was born in 1929 in Sarny, province of Wolyn, which is now part of Soviet Bielorussia. Her mother Sara died in 1982 and her father died couple of years ago after a long illness. Both came from Dombrovic, near Sarny, Tadek and Dorotha have a son Ilon born in Israel December 3 1963. After graduating from High school he served in Israeli armed forces. Lately he was traveling extensivly in southeast Asia and Japan.

Going back now to the original Rotter family, their third son was Mandel. Rich as all the others. He was married to Mila and considered himself a world traveler. Mandel and Mila didn't have any children and perished in holocaust.

The youngest son of the Rotters Monek like his brothers and sister shared in the family's wealth as well. He married Lonka (Lea), and they had two children. Daughter Rena and son Simon. As I wrote before Rena perished together with her grandma Hencia.

Monek and Lonka and their son Simon left Jaslo in September 1939 going east trying to escape German bombings. A bomb exploded near Simon who was then a little boy. He never recovered from the impact of that explosion. Epilepsy became a part of his life until he died some years ago in Kudowa.

Monek. Lonka and Simon were re-united with their nephew Tadek Juszczyk after the war in Kudowa. Rotters because of their son's illness never left Poland. Monek Rotter is not alive anymore. Lonka his wife still makes her home in Kudowa.

Chapter 7

Lonka Rotter!

After the death of her son and husband, Lonka Rotter continued to live in Kudowa, a summer and winter resort, where people used to and still drink some kind of a mineral water which makes them feel better. Kudowa is located in the former German territory given to Poland by the Allies after the war.

Lonka's brother and his family used to live in Szczecin after the war. Somehow through them we met the Amsterdams, because Mrs. Esther Amsterdam was a close friend of Lonka before the war in Rzeszów.

Two or three years ago her nephew Tadek Juszczyk decided to bring his aunt to visit, with him in Israel. Lonka was lonesome in Kudawa and Tadek was hoping, that she would settle in Israel. She was due to arrive there in time for Passover 1984. But days went by and Lonka got lost somewhere along the way. Ofcourse Tadek and Lonka's brother who lives in Israel as well suspected the worse. Inquires in Kudowa and through American Joint Distribution Committee in Warsaw and Switzerland went nowhere. For some reason Lonka have vanished along the way to the Holy Land. As a last resort they even asked International Red Cross to intervene on Lonka's behalf with Polish authorities in Warsaw and if necessary to start looking for her.

The suspense finally came to a happy ending when at last Lonka suddenly arrived in Tel-Aviv, with a simple explanation that she was ill and spent couple of weeks in Hospital.

She was then 78 years old. She was re-united with her family for the first time in 40 years. Tadek and Lonka's brother thought that she will not go back to Poland and re-settle in Israel.

After she left Israel it was obvious that Lonka wanted to be near the graves of her husband and son. There were two different versions told by different people about her decision to return to Kudowa. She says that she wanted very much to stay in Israel but nobody was willing to put up money for her resettlement in Israel. The second story is that she just didn't want to stay there.

Tadek Juszczyk with help from Norbert Amsterdam tried very hard to move her to a Jewish home for elderly in Warsaw. They would probably succed to place her there but she refused as well to leave Kudowa. I guess when her time will come she wants to be buried next to her dearest ones.

Chapter 8

Other Relatives!

Besides Goldmans, Rosenblums, Salomons and Rotters, there were other families related to them, but as years went by , those other families got sort of farther removed. Those were relations which developed because of marriages to some members of the Salomon family.

Let me write first about the Metzger family. We don't know for sure, but evidently many yeras ago one of Salomon women had married a Metzger a wealthy businessman. He used to own in Tuchów a soda pop factory, a tavern, a pastry shop and delicatesen. We think that the first Metzger was second cousin to grandma Frances. Metzgers had seven children. Four daughters and three sons. Both parents and ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ five of their children perished in holocaust. At least one of their sons Hesiek died a hero's death as a member of the Polish underground. Despite his heroics Germans caught up with him in the early months of the occupation and executed him. One of Metzger daughters survived and lives in Israel. Another son Monek Metzger survived in Soviet Union, first in labor camps and then in Fergana, where Leniowers had found him working at the local soap factory. He was one of the few lucky people who made a pretty good living in Fergana. He even got married there to Frieda a niece of the Julie family, Leniowers good friends from Siberia. Frieda's mother who survived the war in New York, left Poland in 1939 before the German invasion to visit relatives and attend the world fair there. She was prevented by the war to return home. Frieda with her father, brother and sister had found themselves in Soviet Union. Help from mother in New York largely contributed to their survival. Monek and Frieda have two children. Ofcourse you Jack and Elaine remember their son Sol who with his wife Debbie attended for couple of years U.M.K.C here in Kansas City. By now they have two sons on their own. Sol Metzger some time ago was appointed to serve as a judge in Levitton, Pennsylvania. The daughter of Monek and Frieda is married as well and has her own daughter. Monek and Frieda live in Bronx. He has always been and still is a very religious Jew.

Mrs. Feiga Ashheim a very good friend of grandma Frances since their childhood in Tuchów left Poland and settled in New York many years before the second world war. Feiga Ashheim and grandma Frances kept in touch all these years, but when at last grandma went to visit friends and relatives in New York, they even didn't meet because by then Mrs. Ashheim was very ill. They only spoke briefly on the phone. Mrs. Ashheim was Monek Metzger's aunt a sister to his father or mother. She was responsible ~~xx~~ for bringing Monek and his family to America. She is not alive anymore, but her family still live in New York.

Another family kind of related to Salomons was the Riegelhaupt family from a shtetl not faraway from Tuchów called "Bogoniowice Ciężkowice". This half shtetl and half village is even mentioned in a book written by a man who spent his childhood in that area. A young Pole who wasn't able to return to his roots after the war and while living in England put down all his memories on paper calling his work "Książeczka" (My Little Book). He even didn't forget to mention in this book some of ~~xxx~~ the Jews who used to live in this shtetl (circa ~~1912x13~~ 1910-1911) and among them the Riegelhaupt family. And here are the author's words as he re-calls a summer morning: "A group of happy girls ran out from the post office with letters in their hands. Among them walking later down the street were some Jewish beauties. The most beautiful as always were the Riegelhaupt girls. They kept walking together holding on to their hands with the queen of the family Dora in the middle like a flower from Florence (Italy) with her younger sisters to her right and left. Dora was the beauty of Bogoniowice Ciężkowice. She was working for the local lawyer Margulies, but the young nobleman from nearby was the one who kept following her all over the place to ~~x~~ the disgust of father Riegelhaupt observing his daughter and the nobleman from his small grocery store trying to fan off the sweat from his face with the yarmulka".

So as the story continues Lazar Salomon, brother of grandma's Frances father Chaim David married a woman who was a sister to Mrs. Riegelhaupt. Lazar's wife name was Balka. I already wrote about them in the chapter about Salomons.

Chapter 8 (cont)

Other Relatives!

The same man who spent his youth in the vicinity of Tarnów and Tuchów and who so eloquently ~~drew~~ described Riegelhaupt daughters from Bogoniowice Cieżkowice in his memories, memorialized as well his former Polish and Jewish friends who perished in the war and holocaust and among them Dr. Robert Kail a grandson of Lazar Salomon.

Going back to the Riegalhaupt family who by some coincidence became grandma Frances' cousins. As I said before Lazar Salomon's wife was a sister to a woman who married a Riegelhaupt. They had two daughters; Ida and Balka ~~xxxxx~~ who was named after Lazar Salomon's wife, and two or three sons. One was Lazar and the other two (NAMELESS), their mother sent to America when they were 15 or 16 years old to stay there with her parents who emigrated much much earlier. One of those Riegelhaupt boys was already seriously ill man when grandma Frances saw him while visiting with relatives in New York. The other one was a wealthy man, an owner of a successful garment factory.

It so happened that Lazar Riegelhaut and his family used to be our neighbours in our apartment complex in Cracow. He was married to Rifka. They both for some reason used to have one side of their bodies lower then the other. Him on his left and she on her right. So they kind of matched perfectly while walking next to each other. They had two children,Moniek who was couple years my junior, and little girl Lusia. Staying with them was Mrs. Rigelhaupt's sister Bertha, very well known among some circles of young ~~xxxxxx~~ Jewish people in Cracow in those days before world war two. Moniek was a fine young man. We knew each other for almost ten years. After finishing his 6 grades of public elementary school his parents enroled him in the Jewish industrial school, an affiliation of Cracow's Hebrew Academy. They all perished in holocaust.

At Riegelhaupt's home I met some of their young relatives. First of them was Richard Lehr a son to Ida and Henry Lehr. Ida Lehr was Riegelhaupt born and best friend of grandma Frances. Ida and Henry had another son Stanley. Before the war in 1939 they emigrated to United States. Ida's sister Balka who used to live in Tarnów married a Silvermann. Also in Cracow in Riegelhaupt's home I met their daughter Irene. I still remember very well, when Mr. Riegelhaupt went to Tuchów in ~~1938~~ 1939 to bid his sister and her family good-by before they left for New York. Ida and Hebry Lehr are not alive anymore.

All the people mentioned above and previous pages lived out parts or most of their lives either in Tuchów or Tarnów. We might assume that events described here took place in a stretch of 130 years, beginning sometime in 1850s. Our only regret is that our information was so limited. We are quite sure that knowing more would make this story much more interesting. If not for some facts given to us by our cousins Louis Pearlman and his sister Marian Groce, we even wouldn't know that much.

There is a possibility that some other clues concerning the family's past exist in a diary dated as far back as 1879 and written in Polish. Cousin Marian says that her friend will translate the diary into English soon. We offered to her to translate the diary, but so far there was no response coming. Anyway she promised to share the new information with us as soon as will become available in English version.

Chapter 8A

The Shtetl! (TUCHÓW)

Since who knows when Tuchów was a shtetl, but in many ways not a typical small town like others in Poland and Eastern Europe where most of the Jewish population used to live in their own district concentrated around their synagogue. There was no real Jewish district in Tuchów. In a matter of facts, there used to be Christian business' nearby where the "shul" was standing. Most of the Jews had lived side by side with Poles in peace and harmony. Obviously there was no shortage of anti-Semites in Tuchów. Without them the town wouldn't be the same as hundreds of other little towns and villages of the long vanished era.

The midtown square market place was surrounded by buildings with stores in front and living quarters in the back. Most of the stores used to belong to Jews, only few of them had Polish owners. The Christian population of Tuchów and vicinity prefered to buy from Jews, but after Polish merchants decided to mark their establishments with a "Christian Firm" signs the other majority, even thou they hesitated, didn't have another choice but to buy their merchandise from Christian stores.

Many years ago, at the time when Kaiser Franz Joseph ruled Southern Poland (Galicia) and even later under Polish administration Tuchów was a prosperous little town. Ofcourse not everybody was rich, but as far as Jews were concerned in most cases rich Jews always made sure that the poor ones were being provided, and assuring at least that they had had food for Shabat.

In the middle of the market place stood the building where City Hall and other government departments were located. Tuchów had only two elementary schools One for boys and one for girls. To expand their education young people traveled to Tarnów, twenty minutes away by train and ten minutes by bus, and in olden days took them even longer going on horse pulled wagen or walking.

Salomons synagogue was located just outside the market place. The church and an ancient monastery was standing outside of town. The monastery was named after Holly Mary of Tuchów and displayed a large picture of the Holly Madonna, where each years thousands of pilgrims from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia used to come to pray for their health and prosperity and have fun, attending procession from church to the market place and enjoy a fair with many traveling merchants (many of them Jewish) who sold their merchandise to the pilgrims and local population.

Twice a week peasants from surrounding villages used to come to town on market days to sell their produce and diary products and later bought goods for themselves from grandma Mariam and other merchants.

Tuchów is standing on the banks of Biała River. Those villages and large farms around the town used to be owned by Polish nobility, other wealthy families and wealthy Jews as well. Ofcourse in present times everything have changed. Polish nobility and wealthy families and Jews as well disapeared from the horison

Long ago in simpler days only two doctors served Tuchów's ill people. Seriously ill used to go to hospitals in Tarnów. There was no cinema in Tuchów as well. Residents of Tuchów like of many other small towns used to be able to provide their own versions of entertainment. Still from time to time a traveling cinema came to town to show some old movies in the local Sokół House. Sokół's in English mean Falcons, was an organization of Christian men who promoted mostly sports. Their motto was "A healthy soul in a healthy body". Their chapters were spreaded all over Poland and in their Sokół Houses many sport and social events used to take place. So in any small town like Tuchów in Poland, when young and old wanted shows, theater, dance or whatever, they went to Sokół, Jews included who used to rent Sokół's facilities for their own gatherings, even thou in some of hard anti-Semitic towns a sign in front of Sokół displayed a hard truth. "Jews and dogs not allowed inside".

Few miles away to the North-West was the much larger neighbour of Tuchów, it's lifeline, the second largest city in Cracow province, the city of Tarnów. Not a shtetl anymore, nowaday itself a provincial city.

Chapter 8A (cont)

The City! (TARNÓW)

Whenever residents of Tuchów were in need of something important, they traveled to Tarnów. To take care of some kind of business, to see a doctor-specialist, to see a tailor or a seamsterss, or prepare for a large wedding. Merchants like grandma Mariam went there to buy goods for their stores from wholesalers (WHOLESALERS) For grandma Frances there used to be a special day to go to Tarnów. Besides buying goods for the store she was always looking forward to meet there with her friends who used to live in the large city.

Ofcourse Tarnów not always was a city as we knew it during our lifetime in Poland before world war two.

Tarnów started its existance way back in 1125. It was a village in those days on a hill covered with blackthorn. This blackthorn used to protect the village from outsiders. The Polish word for blackthorn is "Tarnina". So from this word "Tarnina" the first village got its name "Tarnów". Brothers Benedictins who used to live in a church on a hill not to faraway were first inhabitants of Tarnów.

Since the second half of XV century the church and monastery of Brothers Bernardins became Tarnów's first line of defense against Swedes. The old Bernardins buildings serve until the present era as city government quarters.

In the early days of Tarnów, noble families living there, served as palace elite to Polish Kings who resided at the Wawel castle in Cracow.

On March 7 1330 Polish king Władisław Łokietek gave Tarnów all the same rights as then capital of Poland Cracow was entitled to have. Since Tarnów became forever the second city of Cracow province, and no other city until present time was able to take this privilege from Tarnów.

Through out the centuries many noble families used to call themselves rulers of the city. The families Tarnowski, and Ostrogski were the last modern era owners od Tarnów followed by the last of the Giedyminowicz family prince Roman Sanguszko, who enjoyed much love and great popularity from the population of Tarnów. Roman Sanguszko was a pioneer of car racing in Tarnnów. Because of his iniciative international car races used to take place in Tarnów, which forced the city to build special streets just for this purpose.

Roman Sanguszko used to love brunettes, and some Jewish young women were crazy about him. He turned down a marriage to a Spanish princess who with her mother came to Tarnów to meet him. Instead he married a commoner, a divorcee with a daughter. By a sheer coinsidence this woman was from Jasło and used to live in a rented apartment in a building which belonged to grandma Frances' friend Mrs. Reis. Besides all this Roman Sanguszko happened to be a frequent visitor at the home of Mr. Zohl a very important figure in Polish government circles in the pre-war era and a longtime neighbour of Leniowers.

It was in Jasło where the new wife of prince Roman became very ill while carrying his child. On advise of doctors Sanguszko took her to a famous specialist in New York City who wasn't able to help her. She died shortly afterward.

Tarnów was and still is located on a very important international line, which starts in Paris, then Vienna going thrógh Czechoslovakia, then Cracow, Lvov, into Romania to Bucuresti all the way to Istambul, Turkey. This train always stop in Tarnów for four minutes, but hardly anybody used to board it or leave it. The most popular trains in Tarnów used to be the local ones stoping all the time in those small villages and shtetls like Tuchów, Dombrowa (where our former neighbour on Park Mr. Suess used to live) or Bobowa (the residence of the famous Bobover Rebe).

Life in Tarnów was going on for ages by the clock on the top of the Cathedral, which all the time was showing five minutes difference from the more modern clock at the railroad station. Still the local population insisted that the clock on the Cathedral was much better, like it would be blessed from the above. That was why the third clock on the county building like an ark of peace between the old and new years kept time two and a half minutes earlier then the Cathedral clock, and two and a half minutes later then the railroad clock, prompting the people say times moved much slower in the olden days. OVER

Chapter 8A (cont)

The City! (TARNÓW)

The old Tarnów a city kept locked up at night, like many other cities throughout Poland and rest of Europe in middle ages, became a Jewish district of Tarnów in the modern era.

The sounds of the pre-war Jewish ghetto could make an impression of bees working hard in their beehives. Noises coming from countless Heders, small apartments, all kinds of stores and outdoor vendors trying to sell their "Schmalz", kosher chickens and alive fish for "Schabes".

Inside of the Heder the "Rebe" used to set the ton: - Kumetz-Alef and the students followed: - Alef, Alef, Alef. And then came Kumetz-Beyts, and students kept repeating: Beyts, Beyts, Beyts. And so went on: - Gimel, Dalet, Hay, Zayn, Vuf, Het, Tes, Yit, Kuf, Huf, Lamet, Shamech, Shin.

And so letter after letter those young people with "peys" (earlocks) learned the Hebrew alphabet until they reached the wisdom of reading "Humash" and only some of them after many years of studying finaly begun to understand the secrets of"Gemura".

It's true that not all the students in Heder took serious their learning, even thous parents showered them with raisins, as a sign that their sons are reading Holy Scriptures. Ofcourse they were reading Humash, but many of them were making fun of the old-fashioned way of life and methods of learning. Those jockers used to be the first ones, while seeing the "Rebe" coming to CLASS sing the oldest "dirty" song ever known in all Heders all over Russia and Poland.

Sha-Sha, der Rebe gayt,
Sha-Sha, dem Reben shtayt,
Sha-Shames in der Tür (door).

But when Shabat arrived each Friday night, everybody , jockers included was serious. Jewish women in "Shaytels" lighted their Shabat candles. Always as many candles as members of the family. Then fathers after saying their prayers used to make Kidush by wine and chalas, and the happy super went on until late at night, when it ended with songs and "Zmiros".

On Saturday mornings fathers dressed up in Shtramels, "laptzedekl" and Cyces Used to walk proud surrounded by their sons in yarmulkas or "kapels" on their heads holding under arms their fathers "Taleysim".

And how much happiness it was in this part of town during the High Holidays. Rosh-Hashana, Yom-Kipur, Sukkot, Pesah, Shevuod, Hanukah and Simhat Torah.

Who can forget Rosh-Hashana afternoon when the black mass of Tarnovian Jews was going to the River Wontok to commemorate the destruction of the Temple, and empty their pockets of their sins to the water. (Teshlah).

In the evenings on working days, when the moon was high above the sky, trying to peek into Jewish streets and Jewish homes, when all the window used to be open on hot summer nights, it was listening to squeaky baby beds and old Jewish lulabay:

Shluf mein Sindele shluf!
Rozhinkeloch mit Mandlen,
Das wird dayn Beruf,
Mit den virst du Yidele handlen.

Before the war Tarnów had been known as a stronghold of Zionism. Many young Jewish pioneers learned there before leaving for Palestine. The population of the Jewish district in Tarnów were mostly Chassidim or very religious Orthodox Jews. Not so religious used to live in Polish neighbourhoods. Many of them wealthy with large properties and other business.

Most children of Israel in Tarnów perished in extermination camps. German S.S. led them in long columns through the streets of Tarnów.

The best Poles of Tarnów went to concentration camps as well. Many of them who went through the gate of Tarnów Gestapo in chains never left the building alive.

During the war Tarnów didn't loose to many buildings. Just part of the railroad station, post office, all synagogues and few homes. But lost their best people Jewish population included.

Chapter 8A (cont)

The City (Jasło)

Jasło is located in mid-southern Poland just north from Carpathian Mountains. Only two hours away by train from Tarnów or Tuchów. There was Jasło where the Rotter family used to live, even before grandpa Abraham took his family to settle in Brzyście near Jasło after Leniowers sold their ranch and farm in Karwodrza near Tuchów and where grandpa Abraham took a job as a manager of a large farm.

For Leniower girls Jasło-Brzyście was the second home in their young lives, where they really grew up, went to school until the time when they escaped to the east of Poland to save themselves from the Nazis in September 1939.

Jasło in those days was and still is a very important part of Polish economy. Together with nearby Krosno, Jasło is the main center of Polish oil industry. Even more now then in those pre-war years, when Poland used to own large oil fields in Drohobicz (Western Ukraine) which they lost to Soviet Union in 1939.

Jasło before the war was rather a small city with 20,000 population, including 2000 Jews. It was a nice and sophisticated city, completely destroyed by the Germans and re-bilt by Poles after the war. The city is surrounded by Wisłoka and Ropa Rivers. It had a gimnazium, commercial academy and many highly educated people used to live there. Although in the beginning there were no Jews in Jasło, later they managed to prosper there. There was lots of Jewish business in Jasło and many Jewish profesionals as well. Near Jasło in a village of Niegłowice was a refinery owned and operated by Jewish families Gartenberg, Schreier and Goltschlak, whose daughters used to be best friends of Anna, Frieda and Ela. Large section of Jasło's population used to work for the refinery.

Most of Jews of Jasło perished in Bełżec extermination camp. Among them Bluts and Rotters. Those who survived are spreaded now all over the world. Some of them even as far as Australia, and the Polish government owns the Gartenberg Refinery.

It is also interesting to know, that the village of Niegłowice where the refinery is standing was the first parish of Karol Wojtyła, who now resides in Vatican as Pope John Paul II, after he was ordained by The Theological Seminary in Cracow.

Chapter 9

Leniowers!

To write about Leniowers we will go back about 100 years. We presume that parents of Anna's father Abraham Leniower were born during that era sometime between 1850 and 1860. What happened before that date we don't know. One piece of information available to us is that first Leniowers came to Poland hundreds of years ago from France, but nobody in the family could explain about their roots in detail.

We know for sure that home for Leniowers was Ropczyce a small town in south-eastern Poland near Rzeszów. They always been a very large family. Farming and ranching was in their blood for many generations so it is no surprising that they use to own many villages with fruitful farmland and stock.

Leniowers were religious people and generous people. They were good to their workers and other people. They gave a lot to charity and many poor people benefited from their generosity.

The story of Anna's father starts in Niedzwiada, a village near Ropczyce, where the family owned land and where Abraham Leniower was born. We also presume that some others children of Leniowers were born there.

The city of Rzeszow always was and still is a very important railroad center being on a highway which conected west with east. There use to be lots of rich farmland around Rzeszow. Nowaday Rzeszow is a part of very important industrial center which Polish government started to build long before world war two. International trains which originated in Paris, Vienna and Prague use to go through Cracow, Tarnow also stoped in Rzeszow on their way to Lvov, Bucharest and Constantinopol (Todays Istambul in Turkey.)

Abraham Leniower's father was Joseph Leniower. He married Chaya Gitel born Blasbald. Together they had nine children. Five sons and four daughters. Joseph Leniower died from pneumonia still a young man. His wife Chaya Gitel lived to be 82 years old and lost her life ~~from~~ 37 the hands of Nazi murderers.

The oldest of the nine children was Isak Meir. Probably most religious from all the Leniower children. He was born June 20 1883 in Niedzwiada. Isak Meir married a beautiful young woman Regina Kirschenbaum born August 26 1888 in Wilcza Wola Poland daughter of Jakob and Frimeta Sieger Kirschenbaum, probably born in 1850s. The family of Regina Leniower was wealthy, and their wealth also reflected on their daughter, who not only liked everything she saw but liked also to be pampered. Her hobby was to match young people from poor families. She use to outfit them, make their wedding in her own home and gave them a start in their live together.

Isak Meir and Regina Leniower had four children: One son Joseph and three daughters: Esther, Janka and Mania. In 1929 they left Poland and settled in Anvers Belgium. There they became members of the Diamond Exchange, and made a very good living as everything was going well for them.

World war two came to Belgium in May of 1940. It was the same story as in Poland. Germans didn't spare nothing and nobody on their march to France. Isak Meir got seriously ill about three months into the war and soon died from that illness. Regina Leniower and her four children tried hard to make on their own. It wasn't easy. German forces took Anvers and continued their reign of terror as elsewhere. The time came to leave the good life. The unrushing German pancers harassed them all the way, and the bombardment of German Air Force never ceased. And there it was when the tragedy stroke the family again. Son Joseph born in 1912 and daughter Mania born in 1917 were killed in one of those bombardments somewhere in Belgium on the way to Italy. After the initial shock and funeral Regina and her two daughters Esther born in 1911 and Janka born in 1916 continued with their journey and finally reached and settled somewhere in Northern Italy. I imagene it was a village or some small town.

Chapter 9 (cont)

Leniowers!

Not long before the war in 1939 the oldest daughter of Isak Meir and Regina married Max Apterbach He has been born Oct. 21 1908 in Stary Sambor Poland to Chaim Joseph Apterbach born in 1873 also in Stary Sambor and Gitel Ehrlich Apterbach born also in 1873 in Dolina Polska. Esther Leniower Apterbach Max's wife has been born February 15 1911 in Kolbuszowa. All those places mentioned above are on Polish territory, but at the time described above they use to be a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled by the Hapsburg Royal Family.

So as you can see Max Apterbach was also a member of the Leniower family during their escape from Belgium. Also with them was Max's and Esther's son Isi born in Anvers in 1940.

Second surviving daughter of Regina Leniower married one Victor Korn. We don't know where. Maybe in still in Belgium or in Italy. In 1944 they had a baby girl Mania named after aunt Mania who got killed by German bombs.

Their hiding place in Italy was on the top of a mountain. It was dangerous because of Fascist sympatizers all around the village. The people who hid them were handsomly rewarded but Leniowers and Apterbachs lived in constant fear. The worst of everything was when any of them had to go down the mountain to find or buy some necessities of life. Even to bring a bucket of cold water they had to make the long walk down and up the mountain. The anxiety used to reach a peak when one of the children or both together cried. They covered them with blankets or put them in different hiding places around the house, only to make sure that nobody could hear them outside.

Victor Korn went down the mountain shortly before the end of their ordeal. He wanted to buy some milk for his little daughter. Someway, somehow Germans got hold of him and he never returned.

After the liberation the family spent some time in Italy. During that time Janka met there a Jewish man ~~Baumgarten or~~ Bogart. She fell in love and married him. For some reason she left Mania with grandmother Regina, who since then took care on her until adulthood. I guess Janka's new husband prefered not to be a father to a step-daughter.

War over, the family returned to Anvers trying to rebuild. Max and aunt Regina joined again the Diamond exchange, and Apterbachs had another child. This time a girl, they named Fanny who arrived in 1946.

In 1949 or 1950 they came to America. They settled in New York City and continued in their diamand business, this time joining the New York Exchange.

Janka and her husband from Italy also came to New York. As it turned out he was a mean man and mistreated Janka in many ways. He left her many times but always kept coming back. Despite their problems they had three daughters. Dinah born in Europe September 16 1947. She is married now and her name is Dinah Engel. Vivian born in New York July 3 1950. She is married also and her name is Vivian Burke. The youngest Elli born in New York April 26 1954 is still single..Janka's unhappy marriage finally ended in divorce. She died in 1971 after a long illness. But before her sad end she saw her ~~oldest~~ FIRST BORN daughter Mania Korn to a very fine young man Mr. Marvin Schick. IN 1963 MARRIED

Marvin Schick was a profesor in Mania's university, in New York. He has been born in New York City in 1934. He has a degree in political science. He is still teaching, but during the Mayor Lindsay's administration he served as Mayor's adviser on Jewish Affairs. Marvin comes from religious-orthodox background. As Marvin, Mania also is very religious. In a matter of facts after their marriage she prefered to be called Malka. (Her Jewish given name) I believe that she wears a wick.

Marvin's father was Joseph Schick (1895-1938). His mother Renee Schick had been born in 1905 and still lives in New York City.

Malka and Marvin have four children: Shari born April 28 1964, Avi born June 25 1966, Yosef born January 15 1973 and Adina born December 30 1977.

Isi Apterbach son of Max and Esther got his education in New York. He attended Yeshiva grade school and high school. He got his degree from Yeshiva University. He recived his master degree ~~in~~ from another university. He teaches now english literature in one of New York's universities. In 1960 Isi married Evelyn Gerber who has been his student at the university. He fell in love with her. Evelyn has been born in New York in 1947, the youngest child of William Gerber (1908-1973) from Massasutches, and Pauline Mozel Gerber from Odessa Russia (1911-1976). Evelyn has two brothers both of New York. Jerry born in 1941 and Elliot born in 1935. Isi and Evelyn have two children. Daughter Karen born in 1970 and son William born in 1976.

Apterbachs daughter Fanny who has been born in Belgium in 1946 as her brother was educated in New York also. She has a degree in education and taught in New York's school system.

In 1967 or 1968 Fanny met Marvin Gold. When they first met Marvin studied for Rabinate in one of New York's Yeshiva's. I think this was just a cover-up which would keep Marvin from going to Vietnam. He is now a successful CPA. Marvin's parents are Oscar and Bella Slipowitz Gold from New York City. Incidently Anna and I visited Apterbachs in April of ~~194~~ 1968. It was exactly then when Marvin asked Fanny to marry him. Marvin has been born in New York in 1944. After both families met it came to light that Marvin's grandfather was from Niedzwiada also the birthplace of many Leniowers and ofcourse Fanny's grandfathers Isak Meir Leniower. Marvin's grandfather knew Leniowers and was very happy that his grandson was getting married to a Leniower. At least on one side.

Fanny and Marvin married in 1968. They have two children. Howard born in 1970 and Reva born in 1973. Both in New York City.

Our information about the rest of the Leniower clan is limited. We know more about some of them and less about the others. Let us continue to write about them in the order they were born.

Second child of Joseph and Gitel Leniower was daughter Rachel. She married a guy from Rzeszow whose name was Diamand. We don't know his first name. His hometown was Rzeszow. Diamands ~~d~~ had seven children: Ozek, Izek. Hania, Ida, Mania, Joseph and Bronia. Diamand got drafted into Austro-Hungarian army and fought the Russians in world war one. They captured him and as a prisoner of war banished him to Siberia. He died there one week before he was scheduled ~~for~~ to return home. With the sad news the authorities sent seven silver rings which Diamand was planing bring home for his children. Those were very hard times for Rachel and her children. But her brother your grandpa Abraham steped in and helped them until all children grew up. Needless to say they all perished in holocaust.

Abraham was the third child of Leniowers, but to write about him I will ~~postpone until the end of the chapters~~ IN A SEPARATE CHAPTER

Chaim was the fourth child. After his marriage he and his wife used to live in Bielsko a city in south-western Poland with a large German population. Bielsko was second to Łódz who was and still is the center of Polish textile industry. Chaim was a representative in that part of Poland of Singer sewing machines. The family owned also some apartment buildings in Bielsko. We dodn't know the name of his wife. They had three children. Daughter Tosia and two younger boys. Names unknown. Chaim Leniower and all his family perished in holocaust.

Fifth was daughter Rózia. She married Usiek Kartagener. They lived and owned a brush factory in Tarnów. They had two children Arthur and Tola, ages 11-15. This family perished in holocaust also.

Jacob was the sixth child of Joseph and Gitel Leniower. The name of his wife was Sala. They use to live and ~~xxx~~ operate a ranch in Stykow near Rzeszów. They didn't have any children. Mother Gitel Leniower lived with them until the last days of their lives, when Germans killed them. Grandma Gitel was 82 years old when she perished.

Daughter Minia was the seventh child. She married Salo Diamand who was the brother of Diamand who was husband to Rachel Leniower. The one who died in Siberia. Minia and Salo use to live in Jaworów near Lvov. Lvow was the third largest city in Poland before the war. Now the city is part of Soviet Union.

Minia and Salo had two children; Lonek and Nusia, ages 12-15. They owned and operated a bus line between Jaworów and Lvov. In 1935 Salo was killed in a bus accident. Minia and children perished during the war.

Eight child was David who was an accountant by profession. His wife was an assistant to a lawyer in Lvov, their hometown. They had three years old son. Wife's and son's names unknown. They all perished in holocaust.

A girl Hania was the youngest child of Joseph and Gitel Leniower. She was a bookkeeper in Lvov and married a lawyer during the war. They didn't have any children and like the rest of the family were murdered by Germans.

Chapter 10

Abraham Leniower Story!

Until now we told you everything possible and available to us about Salomon and Leniower families. We also told you whatever we knew about their close relatives. While writing about the Leniower family we left out the details about Anna's father Abraham Leniower. We know more about him then about the rest of Leniower klan. So in this chapter we will write about his life and his lifestyle. How he met your grandma Frances and more. We may repeat some facts we told you earlier, but all this will be necessary for continuation of this story.

As you already know Abraham Leniower was born June 30 1890 in Niedzwiada small farm community near Rzeszow. He was third child of Joseph and Gitel Leniower who owned lots of land in Niedzwiada area. Ranching and farming was Leniowers way of life for many generations. You could easy say from way back.

Because the family was very religious Abraham as his brothers before him and after joined a Yeshiva as a little boy and studied there until he was 18 years old. Besides Yeshiva he attended public schools also. So did his brothers and sisters. Their parents made sure that the girls also got Jewish education. All were smart good looking and well behaved.

Abraham's father passed on early in 1900s leaving his wife and 9 children, all of them already grown up. The family elected Abraham to lead them into the future. Just about then world war one began. This was also the time when Leniowers left Niedzwiada and bought a new land in Karwodrza near Tuchow.

Austro-Hungarian authorities drafted Abraham into their army and sent him to Vienna to make a soldier out of him. He spent some time in Vienna and later was released from the army, because he was a head of a large family and because the Austrians found out about his knowledge of agriculture and those were times that every ounce of grain counted.

Leniowers always led grand style of life. Their homes in Niedzwiada, Karwodrza and later in Stykow use to be full of friends and invited guests. On summer Saturdays their Jewish friends gathered in back yards in shadows of old trees enjoying good food and Leniowers hospitality. In a matter of facts Leniowers were generous and very helpful family. People from the whole area use to come there for help and advise. Nobody ever was turned away. Some of them were hungry, some had financial problems, others needed help with the county or City Hall.

Each summer when all crops were collected they celebrated a kind of village fair. And again all friends and neighbours were invited. The elite was celebrating and dancing in the house or in the yards and the peasants and farm workers farther outside. And as always there was lots of food, drink, music and entertainment. All workers were generously reimbursed for their hard work.

To emphasize the human side of Abraham Leniower let me tell you here about the time before the end of world war one, when Austrian authorities asigned some Italian prisoners of war to work in Karwodrza. Yes they worked hard but Abraham Leniower treated them with respect as human beings. Those Italian men never forget him. They kept writing to him long after they returned home to Italy, sending him not only many thanks but gift parcels also, all in appreciation for human treatment.

There always was something very good about Abraham Leniower. I always liked him very much since I met him. His good deeds left many people grateful to him forever.

So Leniower klan continued to live in Karwodrza. Some of them married, some left home and some remained. But the ones who left always kept coming back. As you can see they were a very close family. But Abraham Leniower was always at home, until the time when he started to think about a family on his own.

Chapter 10 (cont)

Abraham Leniower Story!

When Leniowers purchased Karwodrza Abraham was 26 or 27 years old. As I mentioned before Karwodrza was only few miles away from Tuchow where grandma Frances use to live with her mother and younger sister Helen.

In 1915 when world war one intensified Russian czarist armies carried their enormous offensive and found themselves not far away from Tuchow. As always when danger appears to close people are getting frantic, and so it was in Tuchow in those days. Many people left town and among them grandma Frances with her mother and sister. Their flight ended in Budweiss or Pilsen both famous even today because of brewing excellent beer exported from Czechoslovakia all over the world. They left everything behind in Tuchow and grandma Frances went to work in order to support herself and her family.

She took a job in a clothing factory which during the war manufactured uniforms for Austro-Hungarian soldiers. As refugees in a strange country they endured many hardships but at least they weren't prosecuted as our brothers in world war two. Their ordeal ended in 1917 when they returned to Tuchow. When they entered again after two years to their dry goods store they found it empty except of a large pile of s----t which lay there in the middle of the store who knows how long. It was both funny and tragic. The store was located in the middle of town. Grandma and her family moved back to their apartment in the building behind the store.

Shortly after their arrival they cleaned up the store, bought new merchandise and opened again for business. Little by little life returned to normal. Other refugees came back and old Tuchów burst with Jewish life again.

This was also the time when young Abraham Leniower saw Franciska Salomon for the first time. Since then he couldn't take off his eyes of her. He fell in love immediatly and decided that grandma Frances will be the girl he will marry. But at first it wasn't easy for him as it seemed. Grandma Frances was engaged to her cousin Sigmund (Zisie) Rotter. They been going together for three years and whole town thought that Frances will marry Sigmund. But at the end Abraham Leniower prevailed. I guess grandma loved him much more then Sigmund Rotter.

We don't know for sure where the wedding took place. Maybe in Tuchow or maybe in Karwodrza. All we know that was an impressive affair like all the Leniower symchas before. Whole Tuchow was celebrating with the young couple. Friends and relatives came from all over.

It was year 1919 or maybe 1920. Couple of years after Poland regained her independence. Times use to be unstable. Different Polish factions kept fighting for power, and whatever went wrong Jews were blamed for it. In the east the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia and immediatly started making plans for world domination. Their first step was invasion of the young Polish Republic. They made to banks of Vistula River near Warsaw. But Poles with the help of French army stoped them right there at the gates of Warsaw. The Soviets had to retreat with heavy loses. This war was concluded with a peace treaty between Poland and Soviet Union in 1921 in Riga capital of Latvia.

Needless to say many young Polish Jews joined the Soviet side. Since then Poles started label all Jews as communists calling them Żydo-Communa (Jewish Communists). Lots Jews suffered on their account.

After their wedding Abraham and Franciska settled in Karwodrza. But grandma didn't like country living and missed her family and friends in Tuchow. That why the young couple moved back to Tuchow taking an apartment in largest building there. Grandpa Abraham commuted to work in Karwodrza every day.

Chapter 11

Short History of Poland!

World war one came to an end and Poland once again emerged as an independent country. Therefore I think that at this point it is a good idea to give you a short lesson of Polish history.

Poland's earliest status as a nation started over 1000 years ago. A Slavic tribe of Polanis united with other Slavic tribes and principalities in the basins of Vistula and Varta and Oder rivers. Their first leader was a man called Piast. Farmer himself but a very wise man. He was the father of the Piast dynasty who ruled Poland over 300 years. After his death his son Mieszko the first took over as the first ruler of the country. Since then Poles fought many wars against their neighbours in order to keep their independence.

In 966 Poland took up Christianity. During Mieszko's the first ruler who never got to be a real king the first Polish Bishopric was established in western city of Poznan (Pôsen).

In many of their early wars Poland recived help from the Teutonic Knights, a German order of Christians who had gain control of the German land of Prussia. By the 1300s the Teutonic Knights wanted to rule Poland themselves. Many Polish kings had to fight them over many centuries.

Mieszko the first ruled Poland from 960 to 992. His son Boleslaw Chrobry took over the country immediatly after his fathers death. He became a real king and reigned until year 1025. He consolidated the nation extending its frontiers further east by taking Kiev from Russians. He also had gained recognition from German emperors. Many other kings of Piast dynasty followed Boleslaw first. There were other Boleslaw's, Mieszko's and kings called Leszko, Wladislaw and Kazimierz. Other enemies of Poland of that era were Tatars, Mongolians and Turks whom Poles fought in the name of Christianity. Many times Polish knights took part in crusades to liberate the Holy City of Jerusalem from Turks, at one point even reaching the walls of Jerusalem. They never took the city but many died in the battle and others got killed by venerial disease. Fighting Teutonic Knights and Russian who called themselves Moscals in those days was the second Polish priority. The first Polish king who gained a decisive victory over the Teutonic Knights was Wladislaw Lokietek. His son Kazimierz (Casimir the Great) was the last from the Piasts to rule Poland. During his reign (1333-1370) Poland reached her greatest power in European commerce. Thanks to him in 1347 the first fundation of Polish law was laid. He established the first school of higher learning in Cracow and also allowed Jews to settle in Poland for the first time in history. Thanks to them Polish commerce flourished.

Casimir the Great didn't leave any descendants, so the Polish nobility after his death offered the crown to Ludwik from Hungary. He accepted and ruled both countries. There is not to much to say about him. He didn't do to much for Poland. His very young daughter Jadwiga succeded him in 1384. Poles loved her with all their hearts and treated her as a Saint. No wonder that after her death the Catholic church bestowed sainthood on Her. During her reign the Polish nobility united Poland with Lithuania into one country, which in those days still was concidered wild and pagan country. Lithuanians accepted Christianity and their Great Duke Wladislaw Jagiello married Jadwiga and became Polish king. His brother Vitold became the Great Duke of Lithuania. Jadwiga and Jagiello had five sons. She passed away stil a very young woman. Jadwiga and Jagiello elevated Casimir's the Great school of higher learning into Jagiellonian University which soon became and still is one of the greatest learning institution in Europe. One of the bigest accomplishments of Jagiello was a tremendous victory over German Teutonic Knights in the battle of Gruenwald in East Prussia silencing them for many centuries to come, and giving Poland first time in history acces to the Baltic Sea. The Jagiellonian dynasty ruled Poland until 1572. Jagiello's sons were good kings. One of them defeated Turks in battle of Warna in Bulgaria. The last two Sigmund first and second kept Germans in check who many times paid homage to them in Cracow

Chapter 11 (cont)
Short History of Poland!

It was a proud moment in Polish history when Hochenzollers the German rulers ~~knelt~~ knelt in front of the king Sigmund the Old presenting him with priceless gifts. But the glory didn't last to much longer. The last of the Jagiellonians was king Sigmund August the first. Since then Poland's glory and prosperity began sliding down slow but sure. The Polish nobility (szlachta) couldn't decide who their next king will be. They fought for power between themselves. Shortly after the Jagiellonian dynasty became excint elective kings successivly were put in power resulting in a weakened central authority and increased powers of the nobles and gentry. Their first elected king was SECOND KING WAS Stefan Batory from Hungary again. As it turned out he was a good king. He defeated Russians (Moscals) even taking for a short time Moscow. But right there his success ended. After Batory the nobility elected Swedish king Sigmund third Vaza. He spent more time in Sweden then in Poland. He moved the capital from Cracow to Warsaw in order to be closer to his native country.

The nobility elected Jan third Sobieski to be their ~~third~~ FOURTH king. At least he wasn't a foreigner. He was a real Polish patriot. He was educated in Cracow and my gimnazium (High school) was named after him. He also gradueted from Jagiellonian University. During his reign Poland was strong again. Under his command Polish army stop the Turkish invasion under the walls of Vienna and made them retreat all the way to Turkey.

Despite those successes in 16th and 17th centuries Poland's internal and international position weakened and deteriorated. Attaks from Russians, Swedes, Germans and uprising of Cosaks (todays Ukrainians) kept destroying the country. Polish next two kings were German Saxons August the second and August the third. Their main interest was in having lots of fun. They didn't do any good for the country.

The last three kings of Poland before the disaster stroke were Polish noblemen. Jeremy Wisniowiecki became a king because his ancestors were responsible for stoping the Cosak uprising. The other two Stanislaw Leszczynski and Stanislaw August Poniatowski used to be just figure heads. King Poniatowski tried to stop the down trend by introducing a new May third constitution. The nobility adapted the constitution but it was already to late. Ironicaly the May third constitution still is the legal constitution of Poland.

While Poland was steady weakening her neighbours Austria, Prussia and Russia became powers on their own. They all wanted to own Poland but could not seize her without risking war against the others. They finally settled this by dividing Poland among themselves in a series of agreements called the three partitions of Poland.

The partitions took place in years 1772 when Poniatowski was still the king and later in 1793 and in 1795. It seemed that Poland had vanished as a nation forever. But people of Poland never lost their national pride and their patriotism kept them going. They fought in many uprisings and small scale revolutions. There was a November uprising of 1830 and a January uprising of 1863. There were heros like Tadeusz Kosciuszko who destroyed a Russian army in the battle of Raclavice. There was Kazimierz Pulaski who together with Kosciuszko later fought for American independence. There WERE others like Jewish hero Berek Joselevicz, and general Henryk Dombrowski who as commander of Polish army fought on side of Napoleon Bonaparte in Italy and Spain.

Poland was reborn as a small state during the advance of Napoleon in 1807 but with his defeat in Russia Poland again lost her indentity, as a nation when her land was divided again by the Congress of Vienna, in 1815. Only a small district around Cracow remained independent, later to be annexed by Austria in 1848.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries the desire for Polish autonomy burned in the hearts of Polish patriots. Poets, writers, composers Like Frederick Chopin, Adam Mickiewicz, Julius Slowacki and Ignacy Krasinski all in exile glorified Poland with their poems, stories and music, strongly BELIEVING THAT SOME DAY A FREE POLAND WILL EMERGE.

X HENRYK VALEZY A FRENCHMAN WHO RAN BACK TO FRANCE AS SOON AS HE ARRIVED -

XX SIGMUND THIRD VAZA WAS SUCCEDED BY A NATIVE POLE JAN KAZIMIERZ NOT KNOWN FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, EXCEPT THAT IN A FARAWAY FUTURE RESIDENTS OF LVOV NAMED THEIR UNIVERSITY AFTER HIM

Chapter 12

Joseph Pilsudski

Among many heros and fighters for Polish independence in 19th and 20th centuries in my judgement and all the contemporaries of that era the greatest was Joseph Pilsudski. Almost single handed he took up and continued first political activities against Poland's oppressors mostly Russian czars and with the outbreak of world war one took up a fight against them on the side of Austro-Hungarian empire.

Pilsudski was born in Lithuania near Vilna in November 1867. A consistent rumor throughout his lifetime circulated in Poland that his mother was Jewish. As a young man he went underground. He was caught and banished to Siberia as a result of an alleged plot to assassinate Alexander II czar of Russia. Returning to Poland after five years of exile he became a leader of the Polish Socialist Party in 1892. He started a secret radical paper "Robotnik" (The Worker). In 1900 he was arrested again with his wife Marie but they managed to escape to England. When he returned to Poland in 1902 he resumed his political activities secretly building a private Polish army the Legions. At the outbreak of world war one he put on the field an army of 10,000 men which he commanded against Russia. As I said before he supported Austria and Germany but after 1916 he fought against them on the side of the Allies. In 1918 he returned to Warsaw after the defeat of central powers and with assistance of his army was elected leader of the new formed Polish Republic. They never made him a President of Poland but because he was a great soldier Poles made him a Marshall of the army and minister of war. The independence of Poland was sealed by the treaty of Versailles in 1919.

But internal struggle never ceased in Poland. Right after the war and after the victory over the new Soviet Russia the fights between factions for power started all over again. The first Polish president was assassinated. His succesor always feared for his life. The famous composer of that era Ignacy Paderewski was first Polish prime minister. His government followed by government of peasants with their leader Witos at the helm and many more afterwards. In 1923 Pilsudski resigned as the leader of the country but kept the post of war minister. In 1926 another general Wladislaw Sikorski tried to cease power but Pilsudski through a coup d'etat became a dictator.

Finally Poland was able to elect her President. The man was a chemist profesor Ignacy Moscicki who kept being re-elected until Poland lost her independence again in 1939. During the period between the wars they had many prime ministers. Yes Poles had national elections and due elected two house parlament (Sejm and Senate), but the acctual leader of the country always was Joseph Pilsudski until his death May 12 1935. He ruled through his party BBWR (Bezpartyjny Blok Wspolpracy z Rzadem) which in English means "Bipartisan Block of Cooperation with Government". He was a very good leader. The many leaders of so many Polish factions and their followers kept their mouths shot because they were afraid of Pilsudski. Jews loved him because he cared for them. He was a none believer. He is buried in Wawel Cathedral among all Polish kings. He was buried there against a tremendous opposition from the Catholic Church. His heart was placed in an urn and put on the top of Ostra Brama (Sharp Gate) next to a statue of Holy Mary also a very important Holy Place in Vilna the place of his birth.

I was a 14 years student when together with my colleagues I marched in his funeral. I will never forget it. It was some sight to see Polish armed forces marching along and his old horse "Kasztanka" (Chestnut) struggling to keep up behind with the funeral. And ofcourse all those foreign leaders among them Goering and Laval who in few years later became enemies of Poland.

Pilsudski's death marked the beginning of a new struggle for power in Poland which eventually led to another downfall of the country in world war II.

Chapter 13

Abrahan and Franciska in Tuchow!

Now after this brief lesson of Polish history let us go back to Tuchow where Abraham and Franciska Leniower lived happily after their wedding. Leniowers still owned the ranch in Karwodza which was young Abraham's responsibility.

The happiness was even greater when on January 31 1922 Fransiska presented Abraham with a set of twin baby girls. Frieda (Fradl) was few minutes older also larger not leaving to much space for her younger much smaller sister Anna Lea (Hannah Lea). The two girls created a sensation in Tuchow. I understand that people from miles around Tuchow use to come to town to see them.

Grandma Frances use to drive her little daughters in a carriage made for two. The girls nanny was an older lady whose husband passed away and she needed extra money to make a living. The carriage was always slightly covered with small curtain to protect the babies from some peoples bad eyes. The cover didn't spare them from a choking spell after one woman known in Tuchow for her bad eyes looked at them.

Anna and Frieda use to be darlings of the family and the town of Tuchow. Still you can imagene the surprise of grandpa Abraham when his wife on October 29 1923 gave a birth to another baby girl Ela (Ethel). Deep down inside him grandpa Abraham expected a little boy. No wonder that he fainted while hearing the good news. In time he got used to it. After all he became a father of another beautiful girl.

Life in Tuchow went on. Although at much slower pace then in large cities but it was much happier life with less worries. Grandma Frances was happy because she was close to her mother and sister and many of her friends and grandpa kept commuting to Karwodrza. Anna, Frieda and Ela kept growing. They played with some friends always under the watchfull eyes of their mother. Sometimes during cold winter afternoons the girls listened to many stories about their grandparents and the family before them.

But times never stay still. This was a year 1925 or maybe 1926. Grandpa Abraham and rest of the Leniower family just recived an offer for Karwodrza they didn't dare turn down. After a short period of family meetings they decided to sell.

Shortly afterward an opportunity presented itself for a purchase of another large farm in Stykow near Rzeszow. And again Leniowers decided that the land was good and worth to buy. But for grandpa Abraham the time came to finally leave the farming business. He took his share of the money and left the ranching to his mother and brother Jacob. They did so until the outbreak of world war II in September of 1939.

It didn't take to long for grandpa Abraham to stay out of ranching. In those days there was in Poland one big and wealthy landowner a Jewish man by the name Wymishner. This man use to own lots of farming property all over Poland. His headquarters was in Eastern Poland in Gliniany. Exactly at that period of time he approached grandpa Abraham, like he would know about the fact that grandpa was available, with a proposition to manage for him a large spread of land in Brzyscie near Jaslo. To move to Brzyscie ment to leave Tuchow. To leave the closest family grandma Mariam, aunt Helen and many very close friends. Knowing grandma Frances how upset she was to live in Karwodrza just few miles away from Tuchow how hard it would be for her to leave this little town. The decision wasn't easy for her, but at the end she agreed. After all Jaslo was not to far away. Only couple of hours on the train. So she could come and visit as often as she wanted. On the other hand she had many relatives living in Jaslo like her cousins the Rotters and Bluts. So the packing began and the big move was on.

Chapter 14

Brzyscie - Jasło!

It was already spring 1927 when after all the deliberations and serious discucions the family Leniower finally left Tuchow. As always in springtime everything around was fresh and beautiful. After the initial good-by's and some crying grandma Frances grandpa Abraham and girls boarded the train and were on their way to start a new life in Brzyscie.

At the station in Jasło grandma's cousins the Rotters and Bluts came to greet them. Also people from the ranch came to take them to their new home. Brzyscie was about 4 kilometers away from Jasło. Shortly after leaving Jasło the paved road changed to a country road. The nice landscape made a very good impression on everybody. The first colors of spring made everything looking young and beautiful. The road ran parallel to the River Ropa. Finally not so far away any more they could see their new home. Situated on high ground surrounded all around with bushes and flowers who at that time of the year just started to blossom. The main road to the house was an alley with tall trees on both sides.They loved all of that from the first time they saw it. The high ground made it possible for them to see the rich fields and the surrounding countryside, like on the palms of their hands.

The house was painted white and had many comfortable rooms large kitchen and many other facilities and conveniences. In the back of the house stood special quarters for workers who lived there permanently. Also behind the house there was a gigantic yard with garden and many clumps of flowers and fruit trees. Next to garden was a piece of land which looked like a paradise with tall grass, natural well and with blueberries and raspberries growing all over. A short distance from there you could see all kind of horses running free.

On the far right of the house large barn was located and on far left another two barns and two stables were standing. In the middle of the garden stood a large gazebo, all decorated with many rosebushes.

The whole property spread over 250 acres of a fertile land which years back was owned by a Polish noble family. With an oil refinery in nearby Nieglowice working at full speed the beauty and fruitfullness of the land was never in danger, which shows you that even so many years back good will of people involved protected the environment.

The peasants who worked the land and on the ranch use to live in the area in small houses and poor conditions. Most of them didn't own their land and were paid for their work with small wages. Some came to work from other villages around. All of them liked to work for grandpa Abraham because he tried to pay them better and treated them well. The gates to the house were always open for them and they could get help there anytime.. The peasants of Brzyscie worked there many years from generation to generation and never wanted to leave the place. In a matter of facts many of them still live there, like Aniela Czech who worked for Leniowers in their household for many years.

The leader of the workers was an appointed man who knew the land and people. He watched over them. Every day during the planting and harvesting seasons very early in the morning he stood in front of his house and with a strong voice kept announcing that there was time to go to work in fields. In a clear air his voice carried far away. Other people picked it up and sent the same message to workers who lived in other parts of the village.

Besides Aniela Czech who learned how to speak Yiddish and Hebrew a little, who was extrimly devoted to the family and had lots to do with raising the girls there were other people devoted to Abraham Leniower and his family. Aniela Czech still writes from time to time and ask for help which she gets.

Chapter 14 (cont)

Brzyscie - Jasło!

It didn't take to long for the family to get established in Brzyście. So the life went on. They had good years, very good years and some bad ones. the farm produced very well most of the time. They grew wheat, rye, oats, beets for production of sugar and different kind of beets for feeding animals. They also grew potatoes and all kinds of other vegetables. They raised chickens and turkeys. They kept cows to produce dairy products and also raised horses for Polish armed forces.

There were many peoples involved who worked as supervisors and machinists. Don,t be surprised but this outfit even back so many years ago was equiped with modern farm machinery. Men like Mr. Konop and Mr. Ochonski had a very good knowledge of farming and served as advisers to grandpa Abraham for many years. Some of these people who use to work for grandpa live now here in United States in Chicago area.

There was not only Brzyście where Abraham Leniower became a success instantly. Soon after his arrival in Jasło people there in Jewish and Polish communities recognized him as a person with the right values and good heart. As always he was ready to help anybody who asked and also those who didn't ask. Even the local Polish aristocracy valued his opinion and advice. Grandpa and grandma use to be their guests on many important occassions. The bigest kick for grandpa Abraham always came when his Polish friends used to invite him to take part in their hunting parties. They never could understand why he declined their invitations. It was hard for them to realize the fact that Jews don't like to kill even animals.

Polish authorities in Jasło liked his integrity and when grandpa intervened on somebodys behalf with them they always obliged.

Life was hectic in Leniower's household. As in earlier years in Niedzwiada or Karwodrza, Brzyście most of the times was full of guests. If not the close family, friends kept comming on weekends especially in summertime, to enjoy the country fresh air and good food. It was known all over Poland when city folks used to come to the country all of them loved to eat dark country bread (pumpernikel) with home made sweet butter or farmer's chesse and drink sauer milk (buttermilk). They all gathered around the gazebo in the back garden having fun playing games, dancing and singing.

Rotters and Bluts from nearby Jasło visited in Brzyscie on many occassions. Bluts young son Tadek (Juszczyk now from Haifa) was always hungry. Anytime he called for more food his mother felt terrible embarased. Another guest was Esther Leniower who at certain time spent in Brzyscie almost one year enjoying the hospitality of her aunt and uncle.

But the most important guest was Milton Rosenblum son of ~~Fela~~ Rose Goldman Rosenblum who was a sister to great grandma Mariam. Well aunt ~~Fela~~ Rose wanted her son to meet the European part of the family. He visited not only with Leniowers in Brzyscie but also Tuchow. The family welcomed him with all their hearts, showing him the old Leniower hospitality. He made many pictures of the family and the locations to take to his mother. He was one of the Rosenblums who were responsible for bringing us to this country. When we came to New New York in 1951 Milton's sister Pauline showed us all those pictures he made way back in 1933 in Tuchow and Brzyscie.

Many other people spent their vacations in Brzyscie. Ida Lehr one od grandma's relatives from Tuchow used to sent there her sons so they could have a good time and gain some weight.

But people who spent ~~most of~~ time in Brzyscie were the Leniowers, grandpa's brothers and sisters and their families. You could find them there anytime either for rest or ~~advice~~ ADVISE.

In contrast to grandpa Abraham who was busy all the time and evidently loved this lifestyle grandma Frances didn't feel so happy. As we all know she was born and grew up in Tuchow in a circle of her close friends and relatived and in more Jewish environment. No wonder it was not easy for HER to tackle this new life.

Chapter 14 (cont)

Brzyscie-Jasło!

Grandma Frances was a wonderful mother, caring and overprotective and took her little longer to get acquainted with new people and make friends. There were no Jewish people in Brzyście and to find them grandma had to go to nearby Jasło. She overcame the early jitters. She had plenty of good help to make the household run smooth. After a short time grandma met some people who later became good friends of the family.

As for the girls after one year in Brzyscie time came to go to school. There was no school in Brzyście so first Anna and Frieda enrolled in public elementary school in Jasło. One year later Ela joined them. Every day rain or shine, summer or winter they had been driven to school in horses pulled buggy. That was one of the means of transportation in Poland in those days. I am quite sure it stiil exists. During the cold and snowy winters the buggy was replaced by a sleigh. They dressed up in worm clothing and covered themselves with heavy blankets. Grandma Frances made sure of that and on some days escorted them to school in person. Some people saw it as going a little overboard, but that was the way grandma felt about her daughters.

Aniela Czech was the person who accompanied the girls to school most of the time. She was in those days the main person in Leniowers house. She wasn't just a maid. Besides cleaning and cooking she also took care of the girls. She was a Catholic but knew a lot about Yiddishkeit and her devotion was simply amazing.

The school which the girls attended in Jasło was called Maria Konopnicka School. Miss Konopnicka was a Polish patriot and poet through the years when Poland was divided between the big Powers of that era Austria, Prussia and Russia. She was the one of many intelectuals who with her poems inspired the population to fight against their oppressors. She was most known for the poem about Polish roots. The name of the poem was "Rota" which in Polish means roots. In this particular poem which later was changed to a song she urged her compatriots to never abandon their land and language. During those dark days "Rota" to many Poles was like a National Athem.

Because of the influence Abraham Leniower had with Polish authorities it was possible for his daughters not to attend the school on Saturdays. We always had in Poland all over the country six school days. Everybody attended Jew or not Jew. It was a seldom occurrence but not impossible. Anyway the girls used to be very good students and off on Saturdays didn't interfere with their good grades. On Sundays they always picked up their Saturday work from their friends. On another hand it also was good for business. By not riding to school on Saturdays the kosher Jews of Jaslo kept buying their dairy products from Leniower's farm.

The principal of Maria Konopnicka School was one Mrs. Breitmeyer. She was a very inteligent woman and personal friend of Polish leader Marshall Joseph Pilsudski. She had a great respect for the Leniower family and loved the girls dearly, for their good grades and attitude toward the school.

Anna, Frieda and Ela besides being good students exceeded in many other talents. Your grandma Anna always had a beautiful singing voice. People around her always wanted her to sing. She still sings very nice but don't like to show it off anymore. Your grandma's singing brightened lives of many people young and old at a time when all good and pleasant seemed so far away. During the war Anna also learned the art of weaving. It was a real art done the hard way using hands and legs. Operating an oldfashioned machine like that required a tremendous strain of her mind making sure that all those threads wouldn't tangle making the whole work at the end not acceptable. She became a master of her new trade producing those georgeous silk fabrics, at some point the best in the factory, and all this she accomplished by listening to an Uzbek teacher who didn't know a word word in Russian language.

Frieda also had a talent on her own. She drew and painted pictures. But in later years because of the war and all the problems tied to the war I guess she lost her touch and never resumed the work in this extraordinary gift.

Chapter 14 (cont)
Brzyscie-Jaslo!

Your aunt Ela as long as I remember was a girl of many talents. Really you could put her in the category as an excellent homemaker. She can sew and even could design her own or anybody elses wardrobe. She is very good in needlepoint and kniting xx. She always was a terrific cook. During the war she made beautiful sweaters for Russian women contributing a lot to the family's survival.

At one point during the war Ela tried to learn auto-mechanics. This was a very good profesion at the time. There were many girl auto-mechanics in Soviet Union. Maybe if she would stay with it she would be a good mechanic. At the end she came to an conclusion that it would be better to leave this dirty job for men.

Both Frieda and Ela used to be very good mathematicians. Their teachers in Jaslo Miss Skarniecka and Miss Domino always made an example of them to the entire class. Even the school priest knew about their mathematical success.

As any normal kids the girls liked very much to play and showed much interest in sports. But grandma Frances was very strict about the whole idea. No sports of any kind in her family. Hills and lots of snow in winter made Brzyscie a perfect playground in winter wonderland. The landscape was perfect for fun on sleighs or iceskating. But all that was against grandma's Frances thinking. But kids always be kids. Somehow, someway the girls sneaked some sports when their mother wasn't looking or when she wasn't around. Anna always loved horses and learned to ride them. As a young girl she with passion claimed tall trees. All of them liked boating on the River Ropa. But all this was a no-no with grandma and it xxxxx ended when a tub they were paddling overturned.. They all almost drowned and had to be pulled out from the river.

During the initial period in Jaslo all three girls made many new friendships with kids of their age. Both in school and out of school. Many of those friendships blossomed for many years through teens and into early adulthood. In the beginning there were girls only, later some boys came to the picture. Friends out of school were mostly Jewish. The war brought an abrupt end to all these friendships. Lola Cyna a very good friend of Anna didn't survive. Eva Goldschlak daughter of one of the owners of Nieglowice refinery a [redacted] friend who supplied our girls Saturdays homework on Sundays also got killed by the Germans. One Mr. Schenker here in Kansas City who plays for the local symphony told us once that he was related to Goldschlaks from Jaslo, which gave Anna an idea that Eva was still alive. This Mr. Schenker even gave us and address in Australia where one Goldschlak woman from Jaslo resides. We wrote a letter to her but what we got back was just a short answer that her grandfather and Evas grandfather were cousins. Ela's good friend Mania Kilig also didn't survive. But Frieda's friend Malvina Igler lived through the war and still lives in Israel. As far as boys, they met the same fate. Some of them survived. As in other communities there are no more Jews in Jaslo.

Many other friends used to be children of relatives and children of friends of Leniowers. Take for example Dr. Zucker and his wife. Their daughters Renata and Jasia were close friends to Anna, Frieda and Ela.

Dr. Zucker was a general practitioner in Jaslo and as such was a family doctor of Leniowers. His wife was a doctor also. Her specialty was ginecology. Another very good friend of the family was Dr. Wistreich. He was a lawyer who didn't practice his profesion. Instead he owned and operated in Jaslo a very successfull piece goods store. Dr. Wistreich and his wife with their three children often visited Leniowers in Brzyscie. Their sons Ignatz and Hugo live nowaday in Chicago and New York xxxxxxx respectivly. Their daughter Eva makes her home in Paris.

A separate group were just ladies mostly friends of grandma Frances. They all traveled together to health spas and resorts always keeping company with each other. And as in previous cases their daughters were friends of the girls.

Chapter 14 (cont)

Brzyście-Jasło

One of those ladies a very good friend of grandma Frances was Mr. Altholz. Her husband Mr. Altholz was a wealthy businessman with his hands in everything connect with iron, meaning steel, hardware and ofcourse junk. They had a son and their daughter Sala was also a very good friend of Anna. Mrs. Altholz was grandma's companion on many of their trips to Polish resorts.

After the war we came across this family in Vienna on the way to our destination in Steyr. As us they also spent their war years in Soviet Union. They came back to Poland minus Mrs Altholz who passed away in Soviet Russia. Traveling with them was Mr.&Mrs. Wrubel. Mrs. Wrubel was Mrs. Altholz's sister. Sala was already married then to one Hesiek Wrubel who was the Wrubels adopted son. Later during the years in camps Sala and Hesiek had two children and now they make their home in New York.

Many years later ~~af~~ after grandpa Abraham passed away and all of us had been already living here in Kansas City Mr. Altholz through his sister who then was living in Poland proposed marriage to grandma Frances which she categricaly refused.

Another very good friend of grandma Frances in Jasło was one Mrs. Anna Reis. Mrs. Reis and her husband owned a prosperous grocery store in Jasło. Their daughters Rose and Sulamit used to be very good friends of the girls. They lived in a beutiful house which Mr. Reis built some years before the war. Mrs. Reis was the same lady in whose house once lived the wife of prince Roman Sanguszko the last owner of Tarnow. (I wrote about him before in the chapter about Tarnow).

Needless to say the Reis family came on bad times. I guess they spent more then they made. They were forced to give up their business. All that happened in an era when illegal emigration to Palestine flourished all over Europe.So Mr. Reis left his wife and daughters in Jasło and went to Palestine, hoping for better future there. Adventually Mr. Reis made good in Palestine and moved his family there but not soon enough to prevent their hard life in Jasło. Despite all the hardships of an early life in Palestine this family was thankfull to God for missing the horrors of holoucast in Europe. It was to bad that Mr. Reis couldn't see the emerge of the new State of Israel. He passed away few years before it happened.

Girls friend Rose Reis married in 1960s. Later she and her husband with their two sons left Israel. For awhile they lived in Lima, Peru. Last time we heard from them they resided in Los Angeles. Rose's sister Sulamit still lives in Israel.

Obviously there were many other families who had friendly relations with Leniowers but after so many years when the main participants are no longer among us it is hard to remember them all.

With their busy life all years ~~xxxxxx~~ around, grandpa and grandma didn't forget about the Jewish~~x~~ education for their daughters. As required by law in pre-war Poland Jewish kids had their religious education once a week either at the same hour when Catholic priest taught religion to Polish kids or on Sunday mornings. To teach the Jewish religion usually a Jewish scholar or a rabbi was appointed by the local school board. There was no ~~xxxxxx~~ separation of church and state in Poland, but other religions besides Catholic were allowed to pursue their teachings. Except this grandpa Abraham engaged a Hebrew teacher to come to their home and teach the language to the girls.

Sabath~~x~~ was strickly observed at Leniowers home. Grandpa walked the 4 miles every Saturday to attend services in Jasło synagogue. This was another reason that religious Jews from Jasło kept buying kosher dairy products from Leniowers. During the High Holidays the family used to leave Brzyście on the eve and remained in Jasło for the duration of the holidays.

Chapter 14 (cont)

Brzyscie - Jasło!

Some other girlfriends of Anna, Frieda and Ela inscribed their names forever in Jewish history for their heroic deeds during the German occupation. Soon after German troops took Jasło two girls Frieda Zimet and Frieda Blum left the city and headed for forests where they joined a partisan unit which operated nearby. It took sheer guts on their part, but they died with honor in a battle against German aggressors.

A good friend Janek Peller died from typhus. Another friend Roman Shohet a son of the richest family in Jasło who was the only one who as a young man in those days already owned a car survived and lives now in Israel. Few others also survived.

But the life of the family not always was a patch of roses. As many people all over we might take things for granted and always we hope for the best. Needless to say un-expected happens against our wishes. So something really un-expected hit the Leniower family about two years after they arrived in Brzyscie. A fire started in the ceiling in one of the many rooms. Before it was noticed it spreaded quickly all over the main house. Seeing the entire building engulf in fire people around and many neighbours started a panic. It became obvious that because of lack of equipment and fire protection the house was a total loss.

Looking at the fire and not noticing any of her daughters grandma Frances became hysteric. After a short while she found Anna and Ela but Frieda was no place around. It turned out later that Frieda even wasn't in the house and one of the peasant womem brought her home after all was over.

At the end this blaze destroyed the entire property barns and other houses included. With much effort from the farm workers they menaged to save the entire livestock. Leniowers lost all their belongings and were forced to rent an apartment in Jasło where they resided for more then six months until the whole property including the house was re-built. Grandpa Abraham again traveled to work to Brzyscie like many years before from Tuchow to Karwodrza, and grandma Frances had to recuparate from nervous breakdown.

Little by little after the fire and re-building life in Brzyscie became normal again. Things didn't change to much. Some small repairs still had to be done. But as before the maid Aniela Czech was in command again and friends and relatives resumed their long overdue visits.

Many other occurrences took place on the farm similar to life in many small towns. Everybody knew everything about other peoples lives. There were things which had nothing to do with farm work, or operation of the farm. The story I am about to tell you will sound unusuall, but wasn't unusuall in those days on many farms owned and operated by Jews. Did you ever hear stories about a wandering Jews. Well if you didn't this one is such story.

Myself I never knew such tales until Anna told me all about it. It happened in Brzyscie every summer. Year after year. Since many years ago there used to live Jews in Poland who never had nothing and never owned nothing except a sick horse and a broken down wagen. There used to be whole families of them. They lived and traveled like gypsies. They kept comming to Brzyscie in spring and sometimes second time in late summer. They slept mostly in the barns and sometimes outside when weather was real nice. They were real beggars and never stop begging. No matter how much food, clothing and money Leniowers gave them, it wasn't enough. They always wanted more. They fought and argued among themselves all the time. After a day or so they moved on to next village. There was a man there who owned a large village tavern. Those wandering Jews wanted some some stuff also from that tavern owner so always they kept telling him that Leniower wouldn't give them anything. But the man in the tavern knew that Leniower gave a lot and kept chasing them away with very little.

And so the wandering Jews went on to another farm. When on the road they met another group like them they sent them to Abraham Leniower to the man from Brzyscie who gave a lot.

Chapter 14 (cont)

Brzyście-Jasło!

With the end of summer and colder fall weather those wandering Jews always left the road and took shelter in some small town with large Jewish population where they rented or got for nothing a shack and spent there the whole winter living of the stuff and money accumulated by them during their summer travels or begging some more from this particular town people.

Late in 1920s or early in 1930s grandpa Abraham's brother Isak Meir took his family and moved to Antverpen in Belgium. His wife, aunt Regina and their children, son Joseph and daughters Janka and Mania went along. Left behind was their daughter Esther (Escia), probably to close family's home and other interests, in Poland. Esther didn't have her own place to stay so she accepted an invitation from uncle Abraham and aunt Frances to stay with them in Brzyście. For grandma Frances it was rather good to have Esther around, not only because she still didn't like country living, but also because the big fire was then still vivid in her eyes. It took for grandma a long time to recover from that nightmare, so having Esther there was just a good therapy for her.

Besides being with grandma, Esther had a very good time in Brzyscie and Jasło. She made a lot new friends. There were receptions in Brzyście and Jasło given just for her. She attended dances and other affairs around the city. While enjoying all those shindigs Esther met grandma's Frances cousin Monek Rotter. In those days Monek still was a bachelor. They went out together often and Esther learned to like him very much and probably would marry him if asked.

Needless to say Monek at that time already knew his future wife Lea (Lonka) and was in love with her also, but Esther didn't know nothing about it. So sooner or later this relation was doomed. Finally Esther stoped seeing Monek and left for Belgium and Monek married his love Lonka.

Life in Brzyscie kept going on. Besides hard work around the farm and in the fields there was much fun also. Those peasants new how to entertain themselves and being poor didn't stop them from happiness. That why weddings used to be the focal attraction of the entire village. Grandpa Abraham and grandma Frances always gave the young couples generous gifts. The two of them always been most honored guests at those weddings. Anna, Frieda and Ela attended with their parents when they still were little girls. Later when they got older their father put an end to that, by explaining to the girls the attitude of those young Polish country boys. During weddings they used to drink a lot. For sure they would invite the girls to dance and by refusing them a sticky situation might have developed. Instead to hurt those boys feelings and provoke something unpleasant our girls remained at home. Everybody in Poland knew that for one reason or another there always were fights at Polish country weddings.

For a while everything settled down in Leniowers life in Brzyście. The big fire seemed like a bad memory which happened long time ago. The country living was so tranquil and healthy and no one in the family didn't even dream in their wildest dreams about the two consecutive occurrences which as it turned out later had a tremendous impact on their lives.

Chapter 15

Illness of Grandma Frances!

When Anna and Frieda were 12 and Ela 11 years old suddenly grandma Frances became seriously ill. A hemorrhage prompted by some ladies problems made the whole FAMILY not only concerned but scared. Grandma was bleeding badly but refused to go to hospital. First the friendly doctors Zucker and his wife and later other doctors from Jasło and vicinity traveled to Brzyście trying their best to help her and convince her to go to hospital but to no avail. Grandma kept loosing her blood faster then the doctors could control it. When the situation began to worsen there was no other choice for grandma but to go to hospital in Jasło. The attending phisisian seeing how bad grandma was started yelling at grandpa and the whole family accusing them for waiting so long and for bringing a dead body to him. Luckily this doctor knew what had to be done and menaged to stop the bleeding. He performed necessary tests and TOLD the stunned family that grandma had a tumor in her womb, which has to be removed. Ofcourse surgery was necessary but at that time because grandma lost so much blood not advisable. So grandma went home to recuperate. It took her about half a year to regain her strengh again and then after many deliberations she finally agreed to go to Cracow in order to remove this dangerous tumor.

In order to find best possible specialist and surgeon in Cracow, grandpa Abraham paid a visit to their close friend and neighbour Mr. Zoll. The Zoll family was an old and important Polish family. Mr. Zoll from Brzyście had a title of "Radca". Men with this title in Poland used to be important people in Polish government. A Polish "Radca" was like president's close adviser now in United States gonernment. Mr. Zoll's two brothers played a prominent role in Poland's education. One of them was a long time rector of Jagiellonian university in Cracow. Rectors postion was a one of the head of the university which combined the jobs of president and dean. The other Mr. Zoll was a director (principal) of the oldest gimnazium in Cracow established in 15th century by nobility for only one purpose to educate their sons. In those days it was called gimnazium of Santa Anna. In my lifetime it was gimnazium No 1 with the name changed to Nowodworski gimnazium after a well known educator. It Was a German ancestry In Zoll's past but Poland was their country and their patriotism was very strong.

Mr. Zoll from Brzyście lived on the road between Brzyście and Niegłowice in a beautiful house surrounded with georgeous flowers. He listened to grandpa Abraham with much concern and immediatly wrote a letter to his very good personal friend Profesor Dr. Szymanowicz a well known surgeon and ginecologist in Cracow. He was also a lecturer in the department of medicine at the Jagiellonian university.

Grandma's cousins the Salomons from Cracow invited her and grandpa to stay with them in their apartment. Soon after arriving grandpa and grandma went to see Dr. Szymanowicz who after a thorough examination agreed that immediate surgery was necessary. Grandma Frances underwent hysterectomy which even by todays standarts is still a very serious operation. So you could imagene how serious it was over 50 - ty years ago.

Thanks to God the tumor wasn't malignant and grandma was able to start her long road to recovery. She remained in hospital for quite a while. She lost many pounds and was extrimly weak. When the girls came to Cracow to visit with her in hospital they simply walked by their mother's bad not recognazing her at all. But little by little grandma's strengh was comming back and finally Dr. Szymanowicz allowed her to leave hospital. During her illness grandma Frances was in the same hospital as I as a little boy was hospitalized with scarlatina. (St. Lazar Hospital). Grandma recuperated in her mothers house in Tuchow where she recived a tender loving care. It took quite few weeks before she came back to Brzyscie. During grandma's illness Anna took over the burden of running the household and did an excellent job and earned all the respect of all the helpers involved.

Chapter 16

Incidents!

After grandma's recovery and her return home from Tuchow all family felt reliefed. They enjoyed very much seeing her moving again around the house and taking charge and interest in every day occurences. Many peasants from the village kept comming around to greet grandma Frances. Relatives and friends from Jaslo came as well.

It was already autumn and winter was approaching rather fast so grandma kept resting in their comfortable home. But as girls remember in spring she went for some more rest to a Polish resort of Krynica a place where many Polish Jews used to go to drink some kind of a mineral water that supposed be good for them.

During the same winter a little incident took place in Jaslo that again shook-up the family but mostly grandma Francis. One day grandpa Abraham asked his helper Mr. Konop to pick-up girls at school and on the way to stop at the watchmakers shop and also pick-up some repaired watches. And so it happened. Mr. Konop picked-up the girls at school and then drove the carriage to the watchmaker. While he was inside something scared the horses and made them start to run and pull the carriage with them. Ela was the first one to realise what was going on and quickly grabed the reins trying to stop the run away horses but she wasn't strong enough to pull the reins harder. This incident created a big commotion in the middle of Jaslo. On the street people kept running back and forth, holering and even causing some panic, which could have led to a major disaster if not for a courageous young man who seeing what was happening was able to catch up with the carriage and yielled at Ela to throw the reins to him, which she did. Soon after this young man was able to stop those scared horses. HE WAS HANDSOMLY REWARDED FOR HIS DEED.

At home after she was told what happened grandma Francis became histerical again. No explanation from grandpa Abraham helped to convince her that incidents will happen. The worst felt Mr. Konop. He was really sick and it took him a long time to recover.

The family kept close ties with friends and relatives in Tuchow. Grandma Mariam, grandma's Frances mother visited in Brzyscie few times a year. Anna, Frieda and Ela spent most of their vacations in Tuchow. They also visi- their grandma Gitel in Stykow, but not as much as their grandmother in Tuchow. I guess the old saying that grandchildren prefer more grandparents on mothers side applied here too.

Life in Brzyscie went on. During that time the devoted maid Aniela got pregnant by her boyfriend and had to have abortion, because she was afraid of the religious people of Brzyscie. Later she married anyways the same man. She continued to work for Leniowers but after awhile she decided to leave. Grandma Frances hired other maids but none of themwas as good as Aniela.

Another incident took place the same winter but was more on a funny side. It was one of those hard Polish winters. One day after a heavy snowfall our girls built a big snowman right in front of the house. The funny part started when they decided to paint the snowman red. Can you imagene a large red snowman. Everybody expects a white snowman even a horse. I guess? Next day grandma decided to go to town, so she asked her driver to bring a carriage around. The driver brought the carriage and went to the house to get grandma Frances. While he was there horses got scared of the red snowman and ran wild pulling the carraige with them, into giant evergreens breaking and damagging them extensivly. Yet the horses and carriage came out without being hurt or damaged. Grandma Frances canceled her outing to Jaslo on that day.

Chapter 17
Frieda's Accident!

For time being everything was going smooth in Brzyscie. No hitches and without illnesses. As we all know from our lives experiences unexpected things always arrive when we don't expect it. The accident I am about to describe made a tremendous impact on the family but mostly on Frieda. It shows you how a neglect on the part of a child and a smart child mind you not to tell her parents the truth led to major consequences which affected not only the whole family but mostly the child. As you already know I am talking about your aunt Frieda, how a frick accident during the phisical education hour at school later developed into a nightmare. A jump off a board, maybe a little un-noticed twist which didn't hurt to much. Well whatever happened then Frieda didn't make to much of it. You know how kids are. Yet after awhile she started to favor her left leg and had difficulties to walk strait. As always grandma Frances noticed the change and asked Frieda what was her problem, but Frieda assured her that everything was fine.

Well everything was fine until the day when Frieda visited her friend Eva Goldschlak in Niegłowice. During a harmless walk Frieda tripped and then really injured her leg. She couldn't walk anymore. The Goldschlaks notified Frieda's parents and immediatly rushed her to hospital.

After an examination it came out that while jumping at school many months ago Frieda Injured her hip.Because this injured hip bone wasn't treated right after the jump a nasty cyst started develop on it and weakened the bone considerably, and caused it to break after she tripped.In hospital doctors put cast on Frieda's left leg and it seemed that the bone healed nicely. But it wasn't so. After another thorough examination and x-rays doctors concluded that because of the cyst there was something wrong with the bone which they couldn't handle in Jasło and advised the family to seek help from specialists in Cracow. But the specialists in Cracow couldn't handle it either and told grandpa Abraham that only doctors in Vienna were in position to perform surgery on Frieda's leg.

Grandma's cousins Salomons who lived in Vienna and in whose apartment grandpa Abraham and Frieda lived during their stay in Vienna recomended a surgeon to whom later the doctors from Jasło sent the history of Frieda's injury. After their arrival in Vienna grandpa Abraham and Frieda went to this doctor who after an examination said that he will operate on Frieda. While operating this doctor discovered that the spot in question on Frieda's bone had been eaten up by this cyst and was thin like a piece of paper. Yet he decided not to remove this bone. He removed the cyst and said that in time this bone will grow together with the healthy part of the bone. Because she was young, so said the doctor her prognosis was excellent. The doctors in Vienna put Frieda in cast upto her chest. She lived through very hard times for one year. She spent one month in hospital in Vienna and later at home in Brzyscie. The doctor from Vienna sent instructions to Frieda's doctor in Jasło how to handle her during the recovery. They kept removing the cast little by little, not at once. It took a year before she started to learn how to walk again. And after that she walked with a walker for a long time. As you all know she came through but this experience left a long lasting impact on her life.

While recovering at home Frieda studied a lot. She was always an excellent student so it wasn't difficult for her to keep up with children in school. She recived top grades on her final examination. On her first day in school kids there gave her a tremendous welcome and carried her to the classroom on their shoulders.

After this year long nightmare the family started breath easier again. As always grandma Frances was more exhausted then anybody else. So like in the past she took some trips to the resorts of Krynica and Truskawiec to get some rest and peace and drink some of that miracle water which supposed make people feel better. (Probably reliefed their constipation)

Chapter 18

Prelude to Disaster!

With everybody finally healthy in Leniowers household it seemed that at last they would be able concentrate on every day family's chores and on the subject of running the farm. But all that was just wishful thinking. The year was 1935 and all kind of natural disasters stroke southern Poland. As many parts of the country Jasło and its vicinity was not spared and the farm and all the rich land around Brzyscie wasn't excluded. Long periods of rain and violent storms caused the River Ropa leave her banks and put all the fields around under her waters. Luckily the Leniowers house was standing on a hill and wasn't affected, but all those small peasants homes were under water.

It was vacation time and Frieda and Ela went to Tuchow to be there with grandma Mariam. Needless to say it was a very bad time for your grandma Anna. Shortly before the big rains began Anna contacted a bad cold with acute sore throat. She recovered and resumed her regular activities, but once during a heavy rainfall while riding an open carriage she got all soaked in rainwater. Evidently her sore throat wasn't cured at that time sufficiently, because from that sore throat she developed an acute kidney infection which made her bed ridden for entire vacation. She still remembers those long cloudy days with rain comming down constantly and the landscape as far as she could see covered with water.

Yet the title of this chapter didn't have nothing to do with the disaster in Brzyscie. Prelude to disaster have to do with some international affairs who happened at that era and adventually led to the disaster of 1939.

Acctually the prelude started on October 29, 1929 when the New York Stock Exchange suffered record losses and ushered into a worldwide depression, precipitating a decade of economic and social strife around the world.

In 1930 student demonstrations in Spain led to first military revolt and widespread unrest. Because of bad economy Nazis emerged as a major party in German Reichstag elections. In 1931 the Republican-Socialists came to power in Spain and kept the Spanish King Alfonso XIII in exile and Japanese troops attacked Manchuria and in 1932 established there a puppet state. Nazi Party became more powerfull in Germany by gaining more seats in Reichstag. In 1933 Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany and equired dictatorial powers after the fire of Reichstag. And so the Nazi persecutions of Jews began. Soon after the Nazi Party was declared the only legal Party in Germany. Japan went even further by attacking the mainland of China and politicians kept talking in vain.

In 1933 Mr. Roosevelt became the president of America and immediatly declared war on depression.

In June of 1934 Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by the Nazis and Mao Tse-tung began famous march which concluded in 1949 when his communists gained power in China.

This bring us to the year 1935 when Mussolini's Italy invaded Ethiopia and half a year later annexed it to Italy, against the protests of League of Nations.

All those acts were followed by Germany's occupation of the Rhineland which enabled Hitler to open the Krupp Works and start an excelerated production of arms which culminated with world war two.

As you can see those were the times when dark clouds started hover over the world. Let us also not forget that few months later the Spanish Civil War began with army revolt in Morocco which soon spreaded to mainland. General Franco was chosen a leader of Nationalists. Germany and Italy who joined each other in a friendship pact sent weapons to Nationalists. Soviet Union aided the Spanish Loyalists.

This was the background of the festivities which took place in autumn of 1935 on the occassion of the marriage of Helen grandma Frances's sister to Joseph Eisen.

Chapter 19

Wedding in Tuchow!

Helen was twelve years younger then grandma Frances. She was a very nice young lady. Good natured, easy going and she loved very much her nieces Anna, Frieda and Ela. The whole family was very exited about the up-comming wedding waiting impatiently for the day when they all will travel to Tuchow for this very happy occasion.

Helen's fiance Joseph Eisen was from Oświęcim the small town in south-western Poland where during world war two German murderers killed milions of Jews in gas chambers and later burned their bodies in special build crematoriums. At that era the place was known to the world as Auschwitz concentration camp.

Mr. Eisen was a piece goods salesman and his selling territory was Silesia, a part of Poland which bordered on Germany and which Germany claimed as her own for many centuries. He also was a devoted Bobover Chassid, but kept himself more on the modern side. He was clean shaved, he didn't sport any earlocks and always was dressed elegant in modern clothing. He was an inteligent man mostly educated in Jewish history and Talmud. Grandmother Mariam gave him her prosperous dry goods store the one her husband left her in His Will as a wedding gift.

Aunt Helen liked him very much, but on many occasions he wasn't as nice as he was expected to be. He took over the store and acted as a big boss. It was also something wrong with his left arm, the fact he forgat to mention when he met aunt Helen. Grandma Mariam didn't like him to much and always compared him to grandpa Abraham as "Iseff and Jacob". Grandpa Abraham was always her favored and when she was in good mut she called him "Avreymaly".

Aunt Helen's wedding was a tremendous affair. The whole town of Tuchow celebrated for eight days according to chassidic tradition. Joseph Eisen who after the wedding became uncle Josel brought with him not only his large family but also many young Chassidim. They all made the wedding exiting and colorful, singing and dancing, ofcourse boys with boys and girls with girls.

The young couple spent their honeymoon in one of the Polish resorts attended ofcourse by religious Jews only. After the honeymoon they settled in Tuchow. Uncle Josel was accepted into the Jewish community with open arms. Who else could have better crudentials as son in law of the late Chaim David Salomon. In synagogue the elders gave him a seat next to the Eastern Wall and treated him as a scholar. Uncle Josel was impressed. After all he became an important man in old Salomon family synagogue with the Holy Ark, Torahs, Prayer Books and all other important furnishings all funded by Salomons.

Needless to say aunt Helen wasn't able to have children on her own. A big disappointment to her and to her husband as well.

Uncle Joseph Eisen survived the war thanks to loving care by grandma Frances. But let us not jump ahead with those matters. We will find out all about them when such time will come.

Chapter 20

Pre-war Years 1936-1939!

The family came back to Brzyscie happy with many pleasant memories of the big wedding in Tuchów. There was back to school again and hard work ahead for everybody. For a change everything was O.K. in Brzyscie. Frieda was still recuperating from her injuries and Friends and relatives kept comming and going as before, like in an open house.

This was a year without surprises. So when all was well the time went by fast. And again the school year came to an end so the family made plans for Frieda to attend a special camp in Rabka, a resort town in southern Poland on the edge of Carpathian Mountains. Rabka before the war was like a Mecca of Polish Jews mostly from Cracow who used to go there in summer to drink a special water and to take some kind bath therapy. Rabka was also a place of many camps for Jewish young people. Well Frieda spent her vacation in one of those camps. Being there supposed to help her recovery by therapy and excercises.

Also while being in this camp she had one of the bigest surprises of her life. On one occasion the camp instructor called for a Leniower to come forward. Hearing her name Frieda steped out and found herself in the company of another Leniower. As it turned out the other Leniower was her cousin Tosia from Bielsko the daughter of grandpa Abraham's brother Chaim. Frieda never met her before, but both girls were pleased and happy for this chance to spent their vacation together.

In meantime the international situation was getting worse and more worse. From all over the world young people kept going to Spain to join the international brigades forming in Spain to help fight the Nationalists. Many of them died there in heavy fightings including lots of Jews.

In Soviet Union with a wave of secret arrests and secret court martials Stalin killed all his internal enemies accusing them of conspiring with Germany and Japan and by doing so assuming un-challenged power over the party and country.

Taking an example from Hitler Poles unleashed a vicious anti-semitic propaganda. The Polish National Democratic Party took a lead in fight against Jews. Their main aim was to remove Jews from Poland by all means including help from Catholic Church. The members of the above named party used to be called"Endeks" from the English word "end". These people were so far to the right that there was no farther place to go. They were on the extrime end of the right and Jews were their main agenda, to get rid of them by any cost. Those Endeks had their own press, slandering Jews all the time. They beat up Jews on the streets, organized an old fashioned pogrom in a small town of Przytyk. They painted their anti-semitic slogans on Jewish establishments, on walls and fences. Their favored sayings were;"Long life Poland without Jews!" "Jews go to Palestine!" "Don't buy from Jews, support Christian establishments!" They never served in any of Poland's governments because Polish leaders wanted to show the world how democratic their country was. Yet some ministers liked their suggestions especially the ones which called for ruining Jews economically even thou Polish commerce and industry was zero without Jews. An average Pole used to be a farmer and didn't even have an slightest idea how to run commerce and industry. Despite that Endeks encouraged Poles to open their own businesses and to put a sign in front to tell people that it was a Christian firm.

On Universities Endeks with permission from certain profesors organized gethos for Jewish students making them sit on the left side of the lecture hall only.

But the most important weapon for Endeks were demonstrations. They learned how to demonstrate from Germans. In preparation for the invasion of Poland Goebels the German propaganda minister encouraged Endeks to demonstrate. Once even he arranged for the Endeks to recive 200,000 German marks for anti-Semitic demonstration in Warsaw.

So as you can see German propaganda tactics were accepted and adapted by many Poles. How little they knew that in couple of years they alone will become victims of that propaganda and will find themselves under German boots. Crushed to the bones.

Pre-War Years 1936-1939!

That was the background of Jewish life in Poland in late 1930s. Ofcourse many Jews were not affected by this bad treatment from certain circles of Polish population. They didn't know or didn't feel any of persecutions and thought they never will. But many others even thou being not affected at the time felt that sooner or later the bubble will burst.

The first sign of the up-comming disaster soon appeared on the horison. Beginning on the night of October 27, 1938 the SS deported 10,000 Polish Jews who had lived most of their lives in Germany.They were awakened, given ten minutes to dress and gather their belongings and then they were herded into railroad cars. The trains headed toward the Polish border but stoped six miles short. From there the Jews were forcibly marched into Poland. The march was especially exhausting for the elderly, among them the mother and father of 17 years old Hershel Grynszpan who at that time being a refugee in Paris on Nov. 7, 1938 shot and killed the third secretary of the German Embassy in that city. This assassination prompted the infamous Kristallnacht, the "Night of the Broken Glass."

The exiled Polish-German Jews were put in filthy barracks in Polish town of Zbaszyn near the German border. Conditions there led to disease, particulary because of the winter weather, and sixty eight people died of pneumonia. When confronted by American representative to the League of Nations Polish Ambasador in Geneva called it a Jewish fabrications.

In time all those Jews in Zbaszyn were accepted by Polish authorities and moved by Jewish relief organizations to larger cities in Poland. Local Jewish organizations helped them to find work and lodging and sent their children to schools. Some of those Jews from Germany had lots of money with them, and were able to help themselves. Others for awhile stayed in dormitory type accomodations provided for them by the relief groups. This was the first time ever we saw refugees. A thought even didn't cross our minds that something like that soon will happen to us.

Back in Brzyscie life and hard work on the farm went on. But not for long anymore. The owner of all that land there Mr. Wymislner decided to close his operation in Brzyscie and sell the property. His plan was to divide all those fields into small properties and sell them to different people.

Leniowers decided to stay in the area and moved to Jasło. They rented a very nice apartment on the Third of May street named after the date of the first Polish Constitution adapted in late 1770s during the reign of the last Polish king Stanislaw August Poniatowski.

The decision to remain in Jasło was a wise one. Leniowers had very good relations with their friends there and with their relatives Rotters and Bluts as well. Besides that Jasło was only couple of hours away from Tuchow and not to far from Stykow the two places family was so close to.

Grandpa Abraham was offered a job in public relations with the Nieglowice refinery and accepted the offer. The owners knew him for many years and knew how well he could relate to the public.

For our girls there was like a dream come through. At last no more rides from Brzyscie to Jasło. It became much easier to get together with friends and go out on weekends. They also joined a Jewish youth group Akiba. Those Jewish groups used to be much in fashion in those days. They educated Jewish young people about life in Palestine, Chalutzim and their work in early kibutzim. Besides the educational part they provided entertainment, dances and picnics. (Oneg Shabaths). Being a member o such group made young Jews feel that they belonged and replaced the urge of Jewish kids to join boys or girls scouts movements. Polish authorities didn't accept Jews as members of Polish scout groups.

This was very exciting time for Frieda and Anna. This was their last year in school. Ela had one more year to go. They had to choose between more schooling or to do something different.

Chapter 20 (cont)
Pre-War Years 1936-1939!

For Frieda opportunity presented itself right away. People who owned the Jasło bank heard a long time ago how good she was in numbers and math, so they offered her a good paying job with their bank, which she accepted immediatly. She worked there until the German attack on Poland in September 1939.

On another hand with Anna was a different story. Because she was such a good student the principal of her school recomended her for acceptance in Jasło Commercial Academy. Not to many Jews ever attended this school but Anna probably would go for it if not for her father who had different thoughts. Grandpa Abraham was concerned for Anna's welfare as many other Jewish parents especially in small towns. There always was a possibility that Anna might become a subject of anty-Semitic remarks, which often took place in some public schools.

So instead to go to school in Jasło Anna enrolled in Jewish Commercial Academy in Rzeszow and took-up residence there with the Diamand family. Mrs. Diamand was Grandpa Abraham's sister. Yet she wasn't able to make it over-there. Because of living all her life with her parents and sisters she felt terrible lonesome and finally decided to quit this school and go back home.

Back in Jasło she joined right away the private Commercial school of profesor Kaczkowski. He was quite famous during that era not only in Jasło but all over Poland. He was blind because of some substance which his mother tried to cure his chicken pox. Someway this substance got into his eyes and made him blind. Profesor Kaczkowski was very smart and educated not only in commerce but also in many other fields. When large banks in Warsaw or Cracow had problems with their books they used to send them to profesor Kaczkowski and had someone to read them to him. Only by listening Kaczkowski was able to determine where the mistake was located.

Anna studied in profesor Kaczkowski's school for two years and graduated with excellent marks in summer of 1939, only two months before the outbreak of war.

Still before moving from Brzyscie to Jasło Leniowers lived through a very traunatic experience by witnessing a robbery in their stables. They all watched through the windows with grandpa Abraham with a shotgun in the ready position when unknown thiefs entered the stables and stole all the expensive harnesses. They didn't touch the animals. Everybody in the house was greatly reliefed when the robbers left without entering the living quarters. It didn't take to long for the police to catch-up with the thiefs and arrest them.

In meantime in March of 1938 German army invaded Austria without resistance and shortly after Hitler's government officialy annexed this lovely country.

The following events kept bringing the world closer to the brink of war. In China Japan set up a puppet Chinese government. The Czech people mobilized their army to no avail. Chamberlain the British prime minister after a meeting with Hitler agreed to his annexing the German populated areas of Czechoslovakia. Later in 1939 Germany invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia by setting up there a German protectorate. Slovakia became a puppet state under German influence. Antisemitic pogroms in Germany continued sending thousands of Jews to concentration camps.

On March 28 1939 Spanish civil war ended when Madrid surrendered to General Franco. Italy also got a piece of the pie by sending Albanian king into exile and proclaimed some kind of an union between the two countries.

Chapter 21

Winds of War!

Slowly but sure the events of 1939 kept bringing us and the rest of the world to this day which changed the then way of life completly. Yet people around Europe still didn't realize the real nature of what was happening around them. Little by little countries were falling in Hitler's hands, but the others took "so what attitude". As long as they weren't affected, why should they had to worry about the others.

It was the same with Polish Jews. Even thou they saw the first wave of German refugees and heard their horror stories they kept hoping that someway somehow Hitler will be stoped and war never will come to Poland. Warnings of world Jewry leaders went in vain. And as far Polish population was concerned Germany still was their friend.

But not for long. On March 28 1939 Hitler demaned from Poland that the Free City of Danzing be ceded to Germany. Ofcourse Poland rejected this demand and recived promise of support from Britain and France.

You see back on September 30 1938 when Britain, France, Italy and Germany agreed on terms of giving parts of Czechoslovakia to Hitler leading Chamberlain the British prime minister to believe "in peace in our lifetime" Poland with false temporary German support saw and grabed an opportunity to take from the weak Czechoslovakia a piece of territory called Cieszyn Silesia.

This land rich in coal located on both sides of River Olza was always a sore spot in Polish eyes because of many Poles living and working there in coal mines. The River Olza was the border line and the city of Cieszyn was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Threaten by invasion of Polish volunnteers the weak Czechoslovakia didn't stand a chance and ceded the Olza land to Poland. Hungary supported by Germany also helped itself to some Czech territory without firing a shot.

While all this was going on in the west Leniowres settled in their new apartment in Jasło. Nobody knew what next day will bring but life went on. The school years for our girls were almost over, taking in consideration that Ela still had one more year to go. The family had some money put aside, so they decided to open a dry goods store in Jasło similar to the one grandma Mariam owned in Tuchow. Grandma Frances, Anna and Ela were to operate the store. They also agreed that the store will also have a millinary department. To design and make ladies hats was also one of many Ela's virtues.

Anti-Semitism continued to spread more and more all over Poland. Not only in Large cities but also found a way to such small communities as Tuchów and many other little towns and villages where Poles and Jews lived and worked side by side for many centuries.

This was the last summer your grandma Anna saw Tuchów in her life. The hatred for Jews was in such stage that even Anna the granddaughter of Mariam Salomon wasn't spared from an anti-Semitic outburst by some Polish punks.

Once she went for a walk with one of her friends when couple of young boys approached them calling them Jews and other names spiced with some nasty remarks. Ofcourse Anna wouldn't take kindly to such a treatment. So happened she had a small stick in her hand and she taught those kids a lesson not to mess around with her and gave them good over theeir heads. Such a thing wouldn't have place in Tuchow just few short months before.

But not all the people were bad. While on the same vacation in Tuchow another but more pleasant incident came upon Anna. And again while walking a young Polish man approached her. He was a son of one of Polish friends of grandma Frances. He was older then Anna, good looking and student at the university. He told Anna that he likes her and that he would like to go out with her. She refused ofcourse but this story didn't end there.

Next time he waited for Anna again and had a bouquet of flowers with him. He wanted Anna to go dancing with him in Sokol. (English name for Sokol is Falcon) This was Polish organization for phisical education without Jewish members. THEY COMPETED AGAINST JEWS AND ALLOWED THEM IN THEIR FACILITIES.

By their facilities I mean their gyms, skating rings or tenis courts. Many times in those small towns Jews rented Sokol halls for their activities, because other gathering places weren't available.

Anna being curious about the whole affair asked the young man Why me? Obviously you can date any girl in Tuchów. Why a Jewish girl? His answer was simple. He said that all Polish girls in Tuchów are not smart and inteligent enough for him. And that was why he choose Anna. Ofcourse she refused again, to his great disapointment. He wouldn't take back his flowers. Anna had to dispose of them somehow. She couldn't bring them home having in mind numerous warnings from her grandma Mariam, never but never to get involved with gentile men.

Chapter 22

The Last Straw!

The first half of the year 1939 was already behind us. The Czech nation lost ~~lost~~ her freedom already and Hitler's puppet Slovakia was under the rule of some anti-Semitic priest. Austria as a ~~xxxxxx~~ country belonged to the past. For a good measure in March of 1939 Germany took a piece of land from Lithuania with an important port city of Mamel on the Baltic sea. Albania and ~~Xxx~~ Ethiopia ceased to exist and horror stories reached Poland about Japan's rule over China.

All of that was just the first step in Hitler's plan to conquer the world. After Hitler's demand for Danzig the Polish government got the first message that their country wasn't less vulnerable then Czechoslovakia.

How little they suspected that on August 23rd 1939 Germany and Soviet Union will sign the fateful nonaggression pact which will pave the way for the attack on Poland on September 1st 1939.

All those bad news didn't stop Poles and Jews as well from leaving for their annual summer vacations.

Another indication that Hitler ment business came early in July when a tremendous explosion destroyed half of the railroad station in Tarnów. People by thousands returned to their homes. Many of them later went back to their vacation spots. Lots of them stayed until September first. Many overstayed and never made it back.

Back in Jasło only Anna after graduating from Kaczkowski's Academy with excellent grades went to Tuchów to visit with her grandma Mariam. The rest of the family had to stay behind. Well Frieda worked in the bank and Ela and grandma Frances worked hard to get everything ready for the opening of their new store.

If you guessed that the store was never opened you guessed right. September 1st 1939 German Luftwaffe droped their first bombs on Jasło. Their target was Nieglowice refinery. But instead to hit the refinery, German pilots droped their bombs on fields which used to be part of the farm in Brzyście. People were working there at the time of the raid and five or six of them got killed on the spot. Leniowers knew them very good . Those were the same people who worked for them many years in Brzyscie.

This bombing raid created tremendous panic in Jasło and vicinity. Polish authorities urged the population to take cover or to leave the area and go east. Jews were the firdt ones who took to the road.

Many Jewish families left their homes that day and went to stay with their relatives and friends. This was Leniowers choice at first. They spent the first night of war with their friends.

The situation in Jasło deteriorated quickly. Like other Polish important centers (and Jasło was important because of the refinery) and large cities Jasło was bombed constantly. After couple of days the owners of the refinery decided to evacuate the place. Leniowers left their friends apartment and went to their own. Their decision was also to leave Jasło. Grandpa Abraham got from the menagement of the refinery a wagen and a strong horse. Everybody in the family was set to leave except Frieda. For some reason she prefered to remain in Jasło. It didn't matter, she had to go with the rest of the family anyway.

Back in the apartment they began to pack. It was obvious to them that they can't take everything. Many favored things had to be left behind. They packed with heavy hearts for a long journry into unknown, not knowing what next day will bring. Despite everything ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ look so sad around them a thought never crossed their minds that last night in Jasło that they will never return there.

Chapter 23

The Journey!

Cracow fell to Germans September 6 1939, and the road to Jasło was wide open for the fast moving German army. There was not significant resistance from Polish armed forces.

On September 5th grandpa Abraham took his family out of Jasło. They loaded on the wagen only the most necessary things like clothing, bedding, dishes and some family valuables and ofcourse the money they have put aside for the purchase of the store.

Another important reason for Leniowers to leave Jasło was the fact that grandpa Abraham was there well known. By staying behind he probably would become one of the first victims of Germans.

Many friends of Leniowers asked them if they could join them on their wagen for this journey. But it just wasn't enough room for so many people. Despite shortage of space they took with them brother and sister of Mr. Altholz who as you already know was a good friend of the family.

The family's destination was Gliniany, a small town near Lvov couple of hundred miles away from Polish - Soviet border. Why Gliniany? Because near Gliniany was one of many Mr. Wymislner's farms. Gliniany used to be like Mr. Wymislner's headquarters. You remember Mr. Wymislner was the former owner of Brzyście. At that time Mr. Wymislner wasn't among the living anymore, but his wife and son were still living there.

The time was runing out fast. So grandpa Abraham and his family had to move fast also. Roads and highways were jammed with refugees and fleeing Polish soldiers and German sorties harrassed them all the way. Day or night they took only short rest periods to feed the horse and themselves. People who put their ears to the ground could hear the echos of the heavy equipment of the speeding German army. Once during the journey just for the change of pace Anna and Frieda changed their places on the wagen. Well almost exactly at the same time a wagen similar to theirs passed them by and a board flying from that wagen hit Anna on her head. The hit was painfull but Thanks to God not serious enough. Constant bombardment made them jump many times off the wagen to seek shelter along the road. Frieda still had plenty of problems with running because of her injured leg. But the sisters took good care of her. On one occassion the bombing got so intensive that they weren't sure anymore if they survive. Luckily they found shelter in a barn. When the bombing ceased they saw in the nearby field many people wounded and some dead.

Three days of hard riding finally broght them to the outskirts of Lvov. Gliniany was not to far away. To everybody's surprice they met up there with Dr. Wistreich and his family. Dr. Wistreich Leniowers friend from Jasło also drove a tremendously large wagen pulled by two horses.

It was night already. Outskirts of Lvov were the last line of defense against the fast approaching German panzers. Situation was extrimly dangerous not only for Wistreichs and Leniowers as they happened to be in the middle of a battle and not just any battle. This was the last stand, Poland's survival was on the line. Polish soldiers kept low in the trenches all over on both sides of the road. Seeing grandpa Abraham pressing on the horse to go faster those soldiers kept yelling at him; "Pop where are you taking those girls". With shrapnels and bullets flying and exploding all over the place they probably wouldn't be able to make over that frontline at all, if not for Dr. Wistreich. This resourceful man produced a document which stated that he was a representative of "Polmin". Polmin short for Polish Minerals was a government agency who supervised production of energy in Poland. Passing through the frontline they had to indetify themselves every few minutes by a password; "Dr. Wistreich Polmin".

On the fourth day of the journey they finally arrived in Gliniany. They faced death most all of the time, especially in crossing Lvov. Thanks to God Allmighty they made it without harm.

Chapter 24

Gliniany!

Outside of Gliniany Leniowers quickly found Wymislner's ranch. To everybody's surprise Mrs. Wymislner and her son weren't there anymore. Like many other wealthy Jews in small communities fearing reprisals from Poles, Germans and particulary from Ukrainians who were ready to welcome Germans with open arms because they promised them an independent Ukrainian state Wymislners left for Lvov leaving the large farm in care of people who worked for them.

Coming to Gliniany was like arriving in Paradise after the adventures on the road and in Lvov, The noise of heavy weapons, yelling of soldiers still was ringing in their ears, a constant remainder how close the family Leniower was from being separeted from each other.

Even thou Wymislners weren't there before leaving they left word with people in charge to expect Leniowers. So the whole family was greeted friendly. They got nice rooms in the ranchhouse. There was plenty of food available and everybody could relax at least for a little while.

Needless to say Germans finally took Lvov and the war between Poland and Germany was practically over. There still were pockets of resistance of some parts of Polish population, mostly in Warsaw, but it became obvious that those people were dying for nothing.

The time came for residents of south-eastern Poland to get ready for the arrival of German army. Many of those people mostly Jews seriously considered to seek protection in Soviet Union. The border was very close.

Luckily those Jews didn't have to run.Suddenly on September 17 1939 with a move that surprised the whole world Soviet troops crossed the Polish border and began the occupation of Eastern Poland. It was then when for the first time news came to light that on August 26 1939 Soviet Union and Germany agreed in Moscow on a secret pact to divide Poland between themselves. But before settling down Soviet and German forces fought some bloody battles which stoped after a borderline was established between both countries along the San and Bug Rivers, giving the Soviets almost half of Poland.

In return for Polish territory Soviet Union gave to Lithuania their own land who for centuries was part of Poland including the city of Vilna. For this generous gift Lithuania allowed Soviet troops on their territory. As might as well. How little they knew at that time that in few short months Soviet Russia will annex Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia and will incorporate them into their system as Lithuanian, Latvian and Esthonian Soviet Socialist Republics.

The family Leniower remained on Wymislner's ranch until Russians took Gliniany. Shortly afterward they had to leave because of fear of being arrested. Russians didn't tolerate big land owners and even thou the ranch didn't belong to Leniowers they could be mistaken for owners anyway. So it was safer to leave. They moved to a beautiful house in town. The owners of this house left Gliniany when war began, and the house stood empty. Also it didn't take the Russians to long to notice grandpa Abraham's beautiful horse. One day when he was driving his wagen they stop him and took the horse leaving him with the wagen only. Ofcourse they promised to pay later but never did.

Slowly but sure the family got familiar with Gliniany and its population. They met many new people mostly local Jews. Many people who met grandpa Abraham soon recognized him as a very smart man. After talking to him they discovered that grandpa Abraham could help them a lot. Many Jews in Gliniany operated retail small stores and they knew that Russian wouldn't allow them to continue in their business. They had lots of merchandise on their hands and wanted to sell out. But alone they were afraid to travel to Lvov. But grandpa Abraham as a newcomer to Gliniany could get away with it. In many cases they trusted him their whole wealth and grandpa didn't let them down. He traveled all the time on their behalf back and forth between Lvov and Gliniany, SELLING THEIR MERCHANDISE. WITH PROFIT OF COURSE.

Chapter 24 (cont)

Gliniany!

Personally the little town Gliniany was always close to my heart. To tell the truth I never been there but I heard about it all my childhood. My mothers brother Salomon Speiser and his family used to live there, He was an architect and his wife my aunt Dinah had a rug factory there. You see Gliniany was famous all over Poland for the beautiful rugs being manufactured there.

As it turned out Gliniany was like a small colony for many Jaslans who left their homes to seek refuge from Hitler's hords. Besides Leniowers and Wistreichs few other families came to Gliniany from Jasło. Among others Dr's Zuckers the family doctors of Leniowers came there. Also there was the Suedwertz family mother and son. Mrs. Suedwertz's daughter was married to the director of the bank where Frieda used to work. Another family was the Marmur family with their small son Belek. Mr. Marmur was an executive of a glass factory in Jasło. Later they became very good personal friends to the Leniower family. A single young man from Jasło Dudek Gluekman also came to Gliniany. Shortly after he met Frieda he also became a steady guest in Leniowers house.

After arrival in Gliniany grandma Frances wrote a letter to her mother and sister in Tuchów to let them know where the family was and also to find out how they both were getting along under German occupation. Grandpa Abraham wrote a letter to his mother in Stykow.

Besides the up-normal times and inconviniences of being away from home the life went on. As long everybody was healthy nothing mattered to much. About two weeks after their arrival, shortly after the family settled in the new house Ela first and then grandma Frances got hit with a dysentery. The type they contacted is called "Bacillary Dysentery", which comes with blood and pus. They probably got it while staying on Wymislners farm with all those Soviet soldiers around and animals with millions of flies. They both were very ill especially Ela. She became dehydrated and wasn't expected to live. Both Ela and mother were isolated in one room. Their family doctor from Jasło Dr. Zucker treated them and he did an excellent job. Meanwhile Frieda was so afraid of catching the illness that she never entered Ela's and mother's room. But not Anna. She wasn't afraid. She was really brave. She sacrificed herself for mother and sister. She didn't think about her own welfare working all these days with one thought in mind, just to help mother and Ela, to get better. At the end the family prayers were answered. After six weeks of touch and go Ela and mother recovered. Anna was exhausted but happy. For six weeks she didn't change her clothes and hardly slept. Dr. Zucker after all was over told grandpa Abraham to thank first God and then Anna for his wife's and daughter's survival.

While grandma Frances and Ela were bed ridden in this beautiful house in Gliniany the owners came back to town. There was no way that grandma and Ela could be moved at that stage of their illness. Taking all this in consideration these people agreed to stay with their friends until complete recovery of grandma and Ela.

Little by little Grandma Frances and Ela recovered enough to leave the house and assume normal life. The whole family didn't know how to express their gratitude to the owners for their kindness. Leniowers rented another apartment. It had a room and kitchen large enough to accomodate the whole family. Grandpa Abraham went back to his business traveling back and forth between Gliniany and Lvov. While there he visited his sisters who used to live there.

Three months went by since the family arrived in Gliniany and still there was no word from grandma Mariam and aunt Helen from Tuchow. Grandma Frances kept worrying all the time. Well; who wouldn't hearing all the time those bad news about Germans doing all those terrible things to Jews.

Despite the horror stories the traffick between the German and Russian zones kept going without interuptions and Jews were a large part of it.

Like before the war Polish Jews haven't been convinced that the top priority of Hitlers plan was world domination which included extermination of Jews. So they kept traveling because good profits of such a trip outweighed the danger. Many stories used to circulate about those trains carrying those Jews from one side to the other. Those were stories with funny flavor. One joke was about those two trains loaded with Jews. One was traveling from Soviet side to German and the other from German side to the Soviet side. They met on the border. The Jews on both trains made fun of each other called each other nuts and crazy pointing fingers to their heads. All this was possible because borders in those days were still open and controls not strict enough. Later these travels continued even thou crossing of Soviet-German border was illegal.

Winter always arrived earlier in eastern Poland then in the west of the country. So the month of November 1939 wasn't different. Cold November indicated that the winter of 1939 would be even colder then the previous one. Many oldtimers predicted one of the coldest winter in their memory. So it was a tremendous surprise to Leniowers when on such a cold November day uncle Joseph Eisen suddenly arrived in Gliniany. It was a great day for the family, mainly for grandma Frances. Finally she recived first hand long awaited news about her mother and sister. According to uncle Josel they still lived in their own home and despite not so ideal circumstances they still menaged fairly good in their daily lives.

Yet uncle Josel had to leave because of an urgent message he recived from a Polish friend who informed him that he was on the list of hostages Germans planed to take shortly. He went into hiding immediatly. And as it turned out next day all the other eleven men got killed.

It was a very trying time for the Jews of Tuchów. Many of them left town and kept running. Some of others got caught and later executed. Many of young people joined the partisans. It didn't do them any good. This particular band of partisans was discovered and executed. Among the young people who died were very good friends of Anna and Frieda. They were Hesiek Metzger and Lonek Altstadt.

Uncle Josel told the family that they recived their last letter from Gliniany. He left Tuchów shortly after they got this letter. His trip took so long because he was a fugitive and had to hide many times on the way to the border. Uncle Josel paid lots of money for crossing the border River San. On the Russian side he could relax a bit. He walked to the nearest railroad station and took a train to Lvov and from there to Gliniany.

The greetings Joseph Eisen brought from Tuchow were the last ones for quite awhile. Next messages came quite few months later when the family was already in Siberia.

In meantime situation changed in Tuchów as in other parts of Poland as well. As Jews of other communities the Jews of Tuchów haven't been spared. Not only that. In the vicinity of their town some months later Germans bilt a small concentration camp where they assembled Jews from nearby towns and villages and even from Tarnów before transporting them to the gas ovens of Auschwitz.

While all this was going on in Western Poland Soviet forces kept tightening their grip on the eastern part of the country. It seemed that the whole territory had been subjected to a wave of propaganda and indoctrination. The first to explain to all of us about the happy way of Life in Soviet Union were the Red Army Politruks (Political Leaders). Later they were replaced by important members of the Communist Party on the local level. Their main objective was to indoctrinate local population as fast as possible. Local pre-war communists joined them shortly afterward with many Jews among them, who had a false notion that that the red storm brought them so long awaited redemption.

Most of the Jewish population considered those young Jews as traitors and in many cases they didn't err. Those Jewish communists found out later what a terrible mistake they made. O yes first few months they were running around town with red armbands on their arms, helping out the new liberators any way they could, including denouncing some local people whom Russians considered as enemies of the working class. Lots of innocent people got hurt by those informers. Russians arrested them, interrogated them and finally deported them to Siberia to hard labor camps.

Many communists came from the west leaving the German side for the Soviet paradise. They tried to get on the bandwagen also but to no avail. Russians told them that they made a mistake coming out from the west. They explained to them that their place was with the Germans so they could fight for communism overthere. Either way these people couldn't win. By staying with Germans they would wind-up in concentration camps anyway. And the Soviets sent them to their labor camps for not staying with Germans.

First couple of months everything seemed normal. Businesspeople Jews included kept their stores open..They had lots of merchandise put aside so they tried to sell everything fast in fear that sooner or later Russians will take their stuff away. Many people kept their merchandise hidden hoping to make the killing later when shortages would become more obvious.

Soon schools opened again and the Polish learning system was replaced by Soviet.

Russian soldiers made themselves visible all over town. They talked to the locals, sang their songs and idolized their system and the way of life. Seeing and listening to all this happiness people knew right away that something was wrong in the paradise. The ones who wanted to know got in touch with the other group somehow. The unhappy ones who weren't afraid to tell the truth. You might be surprised how many of them were around. Not just plain soldiers, but officers of the army and men in high party positions. They openly admited in conversations how poor and underdeveloped their country was, and how the system was shoved up everybodys throat. Their advise to their new countrymen and women was to live and work in peace, to say as little as possible, think hard before they made a comment because informers were all around.

To tell the truth the Red Army who marched into eastern Poland didn't look to hot. Their uniforms were chip and poorly made. Their equipment didn't look to good either. Their rifles hang on long pieces of rope instead on leather belts like in other countries. Trucks, tanks and tractors were stuck on highways and cities not being able to move because of poor workmanship. Soon people started wondering how army like that could stand-up to anybody, and first of all to such well equiped German army. Well the future showed us that both ways were possible.

Meanwhile Leniowers got used to their new living conditions and made the best of it. Grandpa Abraham was making his regular trips to Lvov. While there he practicly took care of Mrs. Wymislner and her son who lost everything because of Russian takeover. They couldn't return to Gliniany, because Russians would arrest them immediatly and even without trial sent them to Siberia.

Ela was making sweaters helping this way to bring some more money. Also girls made some new friends. Frieda and the young man from Jasło Dudek Glezekman became an item. Anna also used to go out with a local young man even thou grandpa Abraham was very much against it. In a small town like Gliniany all you could do was go for a walk, maybe to a local dance or see a movie. Ofcourse most of them were propaganda pictures. Everybody was welcome to a indoctrination meeting anytime.

But mostly their friends used to come to their home. The room was always full with old and young people. The family Marmur was there all the time. Some other families arrived from Jasło like Anna's former profesor Kaczkowski with his family and the Fenichel family. They all kept together.

Chapter 25

Deportation!

While the refugees from the west tried their best under difficult circumstances some of the local people fared much worse,. As I said before winter that particular year was extrimly cold. Yet the cold weather didn't stop the NKVD (National Commission for Internal Affairs) from sweeping the countryside to arrest kulaks (rich peasants). They took away from them all their wealth and on one very cold winter day deported them all to Siberia. Bad clothed and undernourished many of them died before reaching their destination. Among them also was one Jewish lady and her family. Her name was Rosenwald and she used to be the owner of the largest rug factory in Gliniany and a very good friend to my aunt and uncle the Speisers.

1940 came. It was first New Year under occupation in many countries. For time being there was quiet on all fronts. Hitler was preparing to invade France, England and other countries.

People in Eastern Poland celebrated as always first in churches. There were also many other celebrations the Soviet style. They made a big Hoopla an all town dance party and with speeches about their happy life under communism.

In Western Poland I presume only Germans celebrated. They were the only ones who had a reason for celebrations. They took Denmark without firing a shot. In Norway they had some problems before they took the most northern port of Narvik. But finally after a short battle they succeded.

And then in spring and summer of 1940 came the clincher. German forces took Holland, Belgium, Luxenburg and bypassing the famous Maginot line invaded France. This was Hitler's happiest moment of his life. This was his revenge for the humiliation Germany suffered because of the defeat from France in world war one. His roads were open for the invasion of Britain which he tried to accomplish by Air Blitz. As we all know he didn't succed. He was free then to turn his attention to the Balkans and southern Europe, where after some easy battles he was able to occupy Greece and Yougoslavia.

Meanwhile in Gliniany and the rest of eastern Poland Soviet authorities sent notices to all refugees from the west to report for a special registration. Nobody knew what to expect from this latest Soviet move.

In those early days of Soviet occupation People didn't realize the meaning of the word "registration". If they only would be familiar with Soviet way of operation they would know right away they any kind of registration in Soviet Union ment trouble. And that how all the troubles for most of the refugees from western Poland began.

On the appointed day they all showed up in government buildings all over the territory. In Gliniany Leniowers reported with all the others. After stating their names, place and dates of birth and the name of the city from where they came, they all had been asked one question. "Do you prefer to remain in Soviet Union, or would you like to go back to your old place on the German side". There was no waiting period. Everybody had to answer this question right there on the spot.

To a large surprise of Soviet authorities a tremendous majority of refugees choose to go back to their old homes on German side. Even thou still not realizing the importance of their answer these people sealed their fate for the next six years. Only small fraction choose to stay in Soviet Union also not realizing that in one more year they will find themselves under German occupation. You should also know that most of the people who registered were Jews. There was only small percentage of Poles. Ofcourse Russian didn't have slicest intetion to send these people home. They knew it all along that all those who said "no" are heading for Siberia. As for the refugees concerned for this one moment when they kept saying "no" to the Russians "Allmaighty" probably took their minds away. Because not knowing it then Russians by sending them to Siberia saved hundreds of thousands lives of Polish Jews, would have perished in German concentration camps. WITH OTHER WAY AROUND

Leniowers went with the majority and registered to return to Jasło. Even thou doing so deep down they weren't sure if their decision was a right one. As others they hoped that bad news from Germany were exaggerated. They also hoped to be reunited with their family and to be able to salvage some of those things they left behind.

But Russian authorities weren't satisfied with one registration. They repeated this process two more times. Why? Nobody knew. My only guess is, that they wanted the people involved have another chance to change their minds. Even Russians knew that those people headed for certain death. Yet not to many changed their minds.

While changing the political structure and way of life in eastern Poland Soviets made the first step toward the official incorporation of those parts into Soviet Union. The entire population of the territory was forced to participate in referendum to approve the incorporation. Even refugees were herded into voting places to beef-up participation. Besides that everybody voted for delegates to Ukrainian parlament in Kiev and for the delegates to Supreme Soviet in Moscow.

On the economic front one day unannouced Soviet authorities withdrew from circulation Polish currency. There was no exchange for Soviet Ruble. Hundreds thousands of people lost lots of money. Mostly those who still kept doing business on the free market. They simply could throw their Polish Złotys away, unless they planed a trip to the German side.

It didn't take the Soviets long to make good on the results of the registration. The first part of their plan took place June 15, 1940. That was the night when first deportation took place. That night Soviet police, NKVD and local communists all over the territory swept the cities and towns taking with them all single men and women. Single people were a special category. They treated them as common prisoners and set them out to far away places in deep Siberia.

So they went all. Young and old alike as long they were single. With them went uncle Joseph Eisen and Frieda's boyfriend Dudek Glickman. Their destination unknown. The Soviet police informed them that their wish came through. As per their registration they were going back home to Germany. They loaded them into many box cars and took then to a small railroad station near Tarnopol where a large transport was organized. Nobody knew what their future will be, but nobody believed for a moment the story about going to Germany.

The following day was a day of shock. The events of previous night found the refugee population in numb disbelieve. Everybody began to worry and asked one question; What next? When will our turn come? All kind of rumors circulated around Gliniany. But stiil the optists kept deluding themselves that the worst was over, and that the rest of the refugee families would safely remain in Gliniany. Some packed their belongings and left town to hide someplace else.

Well it was just a delusion. Two weeks later without any warning the roof felt down. On the night of June 29 to June 30 1940 lives and fortunes of many people changed for a second time within 10 months. Everybody in Poland had an idea about the life in Soviet Union. Everybody knew about the harsh living conditions there, but nobody of the refugee population in Gliniany and Leniowers as well didn't really suspect to find themselves on a transport taking them to Soviet Union to forced labor in the notorious Siberia. Many of those refugees knew very well what Siberia ment. They learned from Polish history how Russians under czars rule exiled there Polish patriots who dared to raise against their rule while they occupied Poland for 150 years.

It was Saturday evening on this particular June 29th 1940. Shabat was comming to an end, and like others Leniowers didn't suspect what was in store for them later that night.

Deportation!

Frieda and Ela were home with their parents. Anna was out on a date. Suddenly an excited friend droped by and told them what will happen later that night. This friend was a local man and listening to him was enough evidence how scared he was. Maybe he thought that he and his family will be deported also. After informing Leniowers about the up-comming deportation he left quickly. In meantime Anna returned home from her date. The family decided that there was nothing else to do but get ready for the worst. It was already to late for them to seek shelter someplace else or to try to escape from Gliniany.

First of all they took back to the owners all their merchandise they kept in their home. Those were the wares grandpa Abraham used to sell in Lvov for the local merchants. It took Anna most of the evening to accomplish this important chore. Later they had to dispose some of their own money and valuables like jewelry, which would be the first target of the officers who came to arrest them. To prevent this Anna took all those valuables to the friendly Ohring family and buried it all in their back yard. Some of that money Ohrings used to send later to Leniowers to Siberia, which helped them to survive, but most of it got lost forever.

The plan to pick-up the families was the same as the plan for deportation of the single people. One of the many teams of NKVD, police and local communists arrived in Leniowers home around midnight. As it was expected they searched the rooms mostly for their own benefit. They took grandpa's watch and other articles which were in demand in those days but not easy available. The remainder of the stuff was loaded on a horse pulled wagen. An again as with the singles the NKVD officers told Leniowers that they ARE going back home to Jasło. There was a long ride because Gliniany didn't have a railroad station and the main assembly station was far away near Tarnopol. Older people who couldn't walk rode on the wagen. The younger ones walked behind the wagen escorted by police. The difference between the deportation of singles and families was that the families hadn't been split. They called deported families Special Settlers (Spec. Peresedlency). People like that were kept under NKVD supervision and not under guard after they reached their final destination. All of them lived in camplike surroundings in halls or dormitories not in rooms.

It was a small railroad station near Tarnopol where a large transport of box cars have been assembled. Many cars, but it was hard to tell how many. From all directions horse pulled wagens arrived with the deporties. To every car there was attached a booth with a NKVD guard in it with a gun and a ready to shoot rifle. Their headquarters was in one of the cars. The commandant of the transport was in evidence all over while the deporties kept taking their places in the cars.

Inside families were getting ready for the long journey. Their first chore was to divide spaces between themselves according to membership in a family. There was no real facility in the cars, except of a round hole in the floor with a thick iron pipe to replace the stool. To get some privacy people donated their sheets and ropes to create a curtain around the so-called facility. There was no drinking or to wash water in the cars. To wash people used to get off the cars on longer stops. They also used to bring some water supplies in buckets to last them for a short period of time. In each car there were 30 - 40 people. Every car had an elder who communicated all the time with the head officer. The elder designated people to go with buckets after food which mostly consisted of some kind watery soup, ration of bread for the day and tea. When tea wasn't available hot water had to do. Many people had their own food and tried to stretch it for as long as possible. Besides the large gate to the car which was most of the time closed the cars had small four windows just below the celling. The cars were divided in three sections. Between sections there were places to move around, congregate, eat or play cards on suitcases.

Chapter 25 (cont)

Deportation!

The main thing was to keep this place clean all the time. For this purpose each family was responsible for their immediate area. For once a week general cleaning every family designated a so-called volunteer.

Half way between floor and celling were boards nailed to the walls. Those boards served as beds. Yet many people had to sleep on the floor because there was not enough room on the top. In time when the transport moved deeper into the Soviet territory the guards stoped to insist on closed doors and windows. The danger of an escape then was absolutly zero.

It was late Sunday afternoon. June 30 1940. Suddenly ~~xxxy~~ everything and everybody around became very quiet. All people settled in their cars. Everyone with his or hers own thoughts. A sharp ~~xx~~ pull of a powerfull locomotive brought people back into reality. Slowly but sure the long transport started to move, but not west as the the police in Glimiany assured their victims. Yes the transport moved in the easterly direction. Destination unknown. There was no doubt, the transport was heading toward the former frontier between Poland and Soviet Union on the River Zbrucz to the small border town of Podwoloczysk.

In their car Leniowers and friends as the other people in other cars tried to get organized for the long journey. They were all together with their Jaslan friends and maybee with couple other families whom they didn't know before. Most of the people in their car were in state of a shock and your grandma Anna among them. For her it took a long time before she was able to snap out of it.

My family and I also happened to be on the same transport. Ofcourse I didn't know Leniowers then. Even thou we were arrested in a different town we have been assigned to the same transport.

The first part of the life of Leniowers ends here for time being, while they try to figure out what their future will bring. Locked in on this ~~speeding~~ train, they didn't dare to dream that they ever will see their dears and the old familiar places again.

This was 1940 and only the beginning of six long years of misery, hunger and disease. The motto was "Survival by all means!" But millions did not.

In the next part of this story I will write about the life of Mondscheins and all their relations until the time when we meet Leniowers on this box cars train traveling with high speed deep in Soviet territory.

Chapter 26

My Roots!

What you are about to read will be my life's story. As much of it as I can recollect. Not just mine but the story of Mondscheins, Nussbaums and other people around me. It is important to me that you my children and grandchildren know at least something about your family's backgroud. They all were common folks. Most of them with high education. Some of them religious, some not religious at all. Some of them accomplished alot in their lifetime, others nothing at all but the fact remains that all of them used to be honest and hard working people and family always was their first priority.

So as you know already I am your father and grandfather Chester Mondschein. I wasn't Chester all my life.During my youth back in Poland I was Czeslaw. Everybody called me Cesiek. My Hebrew name is Tzadok after my paternal Grandfather. I can safely say that my roots are in a small town in south-eastern Poland not far away from former Polish-Soviet border. Don't get upset if from time to time I repeat myself, but it is not intentional.

Well anyway the name of this little town is Zbaraz. The birthplace of my parents and grandparents and maybe of many other members of the family long time ago.

Believe it or not but Zbaraz played an important role in parts of Polish history. In modern days Zbaraz was a regional town like a county seat by American standards. Zbaraz region was and still is a part of Tarnopol province. The first nobility who owned Zbaraz and its vicinity was the family Zbarazki. Their reign over the region took place in early years of Polands existance. The Zbarazkis evidently at some point sold their wealth in the area to the Wisniowiecki family, who established itself around Zbaraz in late 1400s. Zbarazki family moved to western Poland and settled in Cracow. There they bilt a beautiful mansion on the Main Market place. This mansion still stands there and is being protected by the Cracow Historical Society.

In meantime the Wisniowiecki family bilt with the help of the French and Italians a beautiful castle on a hilltop on outskirts of Zbaraz.

Wisniowiecki family was a noble family and all the lands around Zbaraz belonged to them. All around the castle there was a beautiful garden and park. The town of Zbaraz stretched out along the banks of a small river, whose name I no longer remember. The castle was surrounded by tall walls to assure its defense from unfriendly Cossaks. The rest of Zbaraz spreaded at the foot of the hilltop.

During the 16th century the Cossaks who were forbearers of todays Ukrainians rebeled against the Polish nobility claiming that the lands in south-eastern Poland were theirs. You probably remember me writing before about Polish king Boleslaw Chrobry who took all those lands from them in the XI century. But back then they didn't call themselves Cossaks. They were Rusins then. So they weren't wrong all the way by trying to reclaim their lands. Their leader was one Bohdan Chmielnicki. Under him they fought hard burning and killing not only Poles but Jews as well. Even in those days the hatred of Jews was common all over.

The leader of Polish knights fighting against the Cossaks was prince Jeremy Wisniowiecki from Zbaraz. There were many battles between Poles and Cossaks. And after many years of struggle the large Cossak army surrounded Wisniowiecki and his Polish knights while they gathered their force in Zbaraz. The Cossaks while trying to cross the river and storm the wall of the castle lost a tremendous number of warriors, got disorganized and had to retreat. It was a great victory for Wisniowiecki and Poland. But needless to say it was a last Polish victory. Internal struggle kept pushing the country further into oblivion. Still two centuries later before complete downfall of Poland another Wisniowiecki ruled the country as one of the few last Polish kings.

During the reign of the next two kings after Wisniowiecki Poland ceased to be an independent country. In the second half of XVIII century Austria, Prussia and Russia divided Poland between themselves.

So what was left was just a story of Zbaraz and Cossak uprising told so beautifuly by a distinguished Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz who in the third book of his trilogy under the tittle "The Flood" described all the happenings of that period.

Zbaraz remained under Austrian occupation until the world war one. In fightings between Russians, Austrians and Germans this little town changed hands many times. After the peace treaty it was given back to Poland and then was briefly lost during the Bolshevik invasion in 1919. Russians took Zbaraz again in world war two and lost again to the German occupation. Most of the Jewish residents of Zbaraz perished in the holocaust. Noaday Zbaraz is a part of Soviet Union in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Throughout the centuries the Wisniowiecki castle became one large ruin. In modern times the new owners of Zbaraz who happened to be Jewish bilt next to the ruins a modern mansion. Soviet occupants sent the owners to Siberia. The mansion became first public hospital in history of Zbaraz, and the garden and park on the hilltop went to the people of Zbaraz.

Both families Mondscheins and Nussbaums I presume were deeply rooted in Zbaraz. While we were refugees in Zbaraz first few weeks after our arrival my mother urged me to go with her to the old cementary so she could explain to me about our ancestry. There also was in Zbaraz a new Jewish cementary. Both of them were beautiful and well preserved. As far as I know both survived the Nazi era. Now what I regret most that at that time I Wasn't interested in history of my family. After that I never had another chance to find out anything about my ancestors.

The Mondscheins!

My family tree starts with my grandparents. What happened before I don't know nothing about it. I will write first about my father's side of the family, even thou I personally was much closer to my mother's relatives. I guess that it works this way in most families.

I assume that my grandparents were born in Zbaraz sometime in 1850s. they both died still relatively young and I never had an opportunity to meet them. My grandfather's name was Tzadok Mondschein. I guess simply in Yiddish people used to call him "Reb Cudyk". So as you can see my Jewish name is the same as his was. My grandmother's name was Doba Altschueler Mondschein, presumably from Zbaraz also. Most of her family emigrated to United States and Canada and settled in New York and Toronto. Their business the National frame Picture Corporation existed until not so many years ago.

As I was told Cudyk Mondschein was a very religious Jew, but more on a modern side. He had a short beard, didn't sport any earlocks and his clothing was modern. My mother always used to tell me that my grandmother Doba was a very nice lady who ran her household and helped out in family business. They owned in Zbaraz so-called "propinacya" which was a grant from Austrian government to sell liquors. Many Jews in those days had such a grant.

They lived in a two story house in the middle of the Market Place. The store was downstairs and the family had their quarters upstairs. I saw this house during our refugee days in Zbaraz.

Cudyk and Doba Mondschein had six children; Four boys and two girls. They raised them all to be good and religious Jews by sending them to Heder and public schools. All the boys except my father graduated from gimnazium. The girls attended schools on the seven years level which was mandatory under Austrian law. After that they went to Jewish finishing schools for girls.

The oldest of the Mondscheins was my uncle Moritz. After graduation he joined the Austrian Railroads. He worked himself up to the top as a director of operations for the Lvov district. After Poland regained her independence in 1918 he continued in the same capacity. It seemwd that he was very good in his job, because in 1939 when Soviets took Lvov they kept him and let him continue with his old job.

He had a wife Helen and two children. Daughter Vishka was already on her own when I knew her. Son Alexander studied at the Lvov University. They all perished in holocaust.

My aunt Sala, second of the Mondscheins was a beautiful lady and a lifelong friend of my mother. She used to live in Lvov also and was married to Sol Kleiner. They didn't have any children. Salo Kleiner was a very educated man. He worked for Polish government in supervisory capacity with Postal Service. They also perished in holocaust.

Uncle Adolf was the one whom I knew much better then the rest of my father's family because he used to live in Cracow. His wife was Gusta Friedman also a native from Zbaraz. She had artistic abilities. She and my mother had parts in many stage plays presented in those days by the amateaur theatrical group in Zbaraz.

In Cracow uncle Adolf was a director of the local branch of The Polish Department of The Treasury. He was a man with large influence around the city. But this influence didn't help him at all when his superiors in the treasury ordered him transfered to a small town of Wieliczka near Cracow because of his Jewish background.

Uncle Adolf and aunt Gusta had one son. His name also was Alexander like our cousin in Lvov. He was a fine young man but studying an learning weren't his coup of tea. Yes like others in the family he attended gimnazium but after four years he was forced to quit. His parents sent him to an industrial academy in Stockerau, Austria. Yes he graduated from that school and tried later to work in Cracow in his new profesion. Well needless to say he loved play much more then work.

Chapter 27 (cont)

The Mondscheins!

My cousin Alexander Mondschein from Cracow was born in 1913 or 1914. One year before the war of 1939 he was drafted into the Polish army. I believe that thanks to his father's influence he served in the panzer division stationed in Cracow giving him an advantage to be at home most of the time. He learned there not only how to drive a tank but also to be a chauffeur to his commanding officers with whom he was on best terms even thou he was just a private. In 1939 he was sent to war with this panzer division equiped only with few broken down panzers. This division like many other units of Polish army had to retreat as soon as they reached the frontlines.

After the Polish defeat he came to Lvov. As many other refugees he registered to go back to Cracow but instead found himself in Siberia together with other single people.

After the war I saw a letter from him addressed to the Jewish Committee in Cracow. He was inquiring about his parents and the rest of the family. His letter came from Tallin, Estonia which was then already part of Soviet Union. Uncle Ludwik wrote him a detailed letter but we never heard from him again. I hope he is still alive.

As far as I can remember he had fun living. He liked girls and was well known in Cracow's cabaret circut.

Uncle Adolf came from Lvov to Zbaraz and stayed with us for awhile. Later he went back to Lvov. I assume that after Germans took Lvov in 1941 he went back to Cracow and joined there his wife Gusta. Both of them also perished.

Aunt Gusta and mother used to be good friends in their youth in Zbaraz. But later in Cracow something happened and the relation between them went sauer. As long as I remember they never spoke to each other. Uncle Adolf and Alexander often visited our house and my father and I visited their house as well. Their house was always open for guests.

Aunt Rose from Lvov was my father's second sister. She was married to a man whose name was Pollack. All I know about this man then he died as a young man leaving aunt Rose with two little girls. I don't know the name of the younger girl. She was always with her mother in Lvov. The older Andzia used to live in Cracow and had a room in uncle's Adolf apartment. She was a secretary to a lawyer. Andzia was good looking and very pleasant girl. We all liked her a lot. She was an often guest in our house. Aunt Rose and her daughters didn't survive the war.

Fifth ~~son~~ of Tzadok and Doba Mondschein was uncle Isak. I don't know what he was doing. As others he graduated from gimnazium. He married a girl from Zbaraz and they had a son also named after our grandfather Tzadok. So there was another Cesiek in the family. They used to live in Tarnopol the provicial city of that area. The name of Isak's wife was Zofia. I met them once during their visit in Cracow. I never met my cousin their son. Uncle Isak died few months before the war. In his youth with some leftist elements. In 1919 when the Red Army invaded Poland he joined them hoping for better life under communism. After the defeat at the gates of Warsaw the Red Army retreated on all the fronts and uncle Isak didn't have a choice but to run with them. While in Russia in those early days of Soviet government he contacted tuberculosis. He survived the first initial shock of the illness and somehow made it back to Tarnopol. He reunited with his wife, but never fully recovered. Aunt Zofia and her son survived the holocaust. She remarried after the war and even visited my father in hospital in Cracow. She promised to come and see him again but I guess she choose not to remember her promise. Her new husband whose name was Hindes was also from Zbaraz. There used to be many people in Zbaraz whose name was Hindes. Somebody said that this Hindes made quite a fortune after the war. Anyway they all left Poland and according to some rumors settled in New York.

The Mondscheins!

My father was the youngest in the family. He was born July 7 1892 obviously also in Zbaraz. Like other Mondschein Boys he went to Heder. He quit gimnazium in 6th grade. As his brothers he never made any use out of his Hebrew education. They never forsake their Jewish indentity but they never were religious the way their parents would like them to be.

When he was 16 years old he emigrated to United States. He came to New York and joined the family of his mother who already owned a picture frame factory there. My father worked in this factory six months only and got lonesome after Zbaraz and his family and decided to return. I never knew what he was doing after his return. I know for sure that he didn't go back to school. I guess he held some kind of a job or helped out in his parents business.

Life in Zbaraz wasn't dull as somebody could imagene for the town this size. The Jewish population was vibrant and very much active and there were many Zionists among them. Many young people were extrimly well educated long time before Poles came back to power.

In those days and later the Catholic church had a very strong influence on local population. There was in Zbaraz an old church with the adjoining monastery. Next to it stood also an old Greek-Orthodox church to serve the large Ukrainian population.

The bottoms of Zbaraz was where the Jewish Orthodox population used to live and pray in a very old synagogue as well. All this mixture of Poles, Ukrainian and Jews used to live together there for many centuries. Almost every Jew and Pole spoke Ukrainian. Ukrainians spoke Polish and many of them also spoke perfect Yidish. This togetherness didn't mean that they loved each other. It was always a well known fact that Ukrainians hated Jews and would rather see them death. After all every Sunday they listened to their priest preaching anti-Semitism. But this didn't stop them from loving and protecting their own Jewish neighbours.

My father and my mother knew each other since their childhood. Their ages were only couple of months apart. In a matter of facts my mother was two months older. I can't say how long their courtship lasted. All I know that my father always liked my mother very much and was in those young years very jealous when he saw her going out with other boys. I also know that my mother when she was young was many times away from Zbaraz traveling and spending many months in Vienna, Lvov and Cracow with her brothers.

My father except his journey to America never left Zbaraz except shortly before his marriage to my mother in 1920 when he went to Cracow for their wedding.

Chapter 28

The Nussbaums!

My mother's family was somewhat different then Mondscheins. First of all there was more of them. Eleven children most of them vibrant and energetic. As a family and individuals they accomplished a lot in their lifetime.

My grandparents had six boys and five girls. Four of those boys had degrees from universities. One daughter also had a degree in education and taught in public schools until she got married. It seems almost certain that my mothers parents always lived in Zbaraz and all their children were born there.

My grandfather's name was David Leib Nussbaum. He married Zlata Speiser Nussbaum in early 1870s. They both were born sometime between 1850 - 1858 and had their children between 1875 - 1892. They owned and operated a restaurant on main street in Zbaraz. The house was located on the corner of the street. From the side street there was an entrance to the basement kitchen where they cooked all the meals. Next to the kitchen there was a small room where all the food was prepared before serving. All us kids slept in this room after escaping from Cracow. From the kitchen curved stairs led to a large sub-besement where all the produce and other perishable was kept.From the other side of the house other curved stairs led to the main quarters up-stairs. Two rooms of that served as restaurant and the other two were living quarters. During the parts of 1939-1940 all upstairs was taken by us and the Goldstein family. Esther Goldstein was a daughter of aunt Dora who owned the house then.

Most surprising about that house was that it had a modern toilet. Yet the drinking and wash water was delivered to the house every day.

David Leib Nussbaum and his wife Zlata were religious people. He wore traditional clothing of an orthodox Jew. He had a long beard and earlocks. During High Holideys my grandfather wore white socks and shtramel. As my grandfather Cudyk he was very much respected in the community.

My grandmother Zlata wore a wig and I am sure trying to raise eleven children wasn't easy for her. She died still a young woman in 1912 only 54 years old. She just took an afternoon nap and never woke up. Grandpa David Leib lived fifteen or sixteen years longer. He died in 1927 or 1928 after a long illness. He was seventy seven years old. I remember this time very well when my mother went to Zbaraz to care for him while he was ill. She was away for few weeks. After my mother left another daughter came to care for him. In one of his better moments grandpa told my mother how much he appreciated her being there with him. He also told her that he gives the house to her. About one month later he was dead. Needless to say there was no writen will and at the end aunt Dora took the house. There was no problem. She and her husband lived there anyway.. I am very sorry to say that I never had an opportunity to meet my grandparents.

The oldest child of the Nussbaums was my aunt Dora. Probably she was born in 1878 or 1879. She married very young to one Shlomo Balin from Zbaraz. Balins used to be very rich and owned many forest around Zbaraz and also operated a lumber yard. Shlomo Balin was a religious Jew. They had two children almost my mother's age. Their son's name was Paul. In Yiddish They called him Peisah. He probably had another name because many people including his future wife called him Joseph. Paul was educated in Zbaraz. He went to Heder and gimnazium there. I am not so sure if he ever finished his education. He left Zbaraz later and settled in Cracow. He was very interested in watches and worked in this industry. He was real good in this profesion. In Cracow an important manufacturer of watches from Switzerland offered him a job as their representative in Poland. For Paul Balin this was a lifetime opportunity, so he accepted without hesitation. After few years he met a girl from a nice Jewish family in Cracow. Her name was Stefa Hochstetter. She was a very nice and friendly person who liked to show off a little. Aunt Dora and uncle Shlomo were happy with Paul's choise and a beautiful wedding took place in Cracow.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

Paul's parents came to Cracow from Zbaraz loaded with all kind of goodies to eat for the wedding. Imagene to shlep all that stuff on the train for almost 500 miles. But that was the way Jewish families traveled in those days to attend family symchas. Paul and Stefa never had any children but they had a happy life together. Because he made very nice living they rented an apartment in a high class part of town. Their friends used to be called in those days "Pall Mall" which also ment high class.

Yet not always lady luck smiles on everybody. Paul's claim up the tall ladder finally stoped when because of bad economic situation his Swiss company terminated his employment. For a while Paul and Stefa lived through bad times. It was hard for him to find a job to fit his style.

Help for Paul and Stefa came from within the family. My dear uncle Ludwik, my mother'd brother came to the rescue as always in situations like that. He needed in his whosesale business a watch expert, so he hired Paul. Things for Paul and Stefa started to look-up again. Paul worked for uncle Ludwik all these years until the German invasion of Poland in 1939.

Aunt Dora's second child was Esther. She probably was named after the same relative as my mother and many other women in Nussbaum family as well. There was a little difference in age between my mother and Esther. They practically grew up together and remained friends for many years to come.

Esther finished her seven years of public school and got her Hebrew education at home. As her parents she was a religious person but to a certain point. In 1925 or 1926 she married one Lipe Goldstein from Podwolocżysk a small town on Polish - Soviet border. He was a man mostly educated in Yiddish. He came from a religious family but I don't know nothing about his background. He was an able businessman and his family used to be egg whosesalers. And eggs was his first interest after he married Esther. He was a flamboyant man, very energetic in comparison to Esther who was rather a quiet person.

Esther was a tall lady with an heart of an angel. And Lipe could do anything if he really wanted to.

They both had two children. Boy Abraham, everybody called him Bumek born in Zbaraz in 1927, and a girl Miriam (Mala) born in Luck a city in the Wolyn province near Soviet border in 1931. In Luck Goldsteins hoped to open a business for themselves but it didn't work out for them. They came back to Zbaraz but as far as I know the egg business wasn't as good as other people imagened.

Finally in early 1930s family in Cracow decided to help them out. I think uncles Ludwik and Gabriel put up their money and worked out a deal with their brother my uncle Shlomo Speiser from Gliniany whose wife Dina owned a rug factory there. According to this deal Lipe and Esther with their children would move to Cracow and aunt Dina would supply the rugs for him to sale in Cracow area.

Lipe on his own equired from other manufatcurers a reperesantation to sell persian rugs. He was able to develop a very successful business in Cracow. He took over a whole second floor on the Main Market Place. He made two large rooms to a showroom and the rest of the floor he converted to a very nice apartment. He hired a man to work for him and to do all the traveling. The name of the man was Adolf Amsterdam. Little we knew then that this Amsterdam was a brother to Alois Amsterdam father to Norbert Amsterdam who married Ella fifteen years later.

All this took place in 1935. Bumek Goldstein's son went to school right away. He was very religious. He wouldn't eat none kosher food so they sent him to Hebrew Academy. Mala went ot school later. First she attended public school but after couple of years they transfered her to Hebrew Academy also. Because of some complications with Jewish marriages in this case dated back to the marriage of Lipe's parents Bumek's name wasn't Goldstein but Stern as his grandmother's maiden name.

The Nussbaums!

In Cracow my mother and Esther Goldstein continued their friendship as since their childhood in Zbaraz. In a matter of facts we all liked each others company very much. We visited each other often, traveled together and used to go out together. It didn't take to long for Lipe Goldstein to start acting like a big shot.

During that time Esther's father Shlomo Balin passed away in Zbaraz. Aunt Dora became a widow and Esther didn't want her to be alone in Zbaraz. They decided to close the house there and aunt Dora came to Cracow to live with Goldsteins. She stayed there for couple of years and went back to Zbaraz couple of months before the war. Little did aunt Dora knew that soon she will be reunited with the whole family again when we all lived in her house as refugees from the Nazis.

I can't be sure but it seems to me that second child of David Leib and Zlata Nussbaum was a girl also. She was aunt Lora (Leah) born in 1880. She grew up in Zbaraz and married later one Simon Schwarz from Stryszow a small town in south-eastern Poland. They moved to Vienna and continued to live there until uncle Simon's death. He passed away still a young man. They had two children; Fritz (Itzhok) and Irma (Esther Reizel). Both grew up and attended schools in Vienna and aunt Lora had to raise them by herself. Yet aunt Lora didn't give up. She had in Vienna a successfull ladies fashions business. She not only sold her creations in Vienna but exported them to other countries.

Many times she used to come to Cracow with her line and always stayed in our house. Her and Fritz spent many summer vacations with us in the country. I used to have lots of fun with Fritz in Cracow riding bicycles and going swimming. Once in the country we went to a local country fair and got lost on the way back. It was really funny to hear Fritz asking for directions from local peasants in his broken Polish. His native language was German.

Fritz went to Palestine quite few years before the war. He was a young halutz in a kibutz and then he worked very hard as a dock worker in Haifa's harbor. He married there to a former Mary Steinmann born Nov. 15 1907. Her father was from Hungary and her mother from Austria. Because of a steady terror in Palestine they had their children rather late in their lives. They established their household in independent Israel in the city of Holon. Their son Simon has been born in Tel-Aviv June 21 1948. Girl Regina has been born March 3 1951 also in Tel-Aviv. Simon is married to Sara born Baldinger from Tel-Aviv born in 1947. They have a son Jason born in Holon in May of 1975.

Fritz's daughter Regina went to sudy in Italy and met there a man who wasn't Jewish. I don't know if she ever married him. According to uncle Ludwik he was a very nice man. Aunt Lora died during the war and is buried on a Jewish cementary in Paris.

Irma was married twice. Her first husband was Joseph Neuman from Kaschau, Hungary born in 1903. During the war or shortly after Irma met Bruno Schlafenberg. He was born in Vienna July 17 1906 to Simon and Rosa Schlafenberg from Chernovitz in Rumania. Irma and Bruno and his mother for awhile after the war lived in the holy city of Lourdes in France. Later they moved to Vienna and then they emigrated to Israel. After two years in Israel they came to America and settled in New York where Bruno worked in garment industry. After Bruno retired at the age of 62 they moved to Vienna again. They never had any children. Bruno passed away about 10 years ago. We met him and Irma in New York in 1968. Irma still lives in Vienna and misses Bruno very much. We write to each other as often as possible.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

I can't be really sure but I assume that in 1881 my grandparents Had their first son. His Jewish name was Shlomo and all the young folks in the family called him uncle Salo. For reasons known only to my grandparents his name wasn't Nussbaum but Speiser after his mothers maiden name. Facts like that took places many times in those days when parents married only in religious ceremonies, and didn't register with authorities in City Hall.

Uncle Salo like other Nussbaums attended schools in Zbaraz. He graduated there from gimnazium and studied at the University of Vienna where he finished with a degree in architecture and engineering. He married a young lady also from Zbaraz area and they settled in Gliniany near Lvov where his wife aunt Dina operated her own factory of rugs. Your grandma Anna when she lived in Gliniany during the war heard a lot about Speisers but never met them at that time.

Uncle Salo and aunt Dina had two children; Daughter Lusia (Helen) and son Tolo. He attended gimnazium but wasn't a very good student. I think he was helping his mother in her business. Lusia on the other hand was a very capable young lady. After finishing gimnazium she attended the University of Padwa in Italy, where she graduated with a doctorate in medicine. Still a young girl in Gliniany she met Sigmund Foerster whom she later married. He also studied at the University of Padwa and I understand that Speisers paid for his education. After passing necessary exams in Poland they opened their own practice in Polish resort of Krynica. They specialized in ginecology. Krynica was a year around resort summer and winter always full with guests not only from Poland but from all over Europe. Many European kings and queens used to visit there. Their was very successful practice in a villa which was also their home located next to the villa Patria owned by the famous Polish singer Jan Kiepura. My mother spent vacations there couple of times as a guest of the Foersters.

All this came to an abrupt end in September 1939. Foersters managed to return to Gliniany. The war broke out and for some reason uncle Salo and his son Tolo found themselves in Warsaw in the middle of heavy German attacks. They never made it back home to Gliniany. Meanwhile there because of the approaching Red Army aunt Dina closed up her home in Gliniany and took Lusia and her husband on a journey to Zaleszczyki another Polish resort near Rumanian border. The move was necessary because of the threat of the deportation to Siberia as a former factory owner. Their main plan was to cross the border to Rumania. The plan backfired on them when Soviet army marched in to Zaleszczyki. They remained there until June 1941 when Germany attacked Soviet Union. At that time there was already four of them because Lusia gave birth to a baby boy George.

Foersters crossed into Soviet Union with the retreating Red Army and other refugees. In meantime in Warsaw uncle Salo and Tolo went into hiding. Later they managed to obtain Arian papers and survive there the occupation. (Sorry only uncle Salo survived. Tolo didn't)

In all those pre-war years I never had the pleasure to meet aunt Dina. I met uncle Salo on couple of occassions. I also met Tolo and his sister Lusia. We had plans to visit Gliniany but war changed everything.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

Lazar Nussbaum Known to all of us as uncle Ludwik was born in Zbaraż December 20 1882. He was a small child but always healthy. He remained rather small throughout his whole life. Umcle Ludwik was small in his size but his heart was big. As my mother told me in my early childhood, uncle Ludwik didn't have any high education like some of his brothers, yet he was an individual with an outstanding character. Since his early years when he was growing up in Zbaraz he worked very hard not only for himself and his family but always ready to do good deeds even for complete strangers.

He was educated in Talmud and Jewish history but religious he never was. In later years when he was a wealthy man in Cracow he kept his own business closed on Shabat.

Uncle Ludwik left Zbaraz still a young man. I believe it was sometime in early 1900. He came to Cracow and didn't have no problem at all to find work. As always he worked hard and soon he made enough money to send home to Zbaraz. As years went by he met a young lady. I think her name was Miss Brack. They went out together for couple of years but for some reason they never married.

Uncle Ludwik never served in the army not only because of his size but also because of an accident he had when as liitle boy he fell down those curvy stairs in his parents home. He twisted his neck permanently and since then always carried his head little to the right side.

During the years 1914 to 1918 uncle Ludwik took a job in Cracow with a large wholesale outfit of watches and jewelery. The owners the Wanderer family were a Jewish high society of those days. They discovered right away what a good person and loyal employee uncle Ludwik was. Soon they entrusted him with their entire business and made him their head man.

While working there uncle Ludwik met a young divorcee who was related to the Wanderers. They went out together and after a year of courtship they decided to marry. Her name was Rose. She left her first husband because he was a gambler and she blamed him for the death of their daughter. Anyway they married in Cracow in 1919. Aunt Rose was a born Cracovian on September 3 1888. Her maiden name was Zimetbaum. A well to do Jewish family who lived in Cracow for many generations. Aunt Rose was the only girl in this family and was their darling. She had three brothers and they all delt in diamonds. But one of the Zimetbaum brothers Sigmund wasn't interested in diamonds. Instead he took a job with a bank and worked there for many many years. When the diamond business went down in Cracow the Zimetbaum family left the city and settled in Antwerpen Belgium the diamond capital of the world. Aunt Rose and uncle Ludwik stayed behind in Cracow and so her brother Sigmund remained with his bank.

Sigmund was married to a young lady also from Cracow. All I remember about her that she was good looking, very nice and small. I don't remember her real name, only her nick-name which was "Sarenka". Translated to English it would mean "Young Deer-Girl". They had two children, Boy Henry and daughter Nina.

Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose rented a very nice apartment on Berek Joselevich street. In one room of this apartment my parents used to live after they got married and I was born in this room. It didn't take to long for uncle Ludwik to open his own watch and jewelry wholesale on San Sebastian street. The march toward a very successfull future had just began.

The Nussbaums!

Zimetbaums did well in Antwerpen. They lived there until the war of 1939 broke out and by then they were wealthy enough to seek shelter in South America where they settled in Rio De Janeiro.

Their father the old Mr. Zimetbaum passed away few years before the war. During that period of times aunt Rose made many trips to Belgium to visit her family. After the death of her father aunt Rose's mother decided that there was no fun anymore to live in Belgium without her husband so she came back to Cracow and took over the same room where I was born in Uncle Ludwik's apartment.

Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose never had children on their own. So it seemed understandable that they loved us kids in the family.

I don't want to take anything away from all the good things uncle Ludwik had done for us during his lifetime, but I am quite sure that aunt Rose didn't like us that much. She always favored the children of her brother Sigmund. As far as uncle Ludwik was concerned he loved Henry and Nina as much as he loved us. I noticed on many occasions that she wasn't to happy seeing uncle Ludwik giving money to me. Also I know for a fact that on other occasions she made some nasty remarks concerning my weak eyesight. You can believe me her remarks were devastating to my mother. Yet she kept silent about it.

Just about the midway between world war one and world war two uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose were doing extrimly well. Their welth brought them proper recognition from Jewish and Polish communities as well.

That was also a time of my life when I was old enough to notice and remember things and facts happening around me.

For time being let us leave uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose and concentrate on other members of the Nussbaum family.

The only sister of my mother that I don't know to much about was my aunt Etka. I think she was my grandparents fifth child. Like all of them she grew up in Zbaraz. She married a man whose name was Kaufman. He left for America leaving aunt Etka behind. He settled in Lynn, Mass. As all immigrants he worked very hard and when he came to some money he opened his own shoes store and then he sent for aunt Etka to join him in Lynn.

They weren't wealthy but they did pretty well. I remember when I was a little boy in Cracow and when times in Poland had been hard my mother used to get every month a letter from aunt Etka with two dollars bill enclosed. We always took this two dollars bill to a small Jewish fruit shop and the owner there always gave us 18 Polish zlotys for it. Eighteen zlotys in those days was lots of money. In later years when the times got bad even in America she sent us only one dollar and the man in the store gave us only five zlotys for it. Finally when depression came around the letters with dollars stoped coming, but not before when a mailman who delivered our mail all these years got wise to the fact that we were getting money from America and started to deliver our letters without money even thou aunt Etka wrote in each of them "one Dollar enclosed". When my mother confronted him about it he simply said that it was illegal to recive money from America in an envelope. After that discovery we didn't hear to much from aunt Etka anymore except when shortly before the war she offered us her help in the effort to bring us to America. She succeded then to bring to Lynn her brother Dr. Julius Nussbaum and his wife from Vienna at the time when Poland and Lithuania refused entry to them. If not for aunt Etka they probably would perished in holocaust.

Aunt Etka and her husband lived together until 1949. After the war I wrote her couple letters but never got an answer. I think she passed away in 1949. Her husband lived few more years They both are burried in Lynn, Mass.

December 8 1884 my uncle Gabriel was born. In Yiddish they called him Gavril. Uncle Gabriel was a very nice and happy man. He was intelligent and educated to a certain point. He finished gimnazium, but beyond that I am not sure.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

Uncle Gabriel was also funny. He could entertain people and when he was in groove his listeners couldn't stop laughing. He never told stupid stories. Whatever he said always made sence. Still before world war one he served in Austro-Hungarian Navy. My mother used to tell me a story about him. When he left the navy instead to come home to Zbaraz he went to Cracow. In meantime the Navy department sent all his belongings back to Zbaraz. When all that stuff arrived home his mother became histerical because she thought that her son died. It took quite awhile to find out that uncle Gabriel was alive and well in Cracow.

Uncle Gabriel settled in Cracow and I am not sure if he ever returned to Zbaraz. He took a job with an international transportation company with headquarters in London. The name of this company was Lloyd and something. In Poland they called Polish Lloyd. He worked for this company for many years and adventually became president of the Cracow branch.

In 1912 he met and fell in love with my future aunt Mala Bauer. She was a beautiful young lady and of rather large family, maybe not the kind of family his parents would approve. But basicly they were good hard working people especially the old Mrs. Bauer and their children made good later in their lives.

Ofcourse when uncle Gabriel met aunt Mala, uncle Ludwik was still in Zbaraz, but compare aunt Mala's family with Aunt'Rose's family you even couldn't call it a draw. The Zimetbaums were a solid middle class Jewish family with an uninterupted income. The Bauers were poor but you never know who was better and more sensetive at heart.

I would like to write a little about Bauers because I knew them fairly well, much better then Zimetbaums and I practicly grew up in their eyes and had fun being around them.

Bauers used to live in a very old building in Cracow on Poselska street. One way to translate this name to English would be to call it Dignitaries street. Poselska actually was a side street leading to Polish Kings castle on the Wawel hill. All the dignitaries from all over Europe used to come to Poselska street before entering the castle.

The building was and probably still is located on the corner with Grodzka street (Town Street). Grodzka was the main street leading to the Wawel castle. I am sure that that building was a historical building because of the restaurant (inn) located there. All those dignitaries used to stop there for drinks and food. In the middle of the building was a courtyard. On one side was the kitchen and on the other the restaurant. The other two floors I presume served as an inn for the servants of those dignitaries, in more modern times changed to apartments. To enter the apartments people had to walk on long balconies like in many of today's motels. The Bauer family occupied the entire second floor of this building. Uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala lived there after they got married. Also their first child son Saul was born there on October 13 1914. Saul was a beautiful boy not just handsome. As he was growing up many people kept mistaking him for a girl.

Uncle Gabriel, aunt Mala and Saul finally moved to their own apartment on Domnican Place not far from Poselska street. Nearby was Domnican church and monastery. There wasn't uncommom in early days that apartment buildings had been built around churches and monasteries. In a matter of facts close by stood a Franciscan church and monastery. On the other side of the Franciscan Place still stays a palace of the Wielkopolski noble family in which the Cracow City Hall was and still is located.

The apartment on Domnican Place was on third floor. It had two rooms and large kitchen. A modern toilet was just outside of the apartment. I spent many pleasant days in that apartment playing with neighbour's sons. Lolek Brandise was a good friend of mine. What used to fascinate me most about that family was the fact that Lolek's father owned a chimmney sweeping company.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

Through the large picture window in the dining room I always admired the beautiful landscape of Cracow and the many roofs and towers of the palaces in the area.

On March 6 1917 uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala had a baby girl Zosia named after grandmother Zlata from Zbaraz. Saul and Zosia grew up as smart and extrimly inteligent young people. They always were excellent in their studiies and brought lots of pride to the entire family. They used to be my mother's darlings and many times I was inclined to suspect that she liked them more then me.

Aunt Mala's father was a furrier and they used to say a very good one. But he had one problem; He was lazy. I still remember his large working table in the corner of their large kitchen. He loved his grandchildren very much and many times I heard him singing beautiful Yiddish songs to them. Yet needless to say his wife was the one who kept the house, raised children and worked. She owned a fruit and vegetable stand on the Main Market in Cracow. She used to like my mother very much and I remember this nice lady always complaining to my mother about her hard life while we were buying fruit from her. Mr. Bauer passed away couple of years before the war. Mrs. Bauer perished in holocaust. The Bauers had nine children, five boys and four girls. Over the years aunt Mala became an important and sophisticated lady in Cracow, thanks mainly to my uncle Gabriel. Other brothers and sisters of aunt Mala also made good. Her sister Lola who operated a beauty shop in one room of Bauer's apartment met and later married a young man from one of the leading Chassidic families in Cracow. He owned a studio with paintings by the most reknown painters of that era. They used to come to see him from all over the world. The son was a modern Jew, but the old Mr. Horowitz was the real one. His wealth was tremendous. In the Jewish district of Cracow on Dietl street, named after former mayor he owned a giangiantic building like a smal city within the city. People who lived there if they didn't want didn't have to leave this building at all. Everything necessary for their lifestyles was there. Their apartments, synagougues, all kind of stores and services needed for tenants conviniences.

All this went in smoke during German occupation. Lola and her husband had two beautiful children. I think both boys. The whole family perished in holocaust and their names are displayed on my fathers's monument at Cracow's Jewish cementary so they won't be forgaten, all aranged after the war by aunt Mala.

While Gabriel and Mala lived in her parents apartment He learned to know very good the rest of the Bauer family. Maybe all of them used to be more on a simpler side but in reality they were good natured people and liked uncle Gabriel very much. Because of his ways how to handle all kind of people he knew how to approach Bauers in every way. One of those ways was bringing together sister of aunt Mala with a man he knew in Zbaraz. He knew right away that this couple was made for each other. Soon their friendship developed into a full pledged love.

The sister in question was Fran. We called her Frania. Maybe she wasn't smart as her other sisters but she was likeable and a very good looking young woman. She was blond with a reddish ton and tall, and uncle Gabriel figured out a perfect match for her. There was in Zbaraz a young man whom uncle Gabriel knew very well. In a matter of facts this man was uncle Gabriel's barber. His name was Marian Patatoff and his family came from Russia. Marian Patatoff was a good looking also. Probably tall as Fran. He had dark hair, dark complection and a dashing mustache. Marian and Fran hit off right away. They were a match made in heaven. As far as I know they probably married in 1919. Marian Patatoff after working for awhile went on his own. He had very successfull barber shop in a working class neighbourhood. He also was an excellent beauty operator. He employed quite few people in his establishment and later expanded to other parts of Cracow.

Marian and Fran had a daughter Yanka who was two weeks older then I. My mother and Fran later became very good friends and I used to call her aunt Fran. Yanka grew up to be a beautiful girl but she had that thing about her that she was better then other young people. For some reason she had an idea that she was from a higher class of people, which she wasn't at all. When we were in our teens she ignored me completly pretending that she don't know me at all. It didn't bother me at all. I Knew many good looking girls in those days who were as smart as Yanka.

As this story goes on you will hear about Patatoffs much more. Needless to say they all perished in holocaust and names in their memory are also displayed on my father's monument in Cracow.

The last of the sisters of aunt Mala was Gusta. Actually her name was Eugienia (Genia). She owned in Cracow a millinery salon. She was very good in her profesion not only making those hats but designing them also. During the depression years when my father was out of work my mother used to work in her salon. Genia met later and fell in love with a young Polish musician from a Catholic family. His name was Byczkowski and he had his own band. They went out together for a long time and finally his family accepted her. They married shortly before the war. I saw him and his band many times playing in cabarets and for five o'clock dances which used to be very popular in Poland during that period of time. I saw him playing not only in Cracow but in couple of resorts during summer vacations.

Thanks to her husband Genia survived the holocaust. After the war she re-opened her salon under the name Gustava in her pre-war location. Genia and her husband didn't have any children. It is doubtful if they are still alive.

As I said before aunt Mala had five brothers. One of them died in young age because of heart problems. Her other brother Joseph who was also a furrier by profesion was a very good looking man, married with two or three children. Yet it was something wrong about him. He was a very good husband good provider, but he had this idea that his wife was cheating on him, which wasn't true at all. She was a deacent woman always taking care of her family. I guess it was Joseph's sickness. He couldn't stop thinking about it. Anyway the whole situation got out of control. Once he couldn't help himself. He pulled out a gun and took his life.

The most outstanding from all Bauer boys was the oldest Adolf (Dolek). A little educated but smart with lots of common sense. He worked himself up to the top of Polish Union movement. He was instrumental in organizing the Polish white collar workers into an Union of Public Insurance, which also included free medical CARE for all workers in private and government sector. Thanks to his initiative the Union bilt new housing for their members. I know all about it because we used to be one of those families who got an apartment in such a complex. He was very active in many sport organizations but mostly in the Cracow Region of the Polish Track Association. Dolek Bauer never had children on his own but for time being was married to a lady with a child from a previous marriage. Shortly before the war he left for United States and settled in San Francisco. I don't know if he ever married again. He made lots of monev during his lifetime. He passed away about eight years ago. Aunt Mala came from Belgium to be with him during his long illness.

Brother Leo was a very nice and polite man. He was in men's fashions working for high class stores for men. He spent his war years in Soviet Union. Once by chance Anna and Ela met him in Fergana where for few days they worked in the same factory. While talking during lunch with Leo Bauer they found out all about Leo knowing our family. During this conversation Leo even produced a loaf of bread and split it with the girls.
After the war Leo settled in London where he married and raised his family. He always was a good person and friends nicknamed him "Baba".

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

The youngest of the Bauers a real hot-shot and hustler was their son Henry (Heniek). Despite his so-called shortcomings after finishing the elementary school he was admitted to special industrial gimnazium. Jews with lots better grades then Henry could only dream about that school. If not for the war he probably would continue with his studies and had a chance to get a degree in engineering or become a high class architect. He survived the war. He married and lives now with his wife and children in Los Angeles.

My aunt Janette was the seventh child of my grandparents. She was a very good looking woman but in her later years she became rather chubby. I think she was most educated from all the Nussbaum girls. She was a very good student anf liked teaching. After finishing gimnazium she joined Teachers Seminary a school which in those days and later in Poland prepared young people for the teaching profesion, in elementary schools.

According to my calculations aunt Janette was born in 1886. After graduation from the seminary in Lvov she became a teacher and taught in schools first in Zbaraz and then in Tarnopol. She met in Zbaraz and later married Joseph Shmayuk also from one of those religious families. He graduated from gimnazium in Zbaraz and studied mathematics and phisics at the University of Vienna. He became a profesor and taught in Gimnaziums in Vienna and Lvov and later in independent Poland because of anti-Semitism was banished to teach in a small town of Tarnobrzeg in Lvov province.

In 1910 they had their first son Misko. They lived through a terrible tragedy when a lightning stroke at the house where they used to live. Aunt Janette grabed her baby and ran out to the street. Needless to say the lightning and thunder scared Misko and made him retarded for the rest of his life. He couldn't talk but he could hum. During summer when carnival used to come to town he was huming all those songs just listening through the open window to the music coming from that carnival. He wasn't able to do anything else and had to be attended all the time. In 1939 Germans killed him before they threw out the rest of the family with other Jews from Tarnobrzeg.

In 1914 Janette and Joseph had a baby girl. Zosia was her name, also after grandmother Zlata from Zbaraz. Zosia Like most of Nussbaum kids was smart and inteligent. She graduated from gimnazium in Tarnobrzeg and studied law at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

During her studies in Cracow Zosia had her own apartment. She was very popular but there were those two men who really liked her. They both were from Tarnobrzeg and studied at the Jagiellonian University, And they both came from religious families just opposite to the Nussbaum family. One of them was Isak Blum. He studied agriculture and agronomics, subjects you wouldn't expect a Jewish boy to choose or maybe he planed for his future in Palestine. The other one was Roman Kahane. He came from rather large family. In Cracow he always was around when friends gathered in Zosia's apartment but always standing in the farthest corner just keeping his eyes on Zosia. On the other hand Isak Blum was always around in Tarnobrzeg visiting often in Nussbaum's home. Roman was studied law in Cracow also. His parents used to be very nice people. Father Kahane was a barber. All his sons were highly educated.At the end Zosia choose Roman and they married in Cracow in 1937. Roman became a lawyer but Zosia quit her studies after their wedding and opened a school for of dance and music for children in Tarnobrzeg.

Uncle Joseph, Janette's husband didn't like his family name Shmayuk and later changed it to Nussbaum

Tarnobrzeg was a small town in Poland's Central Industrial District. Also known in Polish history because of the noble family Radziwil. They had their castle and land nearby. In XVI century their their daughter Barbara became a Queen of Poland by marrying King Sigmund August. The ruins of their castle are still there and prince Stanislaw Radziwil late husband of Jackie Kennedy's sister was in direct line of the above family.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

In 1922 aunt Janette and Uncle Joseph had a son. They named him Sigmund and he grew up to be a genius. He always was an excellent student. His knowledge of all subjects was remarkable but his first love was Polish literature. If not for war he probably would wind-up with the elite of Polish authors and writers. Even as a young man he was known by the Polish literary experts and by many Polish writers and poets. Some he knew in person others corresponded with him frequently. Needless to say the knowledge of literature didn't help him at all. Nazis murdered him and his parents near the railroad station in Zbaraz with other local Jews making them dug their own graves before.

According to an information given to me by my cousin Helen Stein who lives in Jerusalem her father my uncle Joseph Nussbaum was born 1880. But another information from Fritz and Irma tells me that their mother my aunt Lora was born 1880. So let us just leave it this way. Maybe one of them was born in January and the other in December. Anyway uncle Joseph had a degree in engineering and was employed in high ranking capacity by Austrian railroads. After Poland regained her independence he continued for a short while in the same post. My mother once told me that uncle Joseph died in a tremendous train accident in Rava Ruska in 1922.

Uncle Joseph married Rose born Nussbrecher, a girl from a rich family in Vienna. I don't know her background except that her mother lived with them in Vienna until she was 70 years old. She passed away there in 1930.

Uncle Joseph and aunt Rose had three children. The oldest one was Ignatz (Nacek). He was born in 1908 and recived a doctorate in chemistry. Him and his mother moved from Vienna to Cracow after Nazis took Austria in 1938. They lost everything they owned and uncle Ludwik was obliged to support them. In Cracow Ignatz was on the verge of some kind of an invention but war interrupted his work. Aunt Rose who was in early fifties at that time perished in holocaust. Ignatz almost survived. He died in concentration camp in 1945.

Helen (Lusia) was Ignatz's sister. She has been born in 1914. As her brother and other Nussbaums she was smart and educated. She has doctor's degree in philolsophy and pharmacy. I met her only once when she visited her mother and brother in Cracow in 1938 or 1939. She survived the war I think in Yougoslavia. She married there one Robert Stein born in 1908. He has a degree in arts from Zagreb University.. After the war they settled in Israel. There Robert Stein was a high official of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem.

Helen and Robert have one son Daniel born in 1949. He is a doctor of psychiatry in Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Daniel married Ruth Hauschner born 1955. She has B.A. in Jewish history and studying now for a master degree. They have a daughter Hila. Helen and Robert are retired now doing only voluntary work.

Alfred was the youngest son of Joseph and Rose. He has been born in Vienna in 1920. I never met him. In 1938 when Hitler took Austria Alfred was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to their headquarters. Somehow he was able to escape and got in touch with people who immediatly arranged passage for him to Palestine. He lived there throughout the war until the State of Israel was created. Evidently he got tired of being a Jew and converted to become a Protestant. He left Israel and settled in England. He is married and has four children, in Bristol where he teaches in one of the High Schools.

The last three children born to David Leib and Zlata Nussbaum came to this world between 1888 and 1892. They were Nissan called Nysio, Srulko who changed his name to Julius and the youngest my mother your grandmother Esther Rose.

, Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

As I figure it now uncle' Nysio's Hebrew name Nissan came from the Hebrew month of Nissan. I guess this was the month of his birth. He was born in 1888 or 1889 and he was the second boy in the family who went for the rest of his life by the maiden name of his mother (Speiser). He graduated from gimnazium in Zbaraz and went to the art school at the University of Vienna. Art was his primary ambition. He painted beautiful pictures, mostly landscapes. He was a real artist and showed a great promise. Needless to say he didn't have enough money to follow his dream. Instead he choose to become a doctor of veterinary science. After reciving his degree he opened his practice in Zbaraz. Except of aunt Dora he was the other of Nussbaum children who spent his entire life in Zbaraz. Besides uncle Nysio there was this other veterinarian in Zbaraz but with so many farms around and quite few big landowners there was plenty business for both of them.

Aunt Adela uncle Nysio's wife came from nearby Zbaraz also. She was very outspoken good looking redhead and so was uncle Nysio. They bilt a new home for themselves on outskirts of Zbaraz. It was and probably still is a very nice two story English style house surrounded by a lovely garden. They had two daughters. Older Nusia in 1939 still was studying at the Lvov University. The younger Emily (Milka) also a redhead was only twelve years old when Germans invaded Zbaraz.

Uncle Nysio was an important personality in Zbaraz. He took an active part in the cultural life of this small town not only in Jewish community but in Polish and Ukrainian as well. He directed and produced many successful plays during Polish times and later after the Soviet takeover. He had a rank of a capitain in Polish army. He was called up right away after Germans invaded Poland. After the Polish defeat and the takeover by the Red Army still in Polish uniform he had to sneak into town at night so he wouldn't be taken prisoner by the Soviets. Shortly after he joined the Russian authorities as a veterinarian. After all life had to go on.

Aunt Adela after being all those years a society lady in Zbaraz couldn't adopt the new way of life. She hated the Russian and everything for which they stood. It was for her a humiliation of major proportions when she was forced to march with all those Soviet dignitaries in a parade on the anniversary of the November revolution.

But perhaps the bigest nightmare for aunt Adela came when a young son of a poor local shoemaker who studied together with daughter Nusia started to dating her and became an often guest in the house. Aunt Adela wouldn't have none of that nonsence. I personally think that Nusia liked him but her mother kept chasing him away. Later when Russians came the boy joined them and became a big wheel around town. He finally had his revange. He made aunt Adela's life plenty miserable. Yet he still loved Nusia. Once he invited me to a restaurant and offered peace and gifts if aunt Adela would change her mind. It was just wishfull thinking.

In 1941 after Germans took Zbaraz the family went into hiding. Uncle Nysio joined a partisan unit and having a rank of capitain soon became this group's leader. They menaged to harass Germans and their Ukrainian friends for awhile. It was mostly a Jewish unit. When discovered by the Germans on Uncle Nysio's suggestion they decided to take poison instead to give themselves up. If the family was with uncle Nysio at that time I don't know. Either way they all perished.

Uncle Srulko was the ~~eleventh~~ 7th child of David Leib and Zlata Nussbaum. The inscription on his monument in Lynn Mass. says he was born in 1892. I don't know how was this possible because my mother the youngest child was born May 6 1892. Anyway let me leave it this way. Maybe uncle Srulko was born 1891 and had a reason for changing his age. Many people had done so during the holocaust hoping that making themselves younger or older would help them to survive.

Chapter 28 (cont)

The Nussbaums!

Uncle Srulko left Zbaraz for Vienna after graduating from gimnazium. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna. After years of hard work he recived his doctor's degree. Many times he ran out of funds but his determination helped him to survive. My mother used to tell me about him how stingy he was during those days in Vienna but liked very much to be dressed up. On many occasions it was difficult for him to buy new clothing. Once before reception he was invited to he discovered a large hole in the heel of one sock. It was to late for him to go and buy a new pair. So while polishing his black shoes he also polished black the heel of his leg covering this way the hole in his sock.

In Vienna also he married Regina Schleiher a daughter from a rich and elegant Viennisse family. They owned Anchor (Anker) Insurance Company known in those days all over Europe. After marriage to Regina Uncle Srulko became uncle Julius. They settled in Vienna. He became Austrian citizien and enjoyed a very successfull practice there. Julius and Regina never had children on their own. Once aunt Regina said in a letter that she knew me when I was a small child, but I don't remember her. Probably they would live out their lifes in Vienna if not the takeover by Hitler. In 1938 uncle Julius among other prominent people in Vienna was on the Nazi black list. He left Vienna immediatly and came to Cracow. He hoped to be able to settle there but Polish authorities wouldn't permit him to stay because he was considered an Austrian. Being a doctor uncle Julius thought that Lithuania would let him settle there, but not such luck. He was turned down and faced the grim possibility to go back to Vienna.

This was the first time in my life when I met him. The man was a nervous wreck. Yet in few days when everything seemed hopless a letter came from aunt Regina that sister Etka from Lynn, Mass. arranged for her brother and his wife a visa and a permission to settle in United States. Even with the good news uncle Julius was terrified of the thought of going back to Vienna just for two days. Aunt Regina had everything ready for them to leave Vienna immediatly. Only his signature was required on the documents. The whole family in Cracow went with him to the station. They all tried their best to calm him down, but to no avail. He was terribly nervous. With all this commotion around him he didn't forget me, shortly before boarding the train he took out a bunch of Polish zlotys out of his pocket and gave them to me. Believe me I needed that money and this memory stuck with me forever. Well as far as uncle Julius was concerned this Polish money wasn't good for him anymore anyway. Despite his fears and bad intuition uncle Julius arrived in Vienna without problems. Couple of weeks later a wire from Lynn told us that Julius and Regina were safe in America.

It took three years before uncle Julius became a doctor in Lynn. He had to pass all kind of tests and examinations. In meantime he worked at all kind of jobs including as a longshoreman in Boston harbor. He finally made it and became a popular doctor in Lynn. He also was a chief of staff in one of Lynn's hospitals. According to Mrs. Louise Hoffman a friend of the family and executrix of their will they both were loved and respected in the community. There is a plaque in this hospital in memory of uncle Julius.

The last few years of her life aunt Regina was blind and lived with a pacemaker. Uncle Julius took very good care of her. What I am most sorry about that I wasn't able to see them during all those years in America. We talk on the phone and wrote letters to each other. In 1973 uncle Julius suffered a massive stroke and passed away. Aunt Regina was a great fighter. Despite her double handicap she lived three more years and passed away in 1976.They are buried on Jewish cementary in Lynn, Mass.

Chapter 28(cont)
The Nussbaums!

My mother was the youngest of all my grandparents children. As I mentioned before she was born in Zbaraz on May 6 1892. Being the youngest girl she was loved and pampered by her brothers and sisters. But if she was favored by her parents I don't know. The fact remains that in time of her birth my mothers oldest sister Dora not only was married but already had her older child. My mothers name was Esther Rose. Esther Reisel in Yiddish. Everybody called her Rozia (Polish name). She attended public schools in Zbaraz and had her Jewish education at home but she never was religious. She used to tell me many stories about her childhood in Zbaraz. Needless to say I don't remember them anymore. She had many friends among Jews and Poles and Ukrainians as well. Throughout her life she had very close relations with my father's sisters and I suspect that my father liked her since those early years. She also was a very good friend with aunt Gusta who later became a wife of uncle Adolf my father's brother. Both of them mother and aunt Gusta had artistic talents. My mother used to have very nice singing voice and aunt Gusta was a fair amateur actress. Many times they took part in all kind of entertainment presented in Zbaraz. She helped a lot in her parents restaurant. During world war one when Belgian soldiers fought on Russian side against the Germans they attended often my grandparents restaurant because of my mother's cooking. Those Belgians loved rice and my mother knew how to prepare it for them in many varieties, especially a kind of rice pudding called "ricepop". Later when I was a little boy in Cracow I loved that ricepop very much myself.

In her early twenties my mother ~~my mother~~ spent lots of time in Cracow, Lvov and Vienna. Her brothers used to invite her to come and visit. From her I learned about the life in Cracow during world war one under Austrian occupation. For fun they used to go to restaurants or coffeehouses bringing their own rolls from home and ordering only "ersatz" coffee.

Once during a German offensive she got stuck in Cracow for quite a while. The year was 1915 and German army advanced deep into eastern Poland. They finally stoped near Tarnopol few miles away from Zbaraz. It was very important then for my mother to get home immediatly. When she arrived in Tarnopol the frontline was between Tarnopol and Zbaraz. After an inquiry she found some friendly peasants who offered to take her past the German lines and then past Russian lines and bring her to Zbaraz. Those peasants told my mother to dress in some national Ukrainian clothing and so on a very dark night she was able to reach Zbaraz to reunite with the family there.

After this episode my mother remained in Zbaraz until 1918 after Poland regained her independence. She came to Cracow again. I think it got to a point that my father couldn't stay any longer away so he followed her and in Cracow they decided to marry. It was either 1919 or 1920. The wedding took place in uncle Ludwik's apartment on Berek Yoselevicz street.

Because of apartment shortages after the war my parents sub-rented a room from uncle Ludwik. In this room I came to this world on November 29 1921. I already told you about the difficulties my mother an I had during that time. I had been born by ceasarian section and the attending doctor Jacobson or his nurse injured my right eye while performing the surgery, leaving me without vision for the rest of my life. It took a long time for my mother to recover. In meantime aunt Mala took care on me. I spent many days at that time in the office of one doctor Rosenhauch who saved my eye but couldn't restore my vision. Later in my life I had many more visits with the good doctor who gave me the best care possible in those days.

My mother finally recovered. But I thing this traumatic experience left a mark on her for the rest of her life.

Chapter 29

My Childhood!

My mother always was very good and strongminded person. She loved us dearly especially me. Not until many years later I started to realize That actaually she sacrifised her life for me. Her family ment to her everything. Not just my father and I but her brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces and everything conected with them. She wanted very much to make a "mensch" out of me, for me to be like Nussbaums but needless to say her dreams didn't materialized. She had many disapointments throughout her life but she bounced back most of the time. She died still a young person giving way to a deadly illness.

Most of the people described in the previous chapter played an important role in many parts of my life.

I don't remember anything about my first three years of my life. After living in uncle Ludwik's apartment and after a pay-off as my mother told me we moved to our own on Krupnicza street No. 16. (Barley St) Acctually our apartment was a one large room divided to a room and kitchen by couple of wardrobes which in those days replaced today's closets. One wardrobe was for suits and coats with a place on the bottom for shoes and the other replaced the linen closet also used for shirts, underwear and other related items. In the room we had large two beds for mother and father, two nightstands a sofa which also served as my bed. We also had a table with four chairs and chest of drors with a mirror attached to it. In the kitchen there was a coal stove a credenza another table with couple of chairs and space for a folding bed for our maid. Believe it or not,,in a small apartment like ours we still employed a maid. A water sink and toiled were located in a small hall quite few meters away.

My first recollection of anything is the time when my parents took me to St. Lazar hospital very ill with scarlet fever. There was a large scale epidemic of scarlet fever at that time. Old and young had been affected. I remember very good a priest in bed next to mine also ill with scarlet fever. I was taken to the hospital in horses driven ambulance. A trumpet blown by an attendant served as a siren in those days. The "tra-ta-ta" still rings in my ears. I spent in hospital almost six weeks. In meantime our apartment got sprayed with some desinfectant to kill the germs. Like in a dream I still remember some things about this hospital. Visits from my parents and relatives. They gathered outside in front of windows in my room. Many other people stood there also. I guess those were the ones who visited their loved ones. Once I saw my mother standing way back on the end of the line. I felt very sad then that she couldn't come closer. When I got better I used to walk through the long hospital corridors or played with pots and pans or sometimes going for a ride in my hospital bed. Later I was told that my behavior made the holy sisters furious. I remember very good the time when my parents took me home. We rode i a doroshki a traditional Cracovian transportation. A horse pulled buggy with a coachman sitting high in the front. The passenger section in the back was covered with a hood in case of bad weather. In wintertime they use to drive all covered coaches. We called them "Karetas". In snowy weather those coachmen put out on the street their large sleighs for people to have fun and enjoy the winter paradise. The coachmen were the owners of the doroshkis. They used to be a special breed carrying on from generation to generation, also dressed up in traditional uniforms. The tradition of the doroshki lingered for a long time. Even the modern taxi-cabs couldn't replace them. World war two put the end to this tradition. Few years after the end of the war the doroshkis disapeared from the streets of Cracow.

The ride home from hospital was very enjoyable. It was an evening and store windows were bright with lights. We passed by an old toy store of Mr. Porembski on the Market Place. I wanted some toys and my parents promised that I will get some soon.

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I realize now that my illness and my experiences in hospital were sort of breaking points in my young life. That was the time of my life WHEN I started to recognize clearly what was going on around me. The fact is that was the time ~~in a matter of facts the first time~~ that I remember meeting some boys and girls who later became my very good friends for many more years to come.

The Krupnicza street neighbourhood was a very nice place to live. It was one of the first extentions of growing Cracow spreading in all directions from the walls of original old Cracow. The walls of the old Cracow still existed in the beginning of 19th century, when Cracow was surrounded with double walls and towers. The outside land which divided the city from suburbs wasn't accessable full of garbage, mudd and trash brought out from the city. The smell especially during hot summer days was unbearable. In 1804 Austrian rulers declared Cracow an open city and in 1807 they started to tear and destroy the walls and towers leaving untouched only a small fragments to remember for future generations.

Instead of walls and dumps "Planty" had been born, surrounding old Cracow like a beautiful ring. The name Planty came from planting. Planty of Cracow became the center of walking, playing. There isn't other city in Poland who can claim such a park like Planty.

In the second half of 19th century Planty served as a place for concerts, plays and fireworks. The main beauty of Planty were chestnut trees. Others were ponds, monuments of famous Poles, and ofcourse many playgrounds for children. I am quite sure that Planty still are the pride of Cracow.

In the old days rich Cracovians used to bilt their mansions on Krupnicza street moving there for their summer vacations. Not far from the end of the street on the bank of an underground river Rudawa stood a mill which produced barley. Barley translated to Polish means "krupy", so from that word "krupy" Krupnicza street has been born. A side street of Krupnicaa had a name Dolnych Mlynow after the mill (Englidh translation, Lower Mills street). Lower Mills street was an often playground for us young kids.

During my years on Krupnicza street there were there already many three and four stories apartment buildings. One of them No. 3 still belongs to one Alex Lauterbach who lives now in Van Nuys California and owns there a piece goods mill.His was a very rich family, we used to be good friends in our childhood. He was one of those boys who had a German speaking nanny.

The house we used to live in was one of those mansions. It was only two story high and in the back had a three story addition which in the old days probably served as quarters for servants. Next to it was a small apartment for the caretaker.

The owner of the building was one Jan Herman Schneider, who was a veteran of the January 1863 Polish uprising against Austria, Prussia and Russia.

When I first saw Mr. Schneider he already was in late seventies. He died few years later I believe it was 1927. I presume he was then over 80 years old. I remember he died at night according to people who lived below his apartment. He fell off his bed and the noise woke those people up. His old housekeeper Jaga didn't hear a thing. The neighbours from downstairs called her up through the water pipes connecting sinks in their kitchens. After Jaga got the message she ran to Mr. Schneiders room but he was dead already. Polish government gave him a hero's funeral with military band and honors, a funeral given in those days to every veteran of the January uprising. There wasn't to many left of them.

Mr. Schneider left his mansion to his three granddaughters who lived there also. Their parents were not alive anymore. Their names were Janina, Zofia and Irene. Their apartment was on first floor just across our's. In a matter of facts our room was a part of their apartment just sub-rented to us. Another room next to our's was occupied by a bachelor engineer Mr. Bronikowski. Later he married Janina and the room became his office. Janina was rather a small person, not good looking with one of her sides lower then the other. I guess her money appealed more to Mr. Bronikowski then her looks. After couple of years of marriage they had a baby girl. Irene the second granddaughter married couple of years later to a lawyer Mr. Terlecki. They took over the apartment which was empty after Mr. Schneider's death.

After many years of faithful service to Mr. Schneider the granddaughters let Jaga the housekeeper go. Jaga helped many times with chores for other tennants. Many times when somebody bought alive chicken on the market Jaga used to killed it for them.

The youngest Mr. Schneider's granddaughter Zofia still wasn't married when we left the apartment.

The apartment above Mr. Schneider's belonged to two old maid sisters. Both of them devouted Catholics spent most of the time in churches and surrounded themselves with many dogs.

The apartment on first floor of the same back addition was occupied by Andrzej and Anastazia Drożdż. Mr. Drożdż was making custom fitted shoes and was a master in his profesion. Many times we wore shoes made by him because they were chipper and better made. The family was very good off and had two sons almost my age. The older Mieczysław was one years older and the younger Jurek (George) was one year younger.

Mieczysław was deaf. When he was old enough to go to school his parents sent him to a special school for deaf children. Later Mr. & Mrs. Drożdż had another child a little girl Olga. Our families were friends for many years even after we moved out from that building. They used to be good Poles and Catholics but not anty-Semites. At least that was our impression.

Jurek and Mieczysław were my first friends I ever remember. We used to play in the back of the building on a stone covered yard. Sometimes we raided old man Schneider's back yard helping ourselves to apples from his many appletrees. On other occasions we claimed the wall in the back to see what was going on in the school for girls on the other side.

In the front of the house was a beautiful flower garden, always locked. The window from our apartment faced directly this garden. Along the side of the garden was an alley leading to the main gate of the house and the street.

I spent many happy hours in this building, not worrying but playing. In another apartment next to ours first used to live a priest Father Koniowka. He was very nice and friendly, having endless discussions with my mother about Judaism and Christianity always in a very nice manner without anti-Semitic remarks. Adventually Father Koniowka moved out and a fortune teller took it over. He was also very good neighbour. Smart and educated. He was still there when we left. The second floor of the front mansion was occupied by an agency for domestic help. Still in the back of the building was a small apartment for the caretaker Mr. Maciejczyk and his wife. Later when I attended the Sobieski gimnazium the same man worked there as a maintnance man.

In the shabby apartments in the basement used to live couple of less fortunate families. One of them was an old woman with a hord of cats.

There were four or five mansions on Krupnicza street. One of them was next to our building. A very nice place surrounded with a garden and beautiful large trees also. As far as I can remember the Consulate of Germany was located there. First with an black two headed eagle emblem over the main entrance and later during the Nazi era the swastika replaced the eagle. We never suspected how much shady business was being conducted there.

Right across the street from the conculate on the corner of Krupnicaa and Szuyski streets my future elementary school of Santa Barbara was standing. Santa Barbara ceased to exist few years after I left. It was a two story building with classrooms on both floors, even thou it used to be only four grades school. In the basement there was a caretaker's apartment. Only four teachers taught this school, principal included.

Another beautiful mansion belonged to a known Polish intelectual Mr. Szuyski after whom this street has been named.

Going further west on Krupnicaa street there were more mansions, always in gardens. Also in this particular area few stores were located. First there was a fruit and vegetable store, then a place selling antiques, next to it was a tavern of Mr. Olszewski, then Mr. Turminski's butcher shop and at last the most popular the Perzanowski pastry shop. Few houses away a small diary store was standing owned by two sisters. How vivid I remember me and my friends buying stuff from those two ladies and trying to pay them with old Austrian cents.

On the corner of Krupnicaa and Lower Mills street was an old mill (I wrote about before) no longer in operation. What was most curious about this place was an underground stream called Rudawa which surfaced to the ground only at Lower Mills and disapeared again nearby to surface again when it joined further west the Vistula River.

Other large buildings in this part of Krupnicza street was district offices of Polish Treasury where my uncle Adolf used to work and the Union of Catholic Working Youth operated by the Catholic church. Couple more mansions and Indusrial Engeeniring Gimnazium on the corner of Krupnicza and Adam Mickiewicz Allee ended the street and also marked the place where in older days Cracow ended.

To the east of our building on the corner of Krupnicaa and Loretanska streets was our friendly grocery store owned by Mr. and Mrs. Brinbram grandparents of Jerry Leuchter whom you already met on many occasions. Him and his brother Milek always were my friends for many years to come. Even recently Milek spent couple of days with us while touring United States. He still lives in Poland.

"Our Paper" school and office supply store was directly across the street from the Brinbrams. Small candy store was next and then a dry goods store of Mr. Krumholz. This was almost the end of the east Krupnicza street. On one side was Henryk Sienkiewicz Gimnazium No 4 and Cafe-Restaurant Esplanade on the corner. A favored spot for Cracovians winter and summer when it also served as a sidewalk cafe.

Across the street from Esplanade was a cinema "Bagatela" meaning to be gay and happy. Later in the thirties Bagatela used to present a movie and musical revue in one program. Many Europeans and Americans performed there. Two years before the war Bagatela was converted into high class movie theater "Scala".

Our apartment on Krupnicza street was small but very pleasant. My mother made sure of it. It was nicely decorated. We had very nice pictures on the walls and nice carpeting and curtains on the windows, and many other small things needed to make living comfortable. I remember when I was a little boy a painter who painted our apartment did a beautiful job so my parents nicknamed him "Mateyko" after the famous Polish painter who made his home in Cracow many years before.

Jerry and Milek Leuchter were grandchildren of Mr. & Mrs Brinbram owners of our friendly grocery store. They used to live about four blocks away from us on Czapski street. Czapski was a famous Polish noble family and close by on Marshall Pilsudski street there was a museum dedicated to their past. On the corner of Czapski and Jablonowski streets parents of Jerry Leuchter owned a grocery store also. Their apartment was in the same building right behind the store. On the top floor in the same building used to live the Frenkiel family. Their children Fredek and Lusia were my friends for many years.

Jurek or Jerzy translated to English would be Jerry or George, was a very popular name in Poland. My next good friend was also Jurek. His name was Kirschner and he was one years older then I. They had a large five or six room apartment on the corner on Krupnicza and Loretanska streets, just across the street where Brinbram grocery was located. His parents used to be rich and high class. At home they spoke German only. They had two other sons. Edward who attended the Henryk Sienkiewicz gimnazium few houses away and the oldest Max who was out of town most of the times. Kirschners used to say that he studied at the Prague University in Czechoslovakia but a common knowledge around the neighbourhood was that he was serving a prison term for communist activities.

I remember very well when during that time Kirschners lost most of their wealth and were forced to sub-rent part of their large apartment in order to meet ends. Mrs. Frenkiel, mother of Fredek told us then a story how Jurek Kirschner came once to play with her children on a cold winter day dressed only in very light clothing and freezing. Being in generous mood she gave Jurek some worm clothing of her son. Jurek and I remained friends until we parted in 1939.

Other friends of mine from those early days were Tadek and Ruth Sommer. They used to live not far away from us on Rayska street. To get to their home I passed the Szuyski street where Santa Barbara school was standing. Szuyski street was a short street. Because of no traffic at all there we used to play there a lot. Mr. Sommer was a businessman and when time came sent his children to Hebrew Academy and so did Mr.& Mrs. Frenkiel. He owned a restaurant and was involved with Pilsudski's Legions during world war one. Because of that Polish government awarded to his wife a tobacco licence permiting her to sell tobacco products which were under Polish government's monopoly.

Szuyski street was like a heaven for us small kids. There was the place to play cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians and many other games. Sometimes we came across insignia of officers of Polish army so we played war between Poland and Soviet Russia. Another favored place of ours was an orphanage located next to Santa Barbara school separated only by an underground creek. We used to cross this creek and mingle with boys and girls of the orphanage. We gave plenty of problems to the poor sisters who on many occasions thought that we also were the orphans in their care.

Next to the orphanage was a small apartment building. When I was older another Jewish family moved in there. They were Weissbruns with three sons but we didn't play to much with them.

Another atraction of Szuyski street was the back yard of a theater which actually was located on Rayska street. We used to sneak in there and watched actors performing in the theater. Later the theater whose name was "Gong" was converted into a garden cafe. Years went by and the cafe went out of business. Some organization used the facilities THEN as an exhibition hall.

Building next door was a school for hearing impaired children. The older of the Drozdz boys who was deaf attended there. For quite few years this school also served as Sunday school for Jewish children.

The most interesting building in those days was an old army fort located on the north side of Rayska street only couple of blocks away from our house on Krupnicza street. This fort probably bilt to house Austrian troops during occupation of Poland before world war one was a giant surrounded by four streets. After Poland regained her independence in 1918 they named the fort Tadeusz Kosciuszko Fort. In my childhood that fort was for me and my friends just a large playground. Not until many years later when Poland lost her independence again I started to realize that this fort was just a big joke. It was always wide open without centries or for that matter without any guard. Everybody could walk in and out. There were many open buildings there but I never saw any weapons or other heavy military equipment. O yes I saw many wagens and horses and soldiers ofcourse. There were no military excersices. Kids like us used to roam all over the place and in wintertime they operated a large iceskating ring charging people with the entrance fee. No wonder Poland went down so quickly against the Germans in world war two.

At the east end of Krupnica street there was a circle where five streets met. This was the place were the old Cracow ended and where Planty replaced the old city walls. To the left of Krupnicza there was the Karmelicka street an old street named after the church and monastery of Karmelitan Sisters, famous because of a corner block inserted into the ~~corner~~ wall of the church with an impression of the foot of Queen Jadwiga wife of King Wladislaw Jagiello the benefactor of Jagiellonian University.

The next street in the circle was Dunajewski street. A wide and pleasant street more on the modern side. This street ran parallel to Planty and was a favored place for mothers with children to walk during winter. We all used to go there on cold winter days when didn't snow and when sun shined brightly. We had lots of fun walking there for couple of hours before lunch eating fresh roasted peanuts. There was this tradition in Cracow during winter months when vendors kept small stoves on some busy streets selling small bags of hot peanuts for 10 groshen.

Another street ending at the circle was Szewska street. Translated to English it would be Shoemaker street. This street got it's name from the Shoemakers Tower on the old wall. In middle ages this tower was located exactly on the spot where Planty crossed the Szewska street. This tower was named after shoemakers union who in those old days were obliged to defend the city from that tower in case of enemy's attack. Other profesional unions defended the city from towers located in different places on the wall.

The nearest to Krupnicza was Podwale street, which means the street under the Wall who also ran parallel to Planty. Going farther Podwale merged with Straszewski street. Along Podwale and Straszewski streets many educational institutions used to be located including the Jagiellonian University with many centuries old buildings. Still following Planty on the left side the Straszewski street ended at the side entrance to Wawel hill with the Cracow Cathedral and the castle of Polish Kings.

Besides intelectuals many other interesting people used to live in the area of Krupnicza street. On Loretanska south of Krupnicza there was a family who for ages cooked delicious meals in their apartment. I remember many times we bought from dinners taking it home in special utensils. You couldn't eat in their home. There also was a tailor there who sew my first gimnazium uniform even thou he knew that he didn't have enough fabric to finish it. I could hardly get in into this suit.

Farther Loretanska crossed the Student street with another gimnazium. Loretanska finished at Jablonowski street with Commercial Academies for boys and girls and another elementary school.

Loretanska street was like a Holly Place. Many devout Catholics lived threre mainly because of ~~x~~ Brothers Capucins Church and Monastery. A short street between Loretanska and Straszewski street carried a name Capucin street after the ~~xx~~ Brothers and every Sunday was loaded with worshipers. The Capucin church and monastery was located on a tremendous piece of land surrounded by four streets. From the mouth of Capucin street we crossed directly to Planty. At this crossing one of the many playgrounds established by the city of Cracow was located. I and my friends spent many summers playing there accompanied by our mothers and in case of rich kids by their nannies.

All along the Planty and playgrounds there were benches and chairs for people to relax. On weekends when crowds used to be large city collected fees from those who occupied chairs. A lady city worker collected the 15 groshen. Us kids never ~~pax~~ pay. When we saw this lady from far away we kept runing only to come back as soon as she disapeared.

How sad it was after the war when I came back to Cracow. Many people who used to sit on those chairs perished but the same lady still collected the money on Planty.

So those were the places of my early childhood. But don't go away. The real story begins right now with the legend of the old Cracow.

Chapter 30

Cracow!

As the legend tells us the genesis of Cracow was a menacing monster, a dragon who demanded from the town it's loveliest maidens for his meals. The dragon went on demanding the fairiest virgins and valiant knights kept losing their lives fighting him, until time came when a certain man called Krak had a brainstorm to stuff a dead sheep with sulphur and present it to the monster. The sulphur gave the dragon a terrible thirst. He crawled to the Vistula River and drank until he burst. Later Krak founded a town on the side and named it Cracow.

The history tells us that even in those days Germans had a tremendous interest in Poland. The legend also says that Krak's beautiful daughter WANDA killed herself because she didn't want to marry a German prince Rittiger.

Many centuries later population of Cracow honored their legendary heros Krak and his daughter by building Slovian style high piramids. You could see them even today when you approach the city from any direction.

From the eleventh to seventeenth centuries Cracow functioned as Poland's Capital. The city developed at the foot of a royal castle called Wawel, extending over an elevated rock. Cracow also became the capital of Polish culture following of foundig there in 1364 of the Cracow Academy by the king Kasimir the Great later promoted to Jagiellonian University by the king Wladislaw Jagiello. The University's 15th century buildings among the oldest academic complexes in Europe still house the great institution. Also from the Gothic epoch dates the famous St. Mary's church georgeously ornamented at the close of the 15th century with the high altar by master Wit Stwosz who came to Cracow after Spanish requisition and who many secretly considered being Jewish.

The greatest grow of the city came during Renaissance. The royal castle on Wawel was remodeled, and to the Gothic Cloth Hall on the Main Market place who originally was two rows of warehouses, Renaissanse passages and galleries were added. A large number of palaces, residences and churches were bilt at this time. The university flourished. Cracow's profesors of astronomy and mathematics were sought all over Europe. The famous astronomer Nicholas Kopernik the man who made sun stop and the earth move studied at the university under their guidance. The high standards of phisical and chemical sciences attracted many European alchemists.

The passing centuries left the beauty of Cracow unspoiled. Cracow with it's wealth and variety of monuments cast a spell on its citiziens and visitors alike. Even after so many centuries people visiting and later leaving the city were impressed by the meddieval city planning. There was a pleasure to walk up a winding narrow street suddenly opening into a splendid object of architecture, or a square or arcade. As I wrote before the the old city center is encircled by a parklike Planty, replacing the former fortifications, only fragments of which like the Barbican and St. Florian Gate have resisted the pressure of history. In modern days the pattern has changed somewhat and since the middle ages the city area has been quadrupled. Cracow has always been a city of contrasts which added to appreciation of its values and beauty.

The seven hundred years old city center focused on the Market Place one of the oldest and largest meddieval Market Place in Europe has always its original function, gathering every day hundreds of peasants selling their produce and diary and local merchants selling flowers, fruits and vegetables from their stands. The city always owed its prosperity to its position on the great Byzantium-Bucharest-Lvov-Cracov-Prague-Vienna and beyond roads.

Besides of Jagiellonian University Cracow bilt buildings for the College of Agriculture, Academy of Miners and High Academy of Commerce and Industry and many more. To help students in their studies a new Jegiellonian Library also was bilt.

There were many high class and modern restaurants in Cracow. But on many old curving streets you could find old inns or taverns standing there for hundreds of years still serving food and drinks to new generations of Cracovians. Among them only one could stand-up in oldtimers minds. It was an old restaurant bilt by one Mikolay Wierzynek, who also served as a mayor of Cracow and who in 1394 hosted European rulers to consider giving aid to the King of Cyprus threatened with attack by Turks.

The Tatar invasion in XIII century had left a tremendous meaning in old Cracow's history. Not because of the damage the Tatars inflicted to the city but because of legends and customs it left behind. To commemorate this invasion until today on the top of St. Mary's church a guard blows a horn every hour of the day and night. As the legend tells us the city guard who in those days blew the horn to alert the city of the attack had his throat pierced by a Tatar arrow. Because of that the modern day bugler makes an abrupt break in the call. Also that why since then year after year during the Corpus Christi holiday to remember the Tatar raid a male resident of the district of Zwierzyniec (people of this district were the first to meet the invaders) dressed as a Tatar on a make believe horse runs the Tatar route and pretends to attack the amused people of Cracow who gather along the road.

This one episod in no way can convey to you the entire story of Cracow. There were very many of them and there is no way I can tell them to you. But all the treasures, museums, paintings of famous Cracow's painters, palaces, churches and monasteries are proof enough of Cracow's place in Polish history.

Another treasure not only in Polish history but in history of Polish Jews is the Jewish district of Kazimierz (Kasimir).

Kazimierz used to be a separate town located on the south bank of Vistula River called to existance by the King Kasimir the Great in 1335. It had its own City Hall which stands until today. Kasimir the Great was the first Polish King who let Jews come to Poland. According to old documents King Kasimir the Great had a Jewish lover named Esterka. She used to be known as a protector of Jews in Poland. She was a beautiful women and gave Kasimir the Great two sons Niemir and Pelka never officialy accepted..A legend ties Esterka to many places in Poland. Not many years ago stil a piramid was standing in her honor in the district of Łobzów near Cracow. Also in her honor a street in Kazimierz district still carries the name Esther street.

In the city of Kazimierz the Cracow University had its roots. At the end of XV century Kazimierz was incorporated with Cracow and the Jewish population of Cracow settled there.

Many years ago there was a settlement between Cracow and Kazimierz called Stradom (Old House) a place where Polish kings servants used to live. Later Stradom became a part of Kazimierz. Throughout the years Kazimierz transformed itself into completly Jewish character, with many interesting relics and contradictions. Many churches which go back to XIV and XV centuries with resting places of Polish heros are still there.

Jews left a profound mark on Kazimierz with many old cementaries and synagouges. The Old Synagogue is the oldest Jewish place of worship in Cracow. Bilt in at the end of XIV century, it was rebilt in 1570 and reconstructed after it was destroyed by Germans during the last war. Presently it houses a Judaic Museum. It is also important to mention Synagogue Remu'h bilt in XVI century. The High Synagogue bilt in 1590, Popper Synagogue from 1620 and Synagogues Ayzik and Kupa both bilt in first half of XVII century, and ofcourse the New Synagogue who was known in my time as a Temple.

Besides synagogues and other interesting objects the old Kazimierz had many modern institutions including a tremendous educational system located in modern buildings which housed elementary school, gimnazium, industrial school and commercial school. The Hebrew Academy of Cracow had the same rights as public schools. Each student after graduation could attend any university or other school of higher education if admitted not only in Poland but all over the world.

Like any other Jewish community in the world Cracow's Jews had their leaders but the most important of them was Mr. Chaim Hilfstein. A man with a statue like families Brand and Puritz here in Kansas City. He was the main power of Jewish life in Cracow before the war and in his honor the school was named "The Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy".

On the right bank of Vistula River is a district called Podgórze. English name "Under the Hill." This district was developed between 1815 and 1846 during Austrian occupation and was ment to be as living quarters for Austrian dignitaries. Kaiser Franz Joseph had big plans for Podgórze hoping that one day will surpace Cracow. Plans which never materialized. In 1915 Podgórze was attached to Cracow as one of its districts.

On March 3rd 1941 by the order of the German Governor of Cracow district parts of Podgórze were declared "Jewish District" (so called Yidisher Voynbezirk). By March 20th 1941 all Jewish residents of Cracow were forced into a small area of Ghetto surounded with tall walls and wires. There on a place called Harmony Place the tragedy of Jews of Cracow took place. On this place German murderers selected their victims for hard labor in concentration camps. There the drunk and druged SSmen murdered thousands of Jews of Cracow.

On April 22 1983 on FRAGMENTS OF surviving old walls of Ghetto Cracovians unveiled a memorial plaque with an inscription in Hebrew and Polish. "Here used to live, suffer and die from the hands of hitlerite murders Jews of Cracow. From here they went their last way to extermination camps".

As I was growing up I learned to like Cracow very much. During my school years I learned a lot about Cracow's history. It ment a world to me to walk around this city and visit all those places with the knowledge of facts which took place there many years ago.

Well; World war two changed everything. People changed. Governments and borders changed. Millions perished, but I still dream about my Cracow, city of my youth.

Learning about historical past of Cracow was a part of my education starting with the first grade until my graduation. Another important meaning of that education used to be field trips to see all those old relics of importance in Poland'd past. I visited all the museums, palaces of Polish kings and places of their burial on the Wawel hill and the Wawel Cathedral. I saw many other palaces and churches some very, very old and at that time still in remarkable shape. Among many exiting old buildings bilt in Gothic and Renaissance was the structure of Julius Slowacki theater bilt in 1893 which was as grand as any famous opera house any place in Europe. The old and new buildings of Polish National Museum were an art by itself. Speaking of old buildings I can't forget the small buildings dated back to XVI century and still occupied by modern days tennants. Cracow always had many nice restaurants, two or three nightclubs, many movie houses and other places of entertainment. Parks, Planty and suburbam areas which in my days still were villages made good places for weekend outings.

* Imagene the district of Zwierzyniec. The disctrict where we used to live since 1931 with a small stone church bilt in Xth century,

Chapter 30 (cont)

Cracow!

Few miles away from the place where we lived in the center of a military fort stays another Slovian dirt piramid erected by people of Cracow to honor Tadeusz Kosciuszko (also a hero of American revolution) who swore on Market Place in Cracow to devout his life to fight for Polish independence. A plaque to commemorate this event lies at the exact spot where Kosciuszko was standing.

As the XXX XVII century began the gold era of Cracow slowly started coming to it's end. It wasn't just Cracow. The whole country began to tumble. Little by little so to speak.

Polish King Sigmund III Waza, himself being Swedish native wanted to be close to his country moved the capital from Cracow to Warsaw.

During XVII and XVIII centuties internal misunderstandings and greed of Poland's neighbours led to the end of Polish independence. Many Polish uprisings didn't produce any victories. Austrian and Prussian soldiers robbed Cracows castles, churches and museums of priceless jewels which belonged to Polish kings for centuries and stole many valuables from all over the city. After the Congress of Vienna Austrians created in Cracow territory so called Cracow Republic, but Poles raised again in 1846 and lost. This small revolution ment the end of Cracow Republic, which Kaiser Franz Joseph made a part of Austrian Empire.

In the middle of XIX century Cracovian attempted another fight but that time on cultural and intelectual fields. In those days Cracow gained a name of Polish Athens. Despite some successes in literature and other fields Austrian army took over the castle of Polish Kings on the Wawel Hill turning it to a fort. Luckily in the beginning of XX century Kaiser Franz Joseph experienced many difficulties throughout his vast empire. To appeace the population of Cracow he gave the already ruined castle back to Poles and gave them permission to restore it.

In 1914 with the outbreak of xxx world war one Joseph Pilsudski organized his Legions in Cracow. Their march started from a small suburban locality called Oleandry which later became a famous street. There began the long fight which culminated in 1918 when Poland regained her independence.

In the time between the two world wars the growth of Cracow was rather sluggish. Yes they bilt couple of High Rises which in those days created a big sensation. Overall the industrial potential was low and the city was plagued by many strikes. The worst one was in 1936 in Semperit rubber factory. I remember this day very well. They kept us in school most of the afternoon because it was dangerous to walk the xxxxx streets of Cracow. Many people got killed and wounded by the charging mounted police.

Then came September of 1939. In the building of Miners Academy resided government of German occupation. In the castle on Wawel Hill resided German governour Frank. In a tall building on Pomorska street XXXXXXXX No 2 Gestapo had its headquarters. People who entered this building hardly ever came out. After the liberation blood was still visible on wall and floors in the basement. XX Hundreds of Thousands of people mostlty Jews were arrested, sent out to camps or killed on spot. German forces occupied Cracow September 6 1939. The occupation lasted for five years, four months and twelve days. At the end Germans planed to destroy Cracow but a swift action by the underground was able xx to prevent it.

I felt sad very sad while leaving Cracow. During the course of the war many times I thought that I will never return. But when I returned I couldn't stay there. It was a different Cracow. With different people. It was a sad homecoming. So I left. But I will always love it and remember.

Chapter 31

Growing Up!

When I was a little boy growing up I remember couple of maids working for us. I don't remember their names or faces or anything about them. Many years later I always wondered why we needed a maid at all. Our apartment was small. I am not sure. Probably our well to do relatives had lots to do with it. The idea of following the Jones was already alive in those days.

Our first maid who I really remember was our third maid Eugenia Novak. I was then maybe 5 years old. She was a young peasant girl coming from Zakliczyn a small village near Niepołomice about 25 km from Cracow. Niepolomice was famous in Poland because of a large forest and wilderness nearby, with a reservoir for bisons. A hunting castle of Polish Kings still is standing in Niepolomice. Bilt in XIV century in modern times it served foreign heads of States and other dignitaries while they used to hunt there. During my lifetime in Cracow I remember newspaper notices telling us about Herman Goering hunting there.

Genia as we called her was an honest and devouted person and stayed with us for quite few years.

While Genia was with us our entire family went through a very traumatic experience. My aunt Lora who used to live in Vienna used to bring to Cracow her fashion creations in order to sell them to some local fashion houses. Well one of her competitors in Vienna became jealous of her good fortune reported her to Polish authorities accusing her of some wrong doings. Anyway to make a long story short there was a long investigation. Polish authorities confiscated all aunt Lora's merchandise trying to determine if she entered Poland illegaly. It took few years before the case came to trail and after it came out that aunt Lora didn't have no reason to enter the country illegaly because she was a Polish citizien with Polish passport living in Vienna the case was finally dismissed with the court's decision that there wasn't any wrong doing at all. All the confiscated goods were returned with apologies. The aggravations of those few years left the whole family in a state of shock for quite a while.

As always our family stood close together. It was obvious that my parents weren't as well off as my mother's brothers, but they never acted in a superior way toward us. They were always there when we needed them, and so was my mother always ready to help her family in many other ways. She loved them all dearly and was extrimly proud of all of them.

As far my father's only brother Adolf living in Cracow was concerned, him and his wife Gusta never came to see us in those days. Probably some old feud kept them apart. But their son Alexander was an often guest in our house and we liked him very much.

Everything seemed to be settled at that time in our lives. My father had his job with the Wawel Transportation company. During that period of time my cousin Paul Joseph Balin met Stefa Hochstetter and their wedding took place in Cracow. Ofcourse I was to young to attend. Also at that time uncle Ludwik moved his growing business to larger location from St. Sebastian Street to Stradom.

As other children my age I had some good times with my friends. We played and fought sometimes. During summer we spent most of our time on Planty. I met there many other kids, whose names now would be hard to remember. Our playground on Planty we used to call "Kółko" which means "wheel" in English because it was shaped like a wheel. In winter mostly on weekends accompanied by our parents we used to take out our sleds and go to Blonie. Blonie in Cracow was and still is a tremendous piece of land on outskirts of the city, where people of Cracow had fun all year around.

Chapter 31 (cont)

Growing Up!

On Błonie carnivals put up their raids and stands and circuses performed under their big tops. Most major league soccer teams played on their fields bilt nearby. The main city stadium was also located in that area. Paralell to Błonie runs a long walkway called "Deptak". On Sundays after church half of Cracow used to walk there. All dressed up in their best. During summer vacations this was a meeting place of all teenagers of Cracow Polish or Jewish alike. Through the overhead loudspeakers we used to listen to all kind of music, modern and traditional. When I was a little boy I couldn't understand how a grown-up person could sit all the time in such a small box and sing all those beautiful songs. Next to the Błonie there was and I am quite sure there still is a beautiful park with playgrounds, gazebos, flower gargens and monuments of famous Poles named after and errected to honor one Henrik Jordan; a scholar who spent his life helping underpriviledged children.

The Cracow Electric Railway which ran along Deptak in summer only used to take people for outings beyond the Jordan park to a picturesque area with outdoor restaurants and a horse race track.

Another favored thing for me and my friends was going to the movies on weekends. Cracow had many cinemas in those days but most of them showed pictures not allowed for kids our age. So our greatest pleasure was to go to the Museum Cinema, named after a museum located in the same building. This cinema showed most all the time pictures for kids. For few groshen we saw all kinds of kiddie movies and many cowboy shows with Tom Mix and other western stars of that era. The whole afternoon of fun always finished with a short comedy or a cartoon staring Mickey Mouse.

Like most youngsters many times we got into some mischief. We had lots of them and now they are not easy to remember. Yet few still stick in my mind, probably because they were more rotten then the others. One of those rotten things happened on April Fool's day. My two friends and I were chasing an older man and kept yelling at him that he had something hanging from the back of his pants. When he finally stop, he looked around to make sure that nobody was around. He pulled down his pants to check what was wrong, only to find out that nothing was wrong. As for us we kept yelling at him in Polish ofcourse "Prim, prima nic niema" which in English means April's Fool. The poor man became terrible mad and still with his pants down tried to catch us but to no Avail.

The second incident was even more rotten than the first one, because money was involved. There was a custom in those days in Poland that charitable organizations were allowed to keep tables on certain streets and collect donations for worthy causes by selling tickets. Usually an older lady used to sit by the table while children with special marked banks collected the money and giving tickets to the donors. One of my friends somehow got hold of a bunch of such tickets, and the other one came up with a briliant idea for us to sell those tickets. So we went out on the street and began selling tickets. Some people bought them,but others asked where was the table. So we told them just around the corner. By the time they found out that there was no tables we were long gone buying pastry and ice cream in a nearby store.

(PUSHKAS)

Another incident which I clearly remember not only left me really scared but taught me a lesson I went by the rest of my life. All started innocent, six years old boys runing along a street lined-up with beautiful trees with low hanging branches, jumping happily and breaking a branch with each jump. I was one of those boys. Never mind the man standing close by and watching what we were doing. And guess who was the first victim? Me ofcourse.

Chapter 31 (cont)
Growing Up!

I was in panic, and scared to death. The man told ME that I was destroying public property and treatened to take me to a police station. I kept beging him to forgive ME promising that I will never do it again. In my eagerness to get loose from him I also kissed his hands. He repeated many times that nothing will help ME. In my childish mind I was doomed. Finally he left me standing there and walked away. He never asked me about my name and where I was living. I didn't realized then that this man just was trying to teach me a lesson. At home I was afraid to tell my mother about my predicament. It was Saturday afternoon and all I wanted to know how soon we will leave house to go someplace. When at last my mother was ready to leave to my horror ~~xxx~~ uncle Ludwik came visiting. I always was very happy to see him but not that particular time. Few years later when I was older it finally came to me that the whole thing was just a painfull hoax and I was a victims of this man's fancy.

Yet; Not everything was play and games. It was during that period of time when my mother lost her second child. She was very ill with a nervous breakdown. It took her a long time to recover.. As always our family was near-by, ready to help.

The clouds over world's ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ economies were getting darker and darker. Everybody was expecting something bad to happen soon. The question was when. It was still before the crash of the market when one evening my father came home and told us that he was laid off indefinitly.

While my father was out of work, mother took over as official bread winner. She took some part time jobs in millinery shops. Yes she knew how to design and make hats. She also had some customers of her own. Some ladies used to bring their hats to our home. Mother was very good at it and women liked her work.

During this difficult times father took care on me. We used to go for long walks on Planty. There was no fun to stay around the house when mother wasn't there. I remember once when a large dog attacked me in front ~~of~~ of ~~xxxxx~~ Jagiellonian University. He threw me to the ground, and I must to hit some hard object because next thing I knew that my forehead was bleeding. My father took me to an emergency station which in those days was attached to the main fire station in Cracow. They put quite few stitches in my head. Since that time I HAVE always been afraid of dogs. Even nowaday large dogs scare me.

Becuse of the bad times we had to let go our good maid Eugenia. Slow but sure economic situation was getting worse. The word describing depresion in Poland was "crisis". A lot was said about crisis. People all over the country discussed it constantly. They sang songs about it. Actors and comedians made fun of it or decried it in movies and theaters. To make bad things worse winter of 1929-1930 was very cold and shortage of coal made it even harder. Long lines of people used to wait in front of coal suppliers to pick up their allowances ordered many days in advance. Even schools closed because lack of heating.

The Polish political situation wasn't stable at all. In 1926 parts of Polish army under the command of General Władisław Sikorski rebeled against Joseph Piłsudski than the Polish leader. Piłsudski was able to crash the uprising. He retained the post as the head of Poland armed forces and sent Sikorski into exile.

Despite the hard times crisis didn't affect some parts of Poland's population. I can't remember my mother's brothers ever complaining. I think my uncles Ludwik and Gabriel were doing fine as always.

Another family who was doing well was the Patatoff family. Marian Patatoff from Zbaraz was the barber who married sister of aunt Mala. His barber shop on Czarnovieyska street prospered as never before. His main clientel used to be workers from the nearby ~~xxxx~~ tobacco products factory.

Workers of that factory were the lucky ones because they haven't been affected by the crisis, which made the population smoke more cigarettes then ever before. So those workers and their families went to Marian's barber and beauty shops as always or even more often.

All of them my uncles Gabriel, Ludwik and their families went on with their lives as nothing happened. Ofcourse Patatoffs also joined the band wagen. They kept going to their elegant cafes, restaurants and many other entertainment establishments. I know because many times they invited my mother to join them. Aunt Fran sister of aunt Mala and wife of Marian Patatoff on spur of a moment could hire a doroshki (horse pulled cab) and come to our house with her daughter Janka to take us out on a ride around Cracow because Janka's apetite was better while riding the doroshki.

I continued with my share of more frick incidents. This one happened right in the house during dinner time. Instead to wait nice by the table for my food I kept jumping around the room. I was so happy that I didn't notice my mother coming out from the kitchen with a dish of hot borsht. Before I could stop the hot liquid spilled all over my face. The burns were painfull but not severe. My doctor put some ointment on my face, covered it with bandages and after few days I was fine.

I had also a share of childhood sicknesses. Besides scarlet fever I had muphs, measels, hoopen cough and chicken pocks. I also suffered through a disease which doctors in those days called "Aceton": Every two or three months until I was eleven years old I used to come down with high fever, severe headaches and vomiting. Each time it took me a week to get over it. After my eleventh birthday this sickness never came back. In a matter of facts since than I never was really sick not until the hunger years during the war in Uzbekistan. On Siberia I had to fake illnesses just to get a little rest from the hard work.

Now going back to the family Patatoff I would like to emphasize that they were nice and decent people. Money they made in their business made them long for the good things they saw at the Joneses. In this cases the Joneses were my uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala. They loved high life , especially their daughter Janka when she got older. The Patatoffs never left Cracow in their lives until Hitler sent them to one of his murdering resorts. but Janka went every year to some high class place or camp.

When uncle Gabriel bought a piano for his children, Patatoffs bought a piano for their daughter even thou there was hardly room in their apartment to put a piano. When uncle Gabriel and his family moved to a high class apartment so did the Patatoffs. They rented an elegant place in a fashionable district of Cracow named after former mayor of the city Julius Lea. Soon they found out that high class living wasn't as easy so they moved back to their old neighbourhood on Poselska street taking over the large apartment of aunt's Fran parents who in turn took the Patatoffs old apartment. Another shock for them was when one of Marian's friends opened a barber shop just across of theirs on Czarnowieyska street. Patatoffs countered by buying another shop on the corner of Grodzka and Poselska streets attended by more sophisticated customers. In a matter of facts they have done so well at that location and were able to sell their business on Czarnowieyska street.

Aunt Fran even thou wasn't my real aunt deserved to be called aunt. She was a very nice person and as such a very good friend of my mother.

Chapter 31 (cont)

Growing Up!

I think it was winter of 1927 when my mother left Cracow to go to Zbaraż to take care on her very ill father. She spent there a month maybe longer before returning home. My aunt Janette from Tarnobrzeg took over from my mother. Needless to say my grandfather David Leib Nussbaum never recovered. His passing away was a great shock to my mother. The family tried to keep the bad news away from her, but she walked in on them during the shivah period in uncle Gabriel's home.

I don't remember when and how we met the family Reisberg. All I know that their two sons used to be my good friends until our last days in Cracow before the German invasion. The older boy Fredek was my age and attended gimnazium but wasn't able to graduate. His younger brother Sigmund was couple of years younger and attended the Jewish Industrial School. We kept our friendship throughout the years and couple of times we spent our summer vacations together.

Mrs. Reisberg insisted that she was born in Vienna. It is true that she had relatives in Vienna and visited there few times but the fact was that she came to Cracow from some small town in Eastern Poland and so did Mr. Reisberg.

Mr. Reisberg was selfemployed and used to buy scraps to deliver them later to paper mills. Their apartment was on Grodzka street famous as a route of Polish Kings from the Market Place to their castle on Wawel Hill. All buildings on Grodzka street were very old which wasn't unusuall in Cracow. Yet the apartments in those buildings used to be very well preserved. I am quite sure that people occupy those apartments until today.

Mr. Reisberg didn't own an office. He was doing his business from the table in Cafe Royale. This cafe was a very interesting place in Jewish Cracow. Located on the edge of Kasimir (Jewish district) where Planty ends and back way to Wawel Castle begins, Cafe Royale was a meeting place of Jewish businessmen who made their deals by the shake od hands. Cafe Royale was like an unofficial stock market called "Boerse". In summertime they delt in sidewalk cafe, in winter they moved inside. The transactions took place every day, except Saturdays. Sunday was their best day. All streets leading to the cafe were full of Jews on Sundays. Mr. Reisberg and others could buy there anything whatever their hearts desired from scraps to gold, diamonds and silver and foreign exchange.

When things were quiet all members used to sit around the tables eating, drinking or playing cards.

Happy days came back to our house when my father got his old job back. The owners of "Wawel" as the company was called before got hold of some new capital and reorganized the firm under a new name. They named the new company "Przewóz" which in English meant "Transport". My father was the first one of the old employes to be called back to work. His duties were the same as before dealing mainly with Polish customs.

My mother quit working but from time to time she still accepted some work at home. We were still living on Krupnicza street and I spent most of my time playing with my friends. We used to come to each others homes. I don't remember any major fights among ourselves. Ofcourse I was discovering many more things around me, tried to learn about them and understand them.

It was first time in my life that I learned how certain people made their living. In the begining I thought of it as fun, but little later I started to realize that was very hard for most of the people to survive.

Let's take for example this Jewish man who used to come to our courtyard once a month with a bag on his shoulder.

He was a religious man, His beard made look much older but in fact he was still a young man and always wore his orthodox clothing. His business was to buy everything what was old, mostly things people decided to throw out. He stood there in the middle of the courtyard holering "Handel,Handel" which in Yiddish means "Gescheft" and in English simply business. He usually introduced himself telling people that he has one wife and five children and that he needs money to suport them. He paid just pennies for those rags but a story was circulating that he made good money selling them. He wasn't the only one. There was a whole bunch of them in Cracow. This was an old custmm among those Jews passed on from generation to generation.

Another custom of those days not only in Cracow but all over Europe were young unemployed musicians. They used to form groups wandering around the city and play the popular music for peoples entertainment. They have done som in courtyards, streets and parks and people rewarded them with money thrown out from windows or giving money to them or by throwing it on the ground.

There is in Poland this etnic group who lives in Carpthian Mountains, particulary in Tatra Mountains. Becuse of the hard ground their crops were always rather small and they had to look for other means to make a living. They call themselves Gorals. They always dressed in their old-fashioned costiums. Their men used to leave their families behind in the mountains to go to the large city in order to make some money. their specialty was to repair old pots and pans. They used to be masters of their trade. They could fix all kind of utensils no matter if made of stone or steel. Becaus of the high mountains and snowy winters many of them became good skiers who represented Poland in international competitions.

I still was a small boy when talking pictures arrived in Cracow. I remember very well Al Jolson and his famous movie The Jazz Singer. The whole city was bewildered. And again like with the loudspeakers on Deptak I thought that people behind the screen kept talking so we could hear them. I guess the Jazz Singer was the picture which started our love affair with American movies and all the great stars of the century like Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper and many more.

In summertime I usually parted with my friends for two months. Even before my school years we used to go either to Rabka a resort in Carpathian Mountains. People in those days kept saying that water there was good for our health. We always had a room in a big house called Villa. The fee included board and food three times a day. Sometimes we went together with our relatives from Tarnobrzeg. On other occasions we spent our vacations in Tarnobrzeg. I had lots of fun with my cousin Sigmund there, especially when his father the profesor was out of town on attending mathematicions seminar in Zopot on Baltic Sea.

The Nussbaums of Tarnobrzeg had there a lovely house with a small yard and a gazebo. They also owned a piece of property on Adam Mickiewicz street, the main street of Tarnobrzeg. In those days they had a vegetable garden there and small playground. We enjoyed many picnics on this playground. Profesor's friends used to come from all over with their children, and believe me they had many friends. In those days a gimnazium profesor in small town was an important personality. Few years later they bilt on this land a beautiful modern house.

Many tourists visited Cracow throughout the years. But one of the largest gatherings occured when the Esperanto speaking convention took place in Cracow. This international language was put together by a Jewish profesor Zamenhoff from Warsaw. The Esperanto speaking people came by thousands and Cracow was ready for them. It was a festive occasion and the city was decorated with flags, flowers and signs in Esperanto.

Chapter 32

Santa Barbara School

In 1927 on September 1 I was 5 years and 8 months old. During That summer my mother was seriously considering sending me to school. I was 3 months short of legal age of 6 required for every child to be eligible to go to school. There were no kindergardens in Polish school system. So before school year began my mother convinced the Board of Education to let me enter the first grade. Even my so-called cousin Janka Patatoff who was 3 weeks older then I didn't go to school until one year later.

Some of my friends who were one year older prepared already to go to second grade. For example Jerry Leuchter went to second grade but his brother Milek had one more year to play some more.

The Polish school system in those days operated the same as in the countries who occupied Poland before world war one, which meant, that Cracow was used to be under Austrian occupation, so its school system was the same as in Austria. Poland's parts previously occupied by Prussia had a German school system and cities like Warsaw or Lodz who had been under Russian administration had Russian school system.

Every child was required to complete seven years of elementary basic education. But students who choose to go to gimnazium could do so after completing just four grades of elementary school and passing an entrance exam. After eight years of gimnazium and after passing so-called "Matura" (graduation) students went to universities of their choice. When I went to school Cracow still wasn't divided into school districts. Anybody attended schools of his or hers choice. About six years later Polish educators and government changed the system for an uniform system for the whole country.

So thanks to my mother on September 3rd 1927 I entered the first grade of Santa Barbara school just across the street from our apartment building on Krupnicza street. Santa Barbara was a small four grades school located in a two story building. Our classes used to be on first floor only. Our teachers kept telling us that a girl's school was located on second floor, but I never saw anybody there. When I got older I finally realized that the upstairs was always closed. Anyway we had on the first floor except the four classrooms, the principal's office, a coat and dining room in one, a small library and ofcourse restrooms. Outside was a spasious playground where we played during recesses in summertime. In winter we Used to walk in pairs along the long hall inside.

The school had four teachers including the principal who also taught one grade. Other teachers were Mr. Joseph Sliwa, Mrs. Klosinski and my teacher for the entire four years Miss Janina Chencinski. Right away the principal's name was Piotr Jarosz.

In the basement was caretaker's apartment, who also with his wife prepared lunches for needy children.

My first semester in school wasn't easy at all. I couldn' get through my had that school was for learning, and that playing was over at least for half a day. I still thought about the good days at home but most of all I was missing my mother. Students in elementary schools didn't wear uniforms but most studets wore school caps similar to military caps only in navy with a square looking top. I always wanted to wear a cap like that but my mother wouldn't allow. My headwear was a beret and in winter I had a cap with earflaps similar to those worn in Russia. I didn't have a school cap until I went to gimnazium where the cap was mandatory along with the uniform.

Learning didn't go well for me. It came to the point that before the end of the semester they gave me a test. Ofcourse I didn't pass. I spelled wrong the word "samolot", which in English means airplane. Instead to write "t" on the end I spelled it with "d", and this gave me "4" or as you would say "Fail" on my report card.

Chapter 32(cont)

Santa Barbara School!

My mother made sure that I do much better in second semester. Under her supervision I did lots of writing and spelling at home. After those afternoon sessions next morning she used to sent our maid Genia to show my work to the teacher. I never knew, maybe that was her agreement with my teaacher to keep her inform about my progress.

No wonder that my grades during second semester went up. You see my mother had this idea that I should be as good in school as her brothers before and her nephews and nieces later. It didn't matter to her that maybe I can't be as good at them. Getting me through school and make a "mench" out of me was the first priority of her life.

As far as I can remember there was always my mother around me. O yes; My father was a very good parent also. I am quite sure he loved me a lot. We spent lots of time together on weekends but my education wasn't his first interest. He took his job very seriously. He worked very hard all week long, six days. Everybody in those days worked six days and there used to be overtime for extra hours. So rest and quiet on Sundays ment a lot to my father.

As the second semester progressed I improved my grades and attitude and our whole family in Cracow knew all about it.

A must and important subject in all Polish public school was religion. In every school there was a priest on the faculty. In our school was father Stanisław Kendzior. A large and overpowering personality. He wasn't a loveable person as a priest should be. His students were afraid of him and gave him more respect and attention than their regular teacher.

Jewish religion classes took place on Sunday in a school designated by the district. All Jewish children from all over Cracow used to gather there every Sunday. Our teacher from grade one to four was one Mr. Helfgott. His name coincided with his profesion. He drank his tea with milk all morning long while teaching us the Jewish history, about the land of Canaan, Mode Ani, Shma Israel, a little of Hebrew and other bible stories. Our parents dictated to him our grades, so no wonder that all Jewish kids had "Very Good" from religion on their report cards.

My first grade class was rather large. Thirty or forty boys attended and most of us reamined together throughout the next four years. Out of those 40 boys five of us were Jewish. We used to stick together and have been good friends long after all those years in Santa Barbara. Only one of us a boy named Klinger kept most of the time to himself. He never made it to gimnazium and went through the seven mandatory years of elementary school. Others were Ludwik Marmur a very able boy whose father was a cousin to our good friends the Marmurs from Jasło. Only in those days I didn't know nothing about it. Another fine young man and good student was Alfred Blonder. His mother was a widow and a German nanny took care of him. I guess my best friend was Yurek Schoenberg. He also was a good student and used to live nearby. His parents owned two large textile stores in Cracow. His father passed away in Soviet Union during the war. I saw his mother in Cracow after the war. Yurek was one of the lucky Jews who served as an officer in Polish army in Soviet Union. Later he became a designer of heavy bridges. He settled in Paris after the war but lately planed to return to Poland with his six years old son a product of a split marriage.

In fourth grade we had another addition to our Jewish group. His name was also Yurek. The family name Fussman. Before entering fourth grade this Yurek had a private tuitor at home. He joined our class after passing all the necessary tests. Fussmans were very rich, they used to owned barges transporting coal on rivers from Silesia to Baltic Sea.

The detailed description of my Jewish friends doesn't mean they were my only friends. I also had many gentile friends in school and elsewhere. During the four years in Santa Barbara my best friend was one Leszek Matusiak. A very nice boy from a nice family. We never met his father but his mother was a fine lady. Although Mrs. Matusiak never said it but my mother was convinced that she was Jewish converted to Catholicism. Most boys in my class were from poor families. The needy ones were allowed in summertime to come to school barefoot. On other hand some of those Polish boys were from wealthy merchant families. They used to be raised by nannies and their parents were involved in economic and political lives in Cracow.

During Christmas time we had two weeks of winter vacations but our semester ended January 31 with 3 days recess from school. The Christmas season in Poland always began on December 6th with St. Nicolaus Holiday. Dressed all up like Pope St. Nicolaus used to come to school with small bags of all kind of goodies. Nobody was excluded Catholics and Jews all got the gifts. Shortly after St. Nicolaus day carroling season began. Carrolers dressed up as angels, devils, shepherds, wise men or Joseph and Mary used to come to homes singing Christmas songs and asking around if boys like us have been good all year around. If we deserved a present or to be punished.

I remember an occasion when a group of carrolers once visited Drozdze's home. My friends Mietek and Yurek stood in the corner of the room scared to death mostly of the devil. Couple of days before Christmas there also was time for good wishes, presents and bonuses for working people. I remember very well my mother asking father if he got anything from his boss.

This was also a time when my mother and I visited the home of my teacher Miss Janina Chencinski., and presenting her with a nice usefull gift. It was an ordeal for me mostly ~~before~~ BECAUSE I was forced to kiss Miss Chencinski's hand.

The New Years Eve day or night for this matter was called in Poland Saint Sylvester Day. As nowaday all bars, cafes, restaurants and other entertainment establishments were open and most everybody was out to greet the New Year.

The second semester went by fast. I improved my grades and when summer came I was looking forward for my first vacations. Still I and some others of my schoolmates had to pass one more hurdle. The name days of Miss. Chencinski and our principal Mr. Piotr Jarosz always came before the end of the school year. So as during Christmas time again we had to go through the same ritual of congratulating them, say a poem in their honor and ofcourse kiss them on their hands. Believe or NOT but we repeated this comedy all four years in Santa Barbara.

For our vacations my mother rented a small cottage in a village about two hours train ride from Cracow. The train took us to a small town of Sucha, a very important crossing on the way to Tatra Mountains. Along this route use to be countless villages and resorts like Makow, Zawoya, Rabka and Zakopane which was the end of the line. This resort lies at the foot of Tatra Mountains. It was and still is famous not only for summer vacations but also for all kinds of winter sports. Zakopane and all those other places mentioned above used to be favored vacation spots for Jewish population of Cracow.

Stryszawa was the name of the village where our cottage was located. To our surprise the Frenkiel family our friends from Cracow were already there. They had couple of rooms in a roadhouse which belonged to a Jewish family who used to live there for many generations. They had a small store there selling flour, bread, rolls and soda pop.

Their house was located on the corner of the country roag and the main highway going south to the deepest part of Poland where the Vistula River originated and where in a resort by the same name Polish presidents spent their vacations in a ancient beautiful palace.

About half a mile further on the same highway another Jewish family had a store and an old house. They also lived there for many generations. Weissman was their name. Father, mother and a son with his wife. They were doing rather well. A rather large store in many miles, like a general store. Peasants from all over used to buy there. I was always fascinated with the variety of their merchandise mostly with long whips peasants used on their horses. As a child I always dreamed about one like that. The family Weissman also operated a village tavern full p of drinking peasants mostly on Sundays.

Parallel to highway a railroad ran from Sucha to Zywiec a small town but important as one of the center of Polish beer industry. Next to the tracks flowed a mountain river Skawa which farther near Zywiec falls into Vistula River. A small stream used to flow through Stryszawa protected by a small dam in case of flooding. This stream joined Skawa under nearby railroad bridge.

From the highway the small country road took us to our cottage, about half a mile away. It was a nice place just few steps away from the stream. In the back of the cottage there was a large shadowy back yard with a barn in the far corner. The owner of the cottage had few heads of cattle and few acres of land on which they grew wheat, rye and vegetables. People who lived there bilt their homes along this small country road. Most of them were related to each other, BUT their relationship didn't stop them from constant feuding, arguing all the time about the ownership of their lands and the right of way. They all been devouted Catholics and church and the local priest ment to them everything. In case of illness they didn't even bother to call a doctor. The priest was also their doctor.

There was this one family with their house on the top of the hill which wasn't related to the rest of the population, and they were better off then the others. They had thir land, operated a small bea farm and the man of the family also had a job with Polish railroads. I had good times with their sons who were my age. Besides playing I spent many days with them and their cattle at the grazing pastures. There was also living there another family who considered themselves as something better from the rest. They didn't own any land or cattle but were in process of constructing a modern house. They had two daughters and used rent the finished part of the house to vacationers. The husband had a job in the city.

We all had fun in this village. In the matter of facts we spent our vacations there for three consecutive years. Our house was always full of guests. The family from Cracow used to travel back and forth even aunt Lora from Vienna and Fritz came to visit with us. My father used to come on weekends and stuffed himself with all kinds of goodies mostly with strawberries who didn't agree with his stomach. Anytime AFTER he ate them he was sick and spent days in bed back in Cracow staying home alone. GOT

We met a young lady in Stryszawa who acctually lived with her family in Sucha. This family was very religious and operated some kind of a store in Sucha. My mother liked this young woman very much and they became friendly, until on one occasion my mother found out that THIS person recupareted in Stryszawa after spending few years in prison for communist activities. Their friendship stoped right there.

Many times we spent our days swimming in Skawa. The attraction was to watch the country maidens who with aprons covered their fronts but left bare their behinds.

When uncle Gabriel was with us things were really jumping. He kept us all laughing. He always knew how and when to inject a touch of humor into our lives. Farmhands used to love him for his humor. Their favored time was when uncle Gabriel bought many loafs of bread and organized a bread eating contest. All those boys came from all over the area and kept eating this bread until they almost burst. But at the end the winner always got a nice prize from uncle Gabriel.

Our last vacation in Stryszawa was after I passed to 4th grade. On that occasion we had the Reisberg family with us. As always we had a very good time playing, eating, enjoying the fresh air. We also took part in harvesting and all the fun after the end of the harvesting season.

Quite few years later when I was already in gimnazium we came to Stryszawa again. With us then was my cousin Saul who recupareted then after a prolonged illness.

While in Stryszawa we used to travel to Sucha on market days. Those days always took place on Tuesdays and Fridays. Pedlers from all over used to put up their stands on the Market Place and sold their goods to peasants who in turn tried very hard to sell their poultry and produce. Most pedlers were Jewish and all of them used all kind of tricks to sell their merchandise. Once my father and I have been standing there and eating our ice cream, and there was this pedler desperately trying to sell a hat to this peasant. But this farmer wasn't sure. To buy or not to buy. In his last effort the pedler pulled a hat from under the table and said to the peasant. Now see this ~~this~~, the hat I hold is 'Czeskie Tinoyfes' which translated to English means "S....t from Czechoslovakia". While saying this the pedler turned to me and my father and smiled broadly. By then he knew that the peasant will buy the hat. He also knew that father and I were Jewish.

One year a Polish family from Cracow vacationed in Stryszawa. They had a boy my age and our relations with them were good. Until!

The young farmhands of Stryszawa used to have one great hobby. So they said. In summertime they hunted for squirrels. They had their ways to go after them. And when they cought one they killed it and after cleaning the small animal out they stuffed it. They sold one of those stuffed squirrels to us. You even can't imagene how happy I was having one of them. I used to ran all around the village to show it off. Finally I ran into this Polish boy from Cracow. I scared all the guts out of him. He yelled, cried. In one word he became histerical. When his mother saw us she grabed my priceless possession and trew it away. Well after this development it was my turn to get histerical. I came home and kept yelling at my mother " my squirrel, my squirrel" but she didn't know what I was talking about. At last some peasants came around and explained to her what happened. Later somebody found the squirrel and brought back to me. since then I never played with this boy again. Back in Cracow the squirrel always had a prominent place in our apartment for many years to come.

The scenery all over Stryszawa was beautiful. There were those gentle hills and green forests with blueberries, blackberries, strawberries and raspberries. Local children used to pick them and later sold them to us by glasses for 10 groshen per glass. In the backyards tall fruit trees produced every summer apples, pears, plums and cherries.

But during rainstorms and thunderstorms it wasn't so nice. Those storms used to be ~~xixxx~~ viscious and the echos of thunders made them real scary. There was the time when farmer's wife used to bring the cross and picture of Jesus Christ and placed them in the window. She was convinced that this ritual helped to stop the force of the storm. Once even the local stream went over the dam, but kept far enough from our cottage.

Chapter 32 (cont)

Santa Barbara School!

Well my first fulltime vacation came to an end. After two months of play and fun there was time again to go back to school.

I think second grade for me was the year of maturing. First time in my life I started to realize that play wasn't everything and that attending school was a must. With my new attitude and my mothers help I went on doing better all the time. My good grades gave also my teacher an idea to choose me to say some patriotic poems on the occasion of Polish national holidays. Ofcourse this development pleased my mother very much and I was stuck with this role for the duration in Santa Barbara.

During my years in Santa Barbara I also learned alot about the history of Cracow and its vicinity. Throughout the years we had many outings visiting famous places, museums, churches, palaces and homes of famous people, and old narrow streets where history was evident every step. We saw the burial places of Polish kings in Wawel Cathedral, their magnificent treasury, and ofcourse the "dragon-monster's" cave where he used to hide before Krak managed to destroy him. On warm spring days we traveled out of the city to see pyramids of Krak, Wanda and Kosciuszko. In years ahead we saw more old places and ancient monasteries outside of Cracow.. One very interesting was the monastery of Sisters Norbertans right on a cliff on the banks of Vistula River. After the war the poor sisters have been forced by communist authorities to disband and vacate the place. A story was circulating around Cracow that they saved lives of many Jewish children. As the story continues those kids have been to small to remember anything about Judaism, so the Holly Sisters raised them as Christians. After the war they never returned to Judaism again.

There was also in those days a small place called Bielany where in old monastery an order of Holly Brothers used to live. They prayed and worked all the time producing cheese like brothers Trapists in Switzerland. They didn't talk to each other all year around except on one designated day. On regular days when they used to pass each other they had been allowed to say one Latin sentence "Memento Mori", remember of death. Thousands of visitors used to come to visit them on this designated holiday and those brothers talked their hearts out on this day. But the bigest and most interesting show put up the hundreds of beggars with their screams, showing off their self inflicted wounds and begging for money.

When I was in third grade my mother hired my first Hebrew teacher. From then on I had many Hebrew teachers, not all the time but depending on my mother's mood.

My other bad habit was as a young boy that I was terrified to attend theater plays. My biggest flap was I think when I was in second grade. Our whole school went to a theater to attend a play based on the book "Fire and Sword" by the greatest Polish writer Henrik Sienkiewicz. Among other things there was lots of fighting between the knights , and for some reason I was assigned to a choice orchestra seat. I was horrified watching this play. I offered to few boys to exchange my seat for theirs, but not such luck. They only laughed at me and knew right away how scared I was. I thought this fighting was for real and I couldn't stand it anymore. I walked out during the first intermission and went home. My friends never forgot this incident and kid me about it for many years to come.

My best year in Santa Barbara was in fourth grade. I felt real good then and more sure of myself. I knew my next step will be gimnazium, I took this challenge very seriously.

Chapter 32 (cont)

Santa Barbara School!

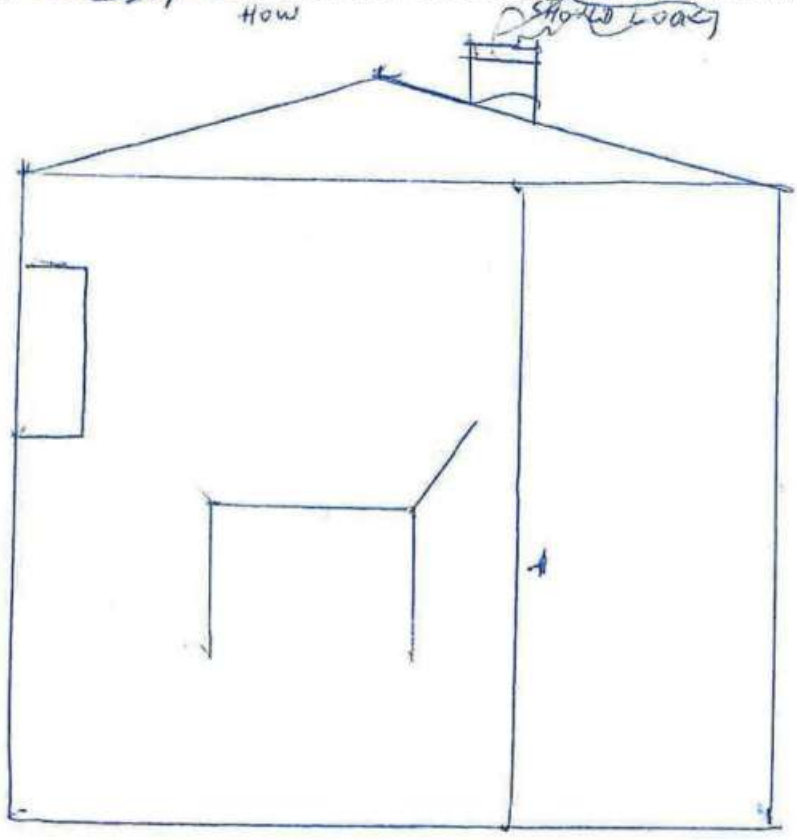
During the late fall of 1929 there wa a big celebration in our family. Aunt Rose and uncle Ludwik celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary. All our relatives and friends came from all over to honor them on this very important occasion.

Everybody was there, except me ofcourse, because my mother had this idea that the reception will take all night and I will miss my precious sleep. I was forced to stay home with our new maid who replaced our unforgetable Genia. I even don't remember her name. She was of German ancestry and hardly could speak Polish. Besides all that shortly before somehow she burned her face and her head and face were all wraped in bandages. I was scared just looking at her. As it turned out later my mother was all wrong. Kids from all the family came to uncle Ludwik's reception. Special beds had been ready for them in case somebody wanted to take a nap.

This new maid left us soon after she recovered from her burns. This was our last regular maid. Later after we moved to our new apartment we used to have a cleaning lady who kept coming to our house twice a week to do our cleaning and washing.

In September of 1930 I entered 4th grade. My change in attitude about school and learning was tremendous since my days in first grade. I came a long way from that time when playing was my first priority. Ofcourse that didn't mean that I abandoned playing completly. My close friends and I still had lots of fun together, but my thinking was different.

Here I would like to give you an example how my thoughts worked when I was a first grader. I will never forget this day as long as I live. It was Monday morning and our teacher Miss Chencinski wanted us to draw a picture of something we did on Sunday. Well: I told her that I went with my parents to see a movie, which wasn't necessary true. So Mrs Chencinski told me to draw what I saw. I am not going to explain to you what I drew. The picture below should be explanatory by itself. In my mind this was the way ~~this was the~~ cinema building with a chimney, screen and a chair.



Chapter 32 (cont)

Santa Barbara School!

My first confrontation with a deadd human body came at this stage of my life also. A caretaker of the building ~~XXXXXXX~~ next to ours Mr. Cora passed away. According to Christian tradition his body was laying in state while friends and relatives used to pay their respects in the apartment. Ofcourse my friends Mietek ans Jurek and I were among the first to view the body. The whole seen made a tremendous impression on me. I couldn't get over the thought how well and alive this man appeared in his death all dressed up in his best clothes and surrounded by all those flowers. I haven't been scared at all but in time to come anytime I played late in the evening in my friends apartment they never failed to scare me when I was returning home. Carefully I looked around the darkened hall if Mr. Cora wasn't there to get me.

I kept learning hard in forth grade. This was my last year of elementary school and as the oldest grade in school we finally moved to the regular 4th grade classroom. This was very important to us because being in this room we felt superior to all the other kids in achool. Besides that this classroom also served as school auditorium and all important school activities took place there.

As in previous years my mother took an active part in my school life. As always she managed to get herself elected to some committee. The fourth year was the year when Santa Barbara had been awarded a new school banner. There was a large reception for parents on this occasion and ofcourse my mother was ~~was~~ in the middle of all of it. She donated beautiful pastry. There was a mass celebrated in church named after Santa Barbara as our school. All attending parents who ~~xx~~ donated had the privilege to nail a small golden logo with their names engraved on the handle of the banner.

Most schools elementary ofcourse in Cracow district didn't have any phisical education because of lack of proper facilities. The closest we came to phisical education was every day a five minutes brakes for stretching out between our tables. We even had a phisical education teacher, but instead of playing and excersicing she used to give us extra lessons in Polish grammar. Once when one of the boys had enough nerve to ask her about it, she told him that it was indeed ~~xx~~ phisical education of the tongue.

Besides our relatives many of my mother's ladies friends used to be very much interested in my education. I still can remember this hot red-headed woman who used to hug me so much that I finally started to hate her for it. Others were those three Sochaczewski sisters always giving me lots of advise. The Sochaczewski sisters are worthed to be mention here because of the treatment as many other wealthy Jews got from the Polish government after world war one. This very orthodox family used to own a small town near Warsaw called Sochaczew for many generations. Ofcourse they were rich and prospered together with their town but they lost everything when the new Polish government took it away from them despite their rights guaranted to them by Polish Constitution. One of those sisters later married a Catholic. Her parents never found out about it. News like that would kill them.

My Jewish friends and I went through many adventures while in Santa Barbara. None of them were of anti-Semitic nature. Only once we went through a very humiliating experience. While our class had their Catholic religion hour us Jewish boys had been fooling around the school. The principal Mr. Jarosz who also taught third grade suggested that we spent this hour with his class. Having no other choise we ~~xxxxxx~~ complied. Yet when Mr. Jarosz was called away we disobeyed his wishes and left the classroom. For this infraction Mr. Jarosz gave us a public spanking. With all those kids ~~xx~~ standing around yelling from pleasure like dam fools after the school each of us had to lay down on a bench and take the licking. An experience I still see vividly in my dreams.

As the time was nearing for me to start my studies to be tested for entrance to gimnazium, my mother still was trying to find a way for me to be accepted.

Just about that time a young Jewish religious boy from Tarnobrzeg came to see us. He came to study in Cracow's Hebrew Academy and aunt Janette from Tarnobrzeg recommended him to us very highly. This young man knew Hebrew very good so my mother hired him immediatly. He also supposed to help me with my studies for entrance examinations to gimnazium.

Even before that my mother wrote a letter to aunt Janette in Tarnobrzeg asking her if her husband profesor Joseph Nussbaum don't have any important conections in Cracow's school system, who can help us to get me accepted to gimnazium. As it turned out the luck was with us. Former very good friend of uncle Joseph's who few years before was also teaching in Tarnobrzeg was at that time the principal of Saint Jacek gimnazium in Cracow. After my uncle Joseph wrote a letter to profesor Kidrynski (that was his name) my mother went to see him at his home. After a short talk profesor Kidrynski gave my mother a letter to one profesoer Tadeusz Szantroch at Sobieski gimnazium. He taught then Polish literature and was also known for his beautiful poetry very popular in Poland. Without any problem profesor Szantroch quickly arranged for me for entrance exam to Sobieski gimnazium.

Anyway at that time little I imagened how many problems would I have in the future with this profesor Szantroch.

During the German occupation profesor Szantroch was arrested for his patriotic poems and later executed.

For almost half a year I studied hard for my entrance exam to Sobieski gimnazium. The young man from Tarnobrzeg wasn't good enough so my mother hired a lady tuitor who was driving me nuts. The fourth grade in Santa Barbara was the best I ever made. Because my examination to gimnazium was scheduled for June 1st I got my report card early. Seeing my grades I realized finally that I came a long way since first grade. It made me feel great when I saw all those "very goods" except one "good" from math. I still was convinced that I didn't need that lady tuitor. Our money helped her to pay for her studies at the Jagiellonian University.

I was pleasantly surprised to be with the first group of so-called advanced students to be tested for the education in gimnazium. Some other friends of mine had to wait until June 15 or even until the end of June. It was always good to know somebody with influence in right places.

On June 1st my mother and I arrived at Sobieski gimnazium at 8 o'clock in the morning. First I registered and then my mother paid the first entrance fee. Many other fees followed. The tests weren't hard at all. There was an easy math problem to solve. The most attention was directed at Polish language; gramar and literature. We have been tested in spelling, writing and ability to read. I passed the test with grade "2" meaning good. About an hour later I was declared a full pledged student of Sobieski gimnazium.

Sobieski gimnazium had two departments of education. One was classical which prepared students for later studies in ancient history and those who planed to study medicine. Latin was the main subject from the begining. They also taught Greek from 4th to 8th grade. The other department was humanistic (liberal arts). Latin from 4th grade and no Greek at all. Profesor Krajewski who was the head of the examining commission highly recommended the classical department so most of the students registered there. Little did we realized that all this will change with the begining of the new school year. I was very happy to have all this behind me. Before leaving for home we recived instructions to report to school next September 3rd.

Chapter 32 (cont)

Santa Barbara School!

My mother and my father and the rest of the family were proud about my accomplishment and happy for me also. The same afternoon after I completed all my tests I went to a cap store and finally bought myself my own four corners navy blue cap the one I always wanted since I was a little boy. Ofcourse the big difference from other cap was that my new one had a green braid around it, which was the official color of Sobieski gimnazium and large gold "G" pined to the front corner.

Next morning I still went to my old fourth grade at Santa Barbara to finish the last 3 weeks of my school year even thou I had already my report card. I entered my room proudly with my new cap on. But as soon I was in I had to removed from my head. I was the first one there who had all those examination behind me. Others boys ready for gimnazium were scheduled to face them later. My teacher of the last four years Miss Chencinski was happy also when I told her that I passed all the tests with "2" marks which ment "good".

The last few weeks in Santa Barbara went quick by. Still before the end of the school year for the last time we gave presents to Miss Chencinski and Mr. Jarosz for their birthdays and for the last time we said our poems in their honor and kissed their hands.

I said good-by to other kids. Many of them I saw the last time in my life. But with some of them I remained on friendly terms for many years to come. As for my teachers I didn't see them either except once or twice passing by on streets of Cracow.

After two years Santa Barbara have been closed officially after Poland overhauled her entire school system.

For our family those were the last two months in our apartment on Krupnicza street. That year we spent our vacations in Cracow not only because of the gimnazium fever but because we expected anytime a notice from my father's union that we had been accepted as tenants in the new complex the union built.

In meantime many of my friends left town for summer, among them my neighbours and best friends the Drozdz boys who always visited their grandmother in a nearby village. The Drozdz family used to be our good friends for many years. Strict Catholics and parents. They used to punish their kids for wrong doings by making them kneel on hard beens. Once when my father didn't return from work for whole night and couldn't notify us because we didn't have a phone my mother went to look for him, so Mrs. Drozdz took me in to spent the night with them. We always spent important holidays as their guests eating lavish real Polish food. During gatherings like that us kids used to put up a play about Christmas. We played shepherds bringing gifts to baby Jesus. I never will forget the time all those Poles laughing when I said that I brought diapers for the baby in case it will need to pee.

Many customers used to come to Mr. Drozdz's shoe shop. Always people liked to stop and chat for a while. Once when my mother was there a Polish man had a conversation with a Jewish man. After the Jewish man left the Pole said to Mr. Drozdz: "You know that man was a Jew but a good man". Mr. Drozdz felt embarased and later apologized to my mother for his behavior. It was real sad to part with this family after we left Krupnicza street. Mr. Drozdz died during the war. I don't know what happened to the rest of the family.

Chapter 33

Last Reminisce About Krupnicza Street!

As far as my father was concerned everything around him was somehow wrong or bad. His favored word was "weak". This word always expressed his feelings about the general situation around him. People who knew him knew in adwance his answer to "How are you". His comment in Polish language was "Slabo jest" which translated to English means "weak".

He was a devoted worker and the owners of the company respected him for it. After the depresion when the firm re-opened, they moved to a new location on Florianska street. The building was standing next to the Florian gate and Barbikan the last remaining walls of the old Cracow. As a rule people of Poland didn't work on Sundays but in my father's case many emergences connected with imports and expoets took place on Sundays so my father was forced to go to work. On many of those Sundays my father used to take me with him. It was a real fun for me watching him supervise those transfers and to ride on the top of those large wagens next to the driver. Later I had something to brag about to my friends.

When he wasn't busy on Sunday mornings we used to go for walks together. During those walks and outings I watched him to do some things but then they didn't mean to much to me. Some years later when I was older and wiser I was puzzled by my fathers actions.

It was a custom in those days in Polish school system to come to school on Sunday morning so all studends could go to church together. Once my father and I returning home from a walk passed the whole body Of Henryk Sienkiewicz gimnazium which was also on Krupnicza street not far from our house. All students stood outside the school listening to their band playing Polish National Athem. We passed by in a hurry but still I couldn't help to hear voices yelling at us: "Stop you Jews. Take off your hats". It didn't mean nothing to me then as I said before, but later I realized that we should have stop then, take off our hats and honor the flag. Until today when sometimes I think about this incident I can't figure it out why we didn't stop then.

On another occasion we went to our Temple on Rosh-Hashanah and they wouldn't let us in because I didn't wear a cap. Ofcourse we went back home. And again many years later I couldn't figure it out how come he took me to synagogue without a cap but remember to wear his own hat.

Going to synagogue in those days was an adventure by itself. Our Temple was beautiful. The congregation was considered reform, but by todays American standarts it was closer to Orthodox. Ladies used to pray on balconies. We used to have two Rabbi's, cantors and choir with an organ. You could see all those rich and important Jews coming to services dressed up in tuxedos and top hats. Their wifes also dressed in their best showing off gold and diamonds. They all used to come in cars or carriages. We were there of the courtesy of uncle Ludwik, who always made sure that we have our tickets. All this ofcourse without knoledge of aunt Rose.

I will never forget the time. I was already in gimnazium, and uncle Ludwik gave me our tickets to take home, but a girl I knew convinced me that I should give the tickets to her. Later I hated myself for what I did after I told uncle Ludwik and my parents that I lost those tickets. Ofcourse we got another set from uncle Ludwik.

There were many synagogues in old Cracow. Hundreds of them used to be so-called "Stiebel Synagogues" set up in apartments or in small rooms anyplace in Jewish Cracow. Ofcourse there were synagogues from 14th and 15th centuries designated as historical objects. There used to be also some modern days synagogues like Deiches and Tigner places of worships. Deiches was for Orthodox Jews and Tigner for less religious people. The Tigner family who maintained this synagogue in their own apartment building was extrimly rich furrier family. Once I was there with friends on Symchas Torah. They gave me the Torah to carry despite objections of shamus's son.

Speaking of Mr. Tigner many years later during the war I saw him in Soviet Union in Bukhara, skinny, hungry and all in rags and sick. Yet he was lucky. His wife who by some miracle made it to United States found him and sent to him the much needed help.

Now going back to my childhood years on Krupnicza street I still could see in front of me the nice little old lady standing in the window of her first floor apartment. All us kids used to call her "Babcia" which means "Grandma". Babcia shared her very nice apartment with her family. She was very nice to all the kids from the neighbourhood. She always gave us presents and sweets. But all those good times ended abruptly when once one of us came up with an idea to visit Babcia in her room by claiming through the window. Everything would be fine if we only knew that a bucket full of water was standing under the window. Ofcourse the first boy jumped straight into the bucket and spilled the water all over the room. And that was the way how our friendship with Babcia came to an end. As far as I can remember she passed away not to long after the above incident.

Thinking about those days on Krupnicza street put me in a reminiacent mood not only about my old friends but mostly about my dear mother. She always was a very good wife to my father but even better mother. She gave us both a tender loving care. She always made sure that we were well dressed and feed. Thanks to her we had everything we needed. Our clothing was custom made and we always looked not like people from an one room apartment but like people who were much better off. Our small apartment not only had nice furniture but thanks to mother was very nice decorated as well.

As other families of the same standing we lived mostly on a prearanged income. My mothers allowance was between 3 to 4 Zlotys per day. It wasn't to bad because Poland's currency at that time was good and prices not to high. The only problem was on weekends when my mother was trying to explain to father that an extra day (Sunday) was coming, so she needed extra money. I am quite sure that she saved some money from her allowance.

I remember many times when a "Mayvin" used to come from time to time to our house. Mayvin was a Jewish man mostly a religious one who needed some easy income because most of the time he was studying Torah. This mayvin tried to take us on a tour of some clothing stores in the Jewish district. If the store owner made a sale this mayvin got his commission on our account because we had to pay a highier price. Once or twice my mother went for it because she wanted to help this poor man. That what she thought about him. Who knows maybe he had more money then we did.

We also had very good doctors taking good care on our health. All working people in Poland had free health care. Something what doctors in America call socialized medicine.

After our last maid left we hired a cleaning lady an old maid who spent most of her time in church. The other lady who used to do our washing was also a devout Catholic. To wash your clothing in those days was a big affair, and always took 2 to 3 days to do the job. This woman wasn't very old but she sure looked very old. Her dearly departed husband was called Yan so we called her Yanova. She had a daughter whose name was Yanka. She was raised in church and was a beautiful girl. Yanova worked hard not only for us but many other people around Cracow. She had a very good sense of humor and kept telling us many interesting stories from old Cracow and about people for whom she worked. Many of them used to be leading citiziens of Cracow. One of them was Profesor Oswiemcinski my math profesor from Sobieski gimnazium.

Chapter 33 (cont)

Last Reminisce About Krupnicza Street!

Yanova was working for us until we left Cracow in September 1939. She have done for us many other things besides washing anytime we needed her. We paid her not only with money but also gave her food and clothing.

Our cleaning lady's name was Zofia. She also was with us for many years always telling to mothers the stories from church and what her priest said in his sermon on Sundays.

[redacted]

Mrs. Glovacki a peasant women from a village near Cracow delivered our milk as long as I could remember. Every second day, no matter rain or shine or snow at 6 pm she was in our house with a good fresh milk and other dairy products straight from a cow.

Another of many incidents still sticks in my mind. When I was maybe five years old or even younger during a cold winter night a chip of white dry paint fell from the ceiling and found its way into may good eye. I woke up with a terrific pain. So in the middle of night my parents carried me to Dr. Rosenhauch who once again maybe saved my sight.

Besides my friends my close friends about whom I wrote already there had been others. In a matters of facts it would be hard to write about all of them. Yet I would like to mention couple of families whose fates remained in my mind until my adulthood. Even nowaday I can't help to think about them sometimes especially during sleepless nights.

There was this family Kasiarski. Their small apartment was on the top floor of the building next to ours. They used to be young good looking couple. He had a job with Cracow's Main Medical Center. She was a housewife. They had two sons; Bohdan and Eugene. I liked very much to play with them because they had many beautiful toys. Later the Kasiarskis moved to the same complex with us. And it was there where their bad luck began. Mrs. Kasiarski passed away shortly after the move and Mr. Kasiarski followed her soon after. Their children went to live with their grandparents.

The other family was the Boland family. I met them while playing on Planty. Mr. Boland already then was an older man retaired from the Treasury Department. He was a widower with two children; Jerzyk and Irena. They were Jewish but non belivers. Mr. Boland remaried and his second wife was a very good mother to his children.

Jerzyk was two years older then I and very smart. Both him and Irene used to be excellent students in schools they attended. And both used to be very skinny and toll as well which made them targets for very bad jokes. Jerzyk also attended The Sobieski gimnazium. When I was there in my first year he was already in third. Irena went to Queen Wanda gimnazium and was a good friend of my cousin Zosia Nussbaum. I still remember when I was six or seven years old their step-mother also passed away, but what I can't forget the most a bunch of us stupid kids making fun about death of their stepmother. Jerzyk and Irena gradueted with honors from their respective gimnazium and later studied at the Jagiellonian University. Jerzyk was a very good and recognized ping-pong player and represented Sobieski gimnazium in many inter-scholastic games.

During summer months Planty have been a center not only for kids to play and for adults to walk or sit on benches. Few times in summer orchestras of Postal or Railroad workers used to perform there playing popular and national songs to the enjoyment of young and old.

While reminiscing other memories come to mind. Not far away on Karmelicka street there was a small ice cream parlor owned by an orthodox Jew. His name was Samuel Samuel. Kids used to ask him which was his first name and which the family name.

Chapter 33 (cont)

Last Reminisce About Krupnicza Street!

Krupnicza street was a very old street. Its fame started when wealthy citiziens of Cracow hundreds of years ago when Cracow still was protected by high walls decided to build their summer mansions outside the walls of Cracow. And this was the beginning of Krupnicza atreet. The mansions probably still are standing there but their glory belonged to the past even while our family used to live there.

One of those old mansions always intrigued me. As a little boy I stood across the street watching the ornamental gates open many times and elegant carriages pulled by couple of horses with men and women in them leaving or entering the premises. In the background I could see a most beautiful garden with tables, benches and gazebos. A story circulated aroud Cracow that this mansion was a playground of the rich. When I was older I found out that the place came on bad times and it was converted to a bridge garden for not so rich.

At the opening of Krupnicza street near the Planty there were quite few places of entertainment. Places like Esplanade, The Pavilion, Bizantz Cafe, small theaters and cinemas served not only people from area but all Cracovians. In summertime sidewalk cafes with the background of Planty added much more charm to the neighbourhood. They used to serve there delicious food. Mostly on Saturdays and Sundays people spent there many hours in the afternoon chating and listening to music. Evenings patrons danced there to the tune of a first class dance band. Many times we dined there with uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose or uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala. As a little boy I could only watch all the excitment. Only short time before the war broke out I was able to participate.

I also had lots of fun when the Staniewski Brothers circus put up their tents on Błonie, not far away from Krupnicza street. They used to bring with them top international acts. But carnivals were another story. Their rides. booths and games also created lots of excitment but the so-called good families didn't allow their children to go there especially on Sundays, because of soldiers on leave and maids with their boyfriends who kept taking this place over on their day off.

So the life went on for us and our friends on Krupnicza street. For me this was a life without worries and problems ofcourse except when I was sick. A life dominated largely by my dear mother. As far as I was concerned she was a giant, and now looking back at those years I wouldn't have it any other way. When I passed the entrance exam to gimnazium and later when the time came to leave Krupnicza street I was very happy with the change but I didn't realize then that the days there were probably the happiest days of my life.

Now-a-days when I am unhappy when trouble knocks on our doors I like especially at night when I can't sleep to thing about those days. I see in front of my eyes the small apartment, Mr. Brinbram's grocery store and I could smell herrings pressed together in the large barrel in the corner of the store. I also dream about the office supply store where we used to buy school supplies. The Drozdz brothers also come to my mind kneeling on hard beens punished by their father for doing something wrong and my first experience at the soccer game explained to me by the same Mr. Drozdz. Krupnicza street a small haven for a little boy from a bygone era a long, long time ago.

Chapter 34

New Neighbourhood!

It was the summer of 1931. That was the begining of a new life for me. I realized then that most of the playing time was over for me and some serious business was ahead for me. The question was if I will be able to meet this challenge? Summertime was still ahead and I had two months of vacations to thing about my future while still enjoying myself.

As I already mentioned before that was the year we didn't leave the city because we expected a note from father's union notifying us that we have been accepted as new tenants in the new project. You could only imagene our happiness when the notice arrived.

This new project was located almost on outskirts of western Cracow in the district called Halfvillage. Constructed on a beautiful piece of Land with the view on Błonie from one side, the Henrik Jordan park on the other. To west on the horizon we could sie the dirt piramid in the middle of an old military fort of Tadeusz Kosciuszko. To the south there was Słoneczna street (Sunny Street). The project Was already the third one bilt by the union and consisted of three four story buildings with beautiful gardens and yards with benches separeting one building from the others. Few years later they added to this complex two more buildings. You already know that Adolf Bauer aunt Mala's brother was mainly responsible for us getting this new apartment. All apartments there were modern as possible for that era. Our apartment had one large room like a studio combined bedroom with dining room with a small kitchen and hall. It was very nice with venetian windows a door to our own balcony facing east.

Our new apartment was on fourth floor. Before moving we sold our old furniture and bought everything brand new. My mother had made a beautiful job decorating and furnishing the place. We recived lots of gifts from our relatives. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose gave us from their store a new grandfather clock. From Mr. Horowitz the husband of aunt Mala's sister who was an art dealer we got new pictures and brand new rugs and carpets from aunt Dina and uncle Salo from Gliniany. Aunt Mala and uncle Gabriel gave us new lamps and other electrical fixtures. A platform wagen from father's company moved all the rest of our stuff from Krupnicza street to our new household.

The complex have been located on the extention of Sunny Street. Our building number was 11A. Later they named the street Łowiecka street (Hunting street) but soon the city changed it to Julian Fałat street after a known Polish painter who resided in Cracow. We had our own storage place in the basement filed up mostly with coal and potatos. There was this old custom in Poland that coal and potatos had been kept in storage all year around.

South of Sunny Street there was this Pond Place. Long time ago three large ponds covered this whole area. When those ponds dried out city fathers converted it to a Pond Market Place. In modern times peasants used to come there every day to sell their produce and dairy products. Also local merchants had their stands there selling fruits and vegetables. The whole area and the Pond Place as well had been surrounded by hundreds of stores owned mostly by Jews. They all used to live there for many generations. They prayed in their small synagogues. To many, the area made an impression like a second Kasimir district, which really was the Halfvillage of Zwierzyniec.

My mother used to buy vegetables from a Jewish lady converted to Catholicizm. On many occasions when she wasn't busy she liked to speak Yiddish with my mother. She survived the war because of her Christian husband and kept selling her vegetables after the war at the same stand. When I saw her then it seemed that nothing changed. She was still there but all those pre-war Jewish stores were in Polish hands.

On a nearby street to Pond Place the rich Zimetbaums relatives of my aunt Rose owned a large grocery store. For awhile we used to be their customers, their son Arthur who survived the war was my friend and for the fun of it we called each other cousins.

Chapter 34 (cont)

New Neighbourhood!

While waiting for our new apartment to be completed on summer afternoons mostly on Sundays we used to check on the progress of the construction.

On one of those Sundays my mother told my father and me to go ahead and meet her later on Deptak near Blonie. After an hour or so I noticed my mother walking toward us from the oposite side of Deptak. I still don't know why, but this particular moment seeing my mother aproaching always sticks in my mind. Even now while typing I see her wearing a new light grey dress with a white small collar and cuffs and light grey new hat. I ran toward her feeling happiness and she in turn was standing there smiling happily at me.

On September 3rd 1931 early in the morning I left our apartment on Krupnicza street for the last time heading for my first day in Sobieski gimnazium. The same day twelve noon I came home to our new apartment on Julian Falat street.

Ofcourse there was no studying on the first day of school. All Catholic students attended the school mass and us Jews joined them later at the first assembly. We all listened to the welcoming speech by the acting principal profesor Szlamka. The new principal Director Wladyslaw Rutkowski arrived few days later. At the end of his speech profesor Szlamka made an announcement that there will be one more week vacations because the remodeling of the the building hasn't been completed. The message have been met with a loud approval of the student body. we all went home smiling to enjoy ourselves for one more week.

It didn't take us to long to settle in our new surroundings. Right from the start we made many new friends and got aquainted with our neighbours in our part of the complex. For many years Poles and Jews lived there like a one happy family. I never heard any anti-Semitic remarks from my friends except once from a boy who lived elsewhere but used to play with us all the time.

Younger kids who still attended primary schools studied in the nearby Henrik Jordan school. Girls had to walk further because their school was on the Pond Place.

There was a large group of us who attended different gimnaziums in many parts of the city. Every day we met on the corner of our street and marched together to a certain point near Jagiellonian University where we split in small groups heading in different directions. As the years went by and we got older girls joined us. Those were the days when our eyes started to look at girls from a different perspective. Few boys from my groups attended gimnaziums in an area close to Sobieski gimnazium. Three or four of us continued to Sobieski gimnazium which was located at the street by the same name honoring one of the better kings in Polish history. There was this little church on the way so the Catholic boys used to stop there every morning for a whort prayer. Us Jews waited for them. On very cold and snowy days we rode an electric tram.

I don't think that ~~threre~~ THERE have been any close friendships between families living on Falata street. But us young people kept rather close with each other. In summertime we congregated outside in winter when we didn't spent time iceskating we met in each others homes. Our most important sport was soccer. We had our own club sport and social as well and again when we got older girls joined us. Living in our section besides us were four other Jewish families; The Potoks, Ratz, Herzog and the Riegelhaupts. In other sections there were other Jewish families. We didn't know all of them but I could mention the Fluss family and the Broners. All of them had two or more children. And again us kids had been together untill September 1939 even thou some of those families moved from the complex earlier.

Saul Potok came to Sobieski gimnazium one year later and joined me there in second grade. He got there thanks to the very smart Boland family about which I already wrote. Mr. Potok was a widower who remarried and had also a daughter Rena with his second wife.

New Neighbourhood!

Mr. Potok was a veteran of Pilsudskis Legions and fought for Poland's independence in world war one. He was a representative of the Singer Sewing Machines Company. When later he lost his job with them he took a job with the rich Fussman family whose son came to Santa Barbara school in fourth grade and later also studied with me at Sobieski gimnazium. The Fussman transported coal on barges on Vistula River from coal mines in Silesia to the Baltic Sea. Mr. Potok who supervised those transports often during summer vacations took their children Saul and Rena with him so they could enjoy the beautiful scenery along Vistula all the way from south to the north of Poland with stops in many cities including Warsaw.

The Potok family was rather friendly with the Ratz family. Anytime of the day or evening you could find Mrs. Potok in Ratz's apartment. Other people always wondered when she was doing her housework. Mr. & Mrs. Ratz had three children. Two boys Alexander and Arthur and a much younger girl Stefa who was a good friend with Rena Potok.. Mr. Ratz was a member of a wealthy family who owned the very known all over Europe Kohinor pencil factory. He used to work for them in Cracow but was very ill with asthma. Many nights when his family went for summer vacations I slept with him in case he would experience an asthma atack. Thanks God nothing happened while I was there. Mrs. Ratz came from a small summer resort at the foot of Beskidy Mountains in southern Poland. Her family owned there a small store, hotel and restaurant. Many people from Cracow used to spent vacations there. The name of the place was Rytro, very close to famous places like Krynica or Muszyna. When I was eleven years old I spent my vacations there in a camp called "Hope".

Alexander Ratz after four years in Sienkiewicz gimnazium because of not so good grades finally transfered to Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Industrial School. His brother Arthur followed him there. Sister Stefa grew up to be very nice girl. I am quite sure that they all perished in holocast. Saul Potok survived the war. He was one of the first members of Polish citizien police which took over Cracow after Germans were forced out by the Soviet Army.

The other two Jewish families were the Herzogs and Riegelhaupts. Mr. Herzog was a traveling salesman. Mrs. Herzog was a firely Jewish-Hungarian woman, with a great temperament. They had four children; Three boys and a girl Fela. They all used to be average kids but their mother with her braging always made something special of them. Their oldest Hesiek was then already to old to associate with us kids. Simon tried to play a smart alec from time to time. The youngest was Nathan with whom quite few years later I reunited in the Hewbrew Commercial Lyceum. Fela was quite popular among the boys.

The Riegelhaupt family came from Tuchów. Little I knew then that Mr. Riegelhaupt was a brother to Ida Lehr the best friend of grandma Frances. Lazar Riegelhaupt was a successful bookkeeper for few large companies in Cracow. Strickly speaking Riegelhaupts came from a very small town not far from Tuchów Bogoniowice Ciężkowice.. The old man Riegelhaupt had a small store there and his daughters were the most beautiful girls in town not only among Jews but Poles as well. Polish and Jewish boys couldn't take off their eyes of them including the local noble man. When the papa Riegelhaupt saw all that through the window of his store he perspired heavily and used to fan his face with his yarmulka. Well the Riegelhaupt from Cracow wasn't that much good looking but his wife Rifka was a good looking lady even thou they both had their hips one shorter then the other. They had two children ; Son Moniek and daughter Lusia who still then was a little girl. Monek attended the Hebrew industrial school.

Also on Falat street was this other Fluss family. Also Jewish with two sons. The older Eddie was a terrific cry baby. Once after I came home from a summer camp my mother told me that Eddie broke his leg and accused me for doing it to him during our last soccer game before I went away to the camp.

Chapter 35

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

As scheduled because of repairs the school year at Sobieski gimnazium began on September 10 1931. The Sobieski gimnazium building was very old, three story high and rather long with a large gate which opened every weekday at 7.30 pm. At 8 pm the gate closed. The small side door also closed at that time and only authorized caretaker in a special uniform could open it or close it. Ofcourse profesors and guests could come and leave anytime but not students. A student always was required to explain his tardiness or absence with a note either from parents or in case of sickness with a note from a doctor. To leave the school during school hours was only possible with a note to the gate attendant from a profesor or from the school doctor or because of an urgent message from student's parents to the school office.

On this first day we recived our classrooms assignments. This room was our only room for the rest of the school year. Our profesors used to come to us to our room, and one of those profesors was so-called master of the class. His functions besides teaching used to be the same as the home room's teacher's by American standarts.

In those days a student needed to spent eight years in gimnazium before he could graduate. To graduate ment to mature. That why we called graduation "Matura".

Each class in our gimnazium had two rooms; "A and B". The A ment classical department, the B ment humanistic department (liberal arts).

As per arrangements made by my mother after my entrance exam I was assigned to 1A grade, but because the classical department was overcrowded I was transfered to 1B and with me many other students. At first I wasn't to happy about this change but later it worked out to my advantage. In classical department they taught latin right away in first grade. This department was good for kids who planed to study later medicine, pharmacy or become profesors of latin, greek, archeology or ancient history. In humanistic department latin didn't start before 4th grade.

From my old friends in Santa Barbara only Alfred Blonder came with me to Sobieski gimnazium but he reamined in classical department. As it turned out later he became one of the top students there. The other student who came with me from Santa Barbara was was Jurek Fussman the kid with the German nanny who started going to school in fourth grade. He also was transfered to 1B.

On our first day our class master told us about the school regulations, and about the code of conduct which was very strict. We were also told that after certain time we all are required to wear gimnazium students uniforms which many kids couldn't effort. An uniform consisted of a grey jacket like an army coat buttoned up the chin. Slacks used to be the knicker type. Long slacks could be worn but nobody wore them. I guess knickers were chiper. Epaulets were mandatory on both shoulders showing a braid with the color of gimnazium (in my case green) and a silver braid showing what grade the particular student attends. One braide for first grade, two for second, three for third and four for fourth. The mark of a fifth grader was latin five (V). Two fives in sixth grade, three in seventh and four in eight grade).

The tuition to attend gimnazium was 220 zlotys per year. Because my father was a working man we have been granted a 50% deduction.

The order of the first few days in gimnazium was to buy books and school supplies. There was this old books district in Cracow on Szpitalna street (Hospital street). Jews used to own most of those stores. Every year in September it was almost impossible to walk there because of those thousands of students from gimnaziums and university buying their books. People who owned those book stores used to be orthodox religious Jews extrimly inteligent and their knowlsdge of their business won them respect from writers and critics of Polish literature. Even thou my mother always made sure that I have brand new books. At the end of each school years those dealers from Szpitalna street used to buy those books from my mother and later sold them at the start of a new school year.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

There were just about 40 students in my class.Ten of them were Jewish. Once a week on Wednesdays Jewish students who attended gimnaziums all over Cracow had their religious classes in Jan Kochanowski gimnazium. Our teacher was Rabbi Dr. Schmelkes. A very known personality in Cracow Rabbi Schmelkes earned his respect not only from Jews but from Poles as well. Once I noticed the Director of our gimnazium Wladislaw Rutkowski while shaking Rabbi's Schmelkes's hand he bowed almost in half while ~~doing this~~. GREETING HIM

Rabbi Schmelkes together with Rabbi Dr. Thon who also represented Jewish community of Cracow in Polish Sejm (Parlament) used to be chief Rabbis of the Temple. Rabbi Schmelkes also was a Jewish chaplain in Polish army.I saw him many times walking down the street in his army uniform with the rank of major. He always had that distinguished look of a chaplain in his three quarter jacket worn by the military clergy.

Rabbi Schmelkes was one of the first Jewish leaders killed by the Nazis in Cracow when as a head of a Jewish delegation he took upon himself to protest the unhuman treatment of Jews to the German authorities.

Our first class master was our math profesor Miss ~~XXXX~~ Clara Schrenzel. In those days she was already very old and one of the few left educators who were Jewish and who taught when Cracow still was under Austro-Hungarian occupation. She was very strict and a real tiger in the classroom. After teaching our class for few weeks a younger profesor Franciszek Lecznar replaced her. And then came to my knowledge another coincident. Profesor Lecznar was a ~~fr~~ former student and later colleague of my uncle Profesor Josef Nussbaum from Tarnobrzeg. Jewish students thought of Lecznar as an anti-Semite. Yet as I heard from an eyewitness after the war he helped many Jews to survive.

There was this beautiful gym hall at Sobieski gimnazium but still under repairs when our school year began. Our phisical education instructor also taught German, so for few weeks this profesor Joseph Figna had an opportunity to teach us more German then we would like.

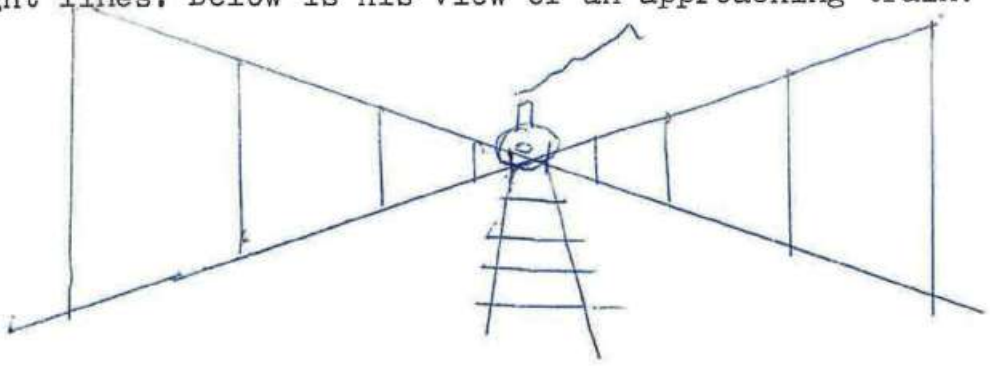
Our history teacher was profesor Franciszek Fuchs. He probably was from a German ancestry because during the occupation he was the first one to whom Germans turned and appointed him a head of the new education commission.

After awhile profesor Figna was replaced by one Otto German who also was from German ancestry. He took over the German department and again during the occupation he ~~was~~ was offered a high post by German authorities but politely refused to accept.

Geography was taught by our new principal Director Rutkowski. He was the easiest one to go along with. He used to give us instructions only. Never conducted tests giving to each and everyone of us good grades. Profesor Joseph Lederer was our teacher of Polish grammar and literature. Our singing instructor Was profesor Kazimierz Garbusinski from Cracow's conservatory of music. But we never sang songs. We were just studying notes.

We studied zoology and botanics with profesor Alexander Lukiewicz, who as I found out later was our next street neighbour. I used to meet him often in the neighbourhood barber shop.

The last and most boring subject was art and drawing. Profesor Joseph Schwarz didn't teach us how to draw pictures but some kind of silly impressions and straight lines. Below is his view of an approaching train.



Chapter 35 (cont)
Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

So a long era of my higher learning began. On this September day in 1931 nobody suspected that nine years later Poland will cease to exist and a maniac by the name of Adolf Hitler will destroy Europe and the Jewish nation.

In meantime as far as I was concerned long months and years of tough times began. There have been many disapointments but as years went by I finally prevailed. At first whatever I tried to do wasn't easy but little by little I learned that I can't act like a child forever.

As in Santa Barbara my mother continued to take active part in my and hers school activities. She not only joined Parents Teachers Committee (PTA) but many other committies concerning my class only. She used to pay surprise visits to school asking my friends if I was doing well. I guess she didn't realize that other kids could care less how I was doing in class, telling her always that I was OK. I detested those visits but there was nothing I could do about them. The naked truth always came out after interviews with profesors. (Open House).

It wasn't possible for me to see to often my old friends from Krupnicza street but we haven't fergaten each other. I made many new friends in gimnazium. There was this boy Tadeusz Zimmerman whose father was a capitain in Polish army. The other was Jurek Stabrawa. We kept our friendship up because my mother for some reason was very sure that his mother was Jewish maybe even not converted to Catholicizm. All I know that the boy always as long as I knew him was going to church. For many years I used to share the same table in class with a very fat boy Stephan Turek whose father was the principal of Cracow's Industrial gimnazium. I met with him again in Cracow after the war. My other friends were a boy from Czechoslovakia Karol Pradel a big prangster and another boy whose name was Pokorny. I don't remember his first name. His father was a colonel in Polish army. After Germans occupied Cracow they made him their official translator. Funny! the father spoke so fluent German and his son always had the worst grades from German language.

All us Jewish boys stuck most of those years together. Besides seeing each other at school we all belonged to so-called Self Help For Needy Jewish Students. We used to have many get togethers throughout the year but most popular were the five o'clock dances.

Ziegfried Appfelsuess was my best friend. He and his family also moved few years later to our complex and took an apartment next to ours. His mother and aunt used to be very protective about him and as much as he wanted to he wasn't able to shake this image of "Mama's Boy". He failed the graduation after eight years of gimnazium. He was eligible to try again after vacation but war prevented him to do so. I am quite sure that he perished in holocaust.

To mention others I shouldn't forget Leopold Schorr. His Polish name was Poldek and he never was able to shake off his nickname. Everybody used to call him "Pischorr". He always was a very good student and took over as broadcaster on Polish radio after liberation of Cracow.

Boys like Leopold Haubenstock and Henryk Mondere never got a chance and quit gimnaium after couple of years. There was also this very rich boy Leo Geitheim whose parents tried hard to push him through with their money but in his case even payoffs didn't help. It still sticks in my mind when he wasn't able to ansver a simple question in zoology. Our profesor Alexander Lukiewicz who used to have some Jewish friends and understood little Yiddish got very unpatient and finally told this boy "Geitheim'gey shoyn haym". I assume that you know the meaning of those words. "Go home Geitheim".

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

Boys like Emil Knoll, Josef Reiner and his cousin Stephan Reisman completed their education in Sobieski gimnazium. After the war Emil Knoll emigrated to Israel. I saw Josef Reiner after the war in Cracow. I don't know what happened to Reisman. Before the war his parents owned a successful oriental fruit store. I wrote already about Jurek Fussman but around 1937 a story circulated in Cracow after his father's death That his mother married a Catholic and that they both mother and son converted to Christianity. I guess the whole story was a big lie because Jurek attended our religious classes until his graduation.

But most exceptional of them all was Jurek Hauser. He always was a very good student. His grades used to be the best so it wasn't surprising that in the begining we didn't see eye to eye. In a matter of facts during one of our arguments he called me stupid. Ofcourse after I came home from school and told the story to my mother, I guess she was more hurt by this whole incident then I was and the same evening she went to see his father who used to be a vice-president of some corporation. The story of my mother shocked Mr. Hauser considerably. He apologized to my mother on the spot and next day at the school came the clincher. Jurek Hauser apologized to me in front of other students. Since that day he changed somewhat you could say he came off the cloud. Our friendship never blossomed but from then on we respected each other. He survived the war, and later became a M.D. in Cracow. He left Poland for good during after anti-Semitic demonstrations there in 1968.

Throughout all those years at Sobieski gimnazium some students changed schools and some new ones joined us but basicly our original group stuck together.

As far as studying was concerned it never entered my mind that I was doing something wrong which could lead later to bad grades at the first semester break. I guess I was the only one who thought that I was doing pretty well. The roof cave in early in January about a month before the end of the semester. It came to my knowledge that I was doing bad in math. As I see it now trying to help out my mother made her first basic mistake. Knowing that my uncle profesor Nussbaum knew my math teacher profesor Lecznar she asked my cousin Zosia from Tarnobrzeg who at that time was studying law in Cracow to ask Lecznar to give me another chance. Ofcourse profesor Lecznar was very happy to see Zosia and after a nice conversation with her agreed to give me another test. Well I passed the test and got the "fair" on my report card but needless to say this fair backfired in my face at the end of the first school year in gimnazium. Lecznar's mercy didn't erase my two "failures" from history and zoology on my report card. Until today I can't figure out why those two profesors failed me. I felt then like somebody would hit me over my head. In one case I wasn't that bad and in case of history I wasn't ask a single question during the semester. I talked my heart out but nobody including my parents would belive me.

Going into second semester my mother decided that I needed a tuitor to help me with math. She hired a friend of the Appfelsuess family who was then already a graduating student in another gimnazium. His name was Lusiek Zimmer. The nightmarish lesson of the first semester in zoology and history made me work much harder and I proved to those two bumbling profesors that I was really good in those subjects. In a matter of facts I was one of their favored students throughout the years. At the end of year they both gave me "good" two grades up.. But my math tuitor didn't help to much. Profesor Lenznar took his revenge on me and failed me at the end. Yet I passed becuse of a regulation that a student could advance to next grade with one "fail" only once during his stay in gimnazium.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise

On November 29 1931 I was only 10 years old. Like other kids my age I should have been still in primary school in 4th grade. Yet because of circumstances beyond my control I found myself all dressed up in an unigorm of a gimnazium student, cap included an becuse of wintertime I Also wore a regulation black top coat, double brested with a collar covered with black velvet and ofcourse with epaulets showing the color of my gimnazium and my grade. All this was very nice for a 10 years old and I enjoyed it verry much. Because of my uniform I could mingle with older boys and girls. Not that girls ment to much to me in those days.

We used to have quite a group hanging around the complex. Most of the week we had lots of homework to do but we always managed to get together on warm afternoons or on weekends. If weather didn't cooperate we met in each others homes. New kids joined us, among them the three Weber sisters, Tadek Kindlik and his two sisters, a boy named Woytasiewicz and his sister Marie. Then there were those Wrublewski brothers who owned an original official soccer ball but didn't have slightest idea how to play soccer, yet we included them in the team because without their ball we couldn't play. Another boy Antek Zwirowski also became our close friend because he owned a pair of ski's and let us use them when there was lots of snow around. This guy was a little older then the rest of us. Once when a circus came to town he fell in love with a girl boa dancer. This girl performed there maybe a month, maybe longer and he didn't miss a single performance.

All of us used to get along quite well. Besides just hanging around in wintertime we used to iceskate on a nearby iceskating ring. After one lesson from my cousin Saul I moved pretty well on ice. My first pair of skates was rather shoby. I had to screw them to my regular shoes with a special key. It cost more to replace heels on my shoes then the skates were worthed.

On Saturdays afternoon we usually went to the movies. The pictures we wanted to see were off limits to kids our age.

When spring and summer came everything changed. There have been lots of empty spaces around, green and fresh, waiting for development but in meantime we played soccer there. I learned all the rules of the game rather quickly. Since the summer of 1932 until I was 30 years old soccer was my passion even during the hungry days in Siberia. In those days I didn't have enough money to go and see a major league soccer game but I played the game all the time. Many times my mother had to come down to chase me to go home and do my homework. Many times we didn't have a ball to play, but we played anyway with a ball made of rags.

It was summer of 1932 when I finished my first year at Sobieski gimnazium. Shortly before that Uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala and their children Saul and Zosia moved from their apartment on Dominican Place to much modern place on Kremerowska street. This place was so close to Sobieski gimnazium that from my classroom I could see the windows of their apartment.

This was also the summer when we spent our vacation again in Tarnobrzeg. Aunt Janette invited us to stay with then in their brand new house which they bilt on piece of land where we used to have picnics during out previous visits to Tarnobrzeg. It was a very nice house standing next to the county three story building the tallest in Tarnobrzeg on the main street of town named after famous Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz.

As always it was very nice and pleasant to be in Tarnobrzeg. It was already our third time around there. Mother and I had a nice room for ourselves and all those people with their children who remembered us from our previous visits came to see us again. We also met some new friends of aunt Janette and uncle Josef. One of those new profesors assigned to teach in Tarnobrzeg rented the old house of Nussbaums for his family.

It was understandable that the best friends of the family used to be other profesors who taught in Tarnobrzeg.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

Tarnobrzeg in those days was a small town with a large Jewishm population. It was one of those "shtetls" of that era where Jews and Poles used to live side by side and where almost every Pole had his favorite Jew. Ofcourse there also were those Jewish families who together with high class Poles counted as the elite of the town. Those were the profesors, doctors and lawyers and also those Jews who still held high government positions on the county and town level.

The best friends of my uncle's family was the family of profesor Holubowicz. Ukrainians nationality if they used to be anti-Semites they never showed. Mrs. Holubowicz was a confidant of my aunt Janette and the children of both families kept their friendship going as well as their parents. Profesor Holubowicz taught German and geography.

The next closest family to Nussbaums was the family of profesor Woynas. He taught physical education in Tarnobrzeg gimnazium. These people used to be real Poles and Christians but their friendship with Nussbaum's as I saw it was even greater then the one my aunt and uncle had with the Holubowicz family. Their son Josef was a very good friend of my cousin Sigmund and daughter Wisca was a friend of my cousin Zosia forever. Profesor Woynas retired few years before the war and the family moved to Cracow. They survived the war but their son Josef gave them a heartbreak of their lifetime. During the war he cooperated with the German enemy and have done lots of the dirty work for them. He was forced to leave Poland with the re-treating German army and his parents never heard from him again. Still their good friendship surfaced after the war when Zosia and her husband Roman with their baby Yoel came back from Russia they took them in, gave them a room in their apartment and let them stay there few years until they left Cracow for Israel.

Another of Jewish notables in Tarnobrzeg was profesor Laufer who taught German language. He used to be a funny ~~many~~ man noted of his smart alec quotations. An older man already in those days he was a devouted family man until; Until he got involved with one of his students. Ofcourse he made her pregnant which created a high scale scandal in a small town like Tarnobrzeg and for him being Jewish didn't help alot to quiet down things. At the end the poor man couldn't take it anymore and commited suiside.

Mr. Czeszer also Jewish held the post of Postmaster General of Tarnobrzeg. A very nice family with a boy and a girl. When we used to be real young we always played together but in later years when we all grew up my aunt Janette wouldn't let us to associate with them, especially the girl Stella, because when Polish army used to have manuvers in Tarnobrzeg ~~are~~ this girl liked very much to go out with soldiers so her reputation since then suffered considerably.

On a much brighter side together with most of the elite of Tarnobrzeg we took up a voyage on Vistula River from Tarnobrzeg to Sandomierz an ancient Polish town with much historical meaning on the bank of Vistula River. This still was in days of high popularity of profesor Laufer who entertined the whole group during the voyage. Needless to say we ran into terrible rain storm on the way back and our ship wind-up on a sandbank in the middle of the river. We spent some anxious hours before help finally arrived and was able to tow the ship away.

The same summer to top the pleasant vacation we presented in the back yard of the new home a children play which enjoyed a big popularity with large attendance from all over Tarnobrzeg.

Like everything else also this vacation came to an end. The new school year was just about to begin. But when we came home some unexpected trouble which families have to endur from time to time hit our family.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

All the trouble began when my cousin Saul Nussbaum completed his "Matura" (graduation from gimnazium). He graduated from St. Jacek gimnazium with honors and it was obvious to all of us that he will study medicine at the Jagiellonian University. In a matter of facts he was so good that even being Jewish wouldn't stay in a way of his admission.

Upon concluding Saul's medical examination doctors told the family that he can't be admited to medical school because of a serious heart condition of which everybody in the entire family didn't have a slicest idea including Saul himself. He never was ill before, active in all kinds of sports, so all the family could suspect that he inherited this condition from one of his uncles on the Bauer side of the family who died from a heart attack many years before.

Shortly after the discovery uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala seek out an advise from my uncle Dr. Julius Nussbaum in Vienna who in turn made necessary arrangements with heart specialists in Vienna and enrolled Saul in a top heart clinic there. The doctors in Vienna confirmed the diagnosis of the doctors at the University.

The time came for Saul to take it easy. He was forced to change his entire lifestyle. There was no more sports for him and no more studying for a while.

There was no advance medicine in those days. Who knows maybe if the doctors knew about by-passes in those days an operation might have cure him. Saul spent more then a year at home in different clinics and in all kinds rest resorts. Little by little his condition improved to a point that doctors allowed him to resume his studies. There was no way he could study medicine so he joined the university's law school. By then already the year was 1935. He graduated in 1939 shortly before the world war two began.

Before I went to school again I payed a short visit to my old friends on Krupnicza street. Together with the Drozdz boys we had a nice walk around the old neighbourhood. What surprised me most that finally an old shack on the Lower Mills street was gone. People used to live there in terrible conditions and a man whose son used to go with me to Santa Barbara school used to make hats for men there also living there with his family in the back of the shop. This shack stood there probably for hundreds of years, in more modern era surrounded by 3 and 4 story buildings. At the end the hatmaker was forced to move to a nice apartment next door.

As for other kids the Leuchter brothers still lived on Czapski street. Jerry started then his third year in gimnazium. His brother Milek was still in six grade of elementary school. The reform of the Polish education system kept him there for one more year. The Frenkiel family was still living on Czapski street. Another friend Tadek Sommer also had to wait for one more year to get to gimnazium, Last of our old brigade Yurek Kirschner as Jerry Leuchter also started his third year in gimnazium.

Not far from Krupnicza on Wolski street used to live the Haber brothers. Tadek was the oldest of them. The other two Staszek and Rudek became my good friends. You never know how fate sometimes can bring people together. Imagene our surprise when many years later we ran into each other on train in Soviet Russia taking us to Siberia. Rudek was missing then. Only Staszek and Tadek used to share our ups and downs of the Siberian wilderness.

Starting my second year at Sobieski gimnazium also marked the end of our first year on Falat street. It was rather a good year as far as living in new and more comfortable surroundings. Then we could also add some other families to the list of our new friends. First of all was the family of the bookkeeper of the company my father used to work for with their rather grown three daughters. I remember people wondering how come girls so good looking and inteligent have still been single at home.

The other family who used to live just below our apartment moved to the complex from Silesia. They didn't have children on their own but many times their nieces and nephews came to visit them. Soon us kids made friends with them but our interst was mostly directed not to the boys but to their good looking sister Irena Michalski. I think this was first time in my life that I began to show any interest in a girl. Well I was only 11½ then.

My second year in gimnazium was my best out of the eight years..I finally figured out ways how to survive by closely studying the ways of thinking of certain profesors.

My sophomore year was the last of the old Polish education system which operated since 1918 on the rules of Austrian, Prussian or Russian education systems as during the times when those countries occupied the Polish territory. In order to make this system operative for this one year only firsts grades all over Poland have been discontinued. (Only in gimnaziums). In 1932 many students who finished 5th grades of elementary schools after tests were admited to second grade of gimnazium. Among them was my neighbour and friend Salek Potok.

In order to accommodate the large attendance the school administration was forced to create four second grade classes. The A and B classes for classical department and C and D for humanistic..As one of those not so good students I wind-up in the "D" class. My newcomer friend Salek Potok thanks to the influence of the Boland family (I wrote about them before) was admited to class "C" even thou as it turned out later he wasn't able to survive the rigors of gimnazium. Another newcomer in my class was Julian Sonnenblick who tried to picture himself as a famous boxer. A first class good looking liar who maybe had his ways with some girls but lasted only two years in gimnazium.

The line-up of profesors also changed. Our physical education instructor was our class master which cut our game hours from two to one because he needed one hour to take care on class business. Instead they gave us one hour of games in the afternoons. To everybody's satisfaction school authorities finally droped the art and singing hours. But on another hand they added the subject of handy works taught by our former art profesor Schwarz. This particular year we learned how to make hard binders for our books and note pads. Ofcourse Dr. Schmelkes was still our Jewish religion teacher. My former enemies profesors Fuchs who taught that year geography and Lukiewicz became my best friends. I figured out profesor Fuchs who never asked kids who used to raise their hands and that what I was doing during his classes always raised my hand no matter if I knew the answer or not. On the few occasions he called on me I was lucky I always had the right answer. The only profesor I really had to watch was my math teacher profesor Pichor. Because of my "4" from math at the end of first year another "4" from Pichor would leave me stranded in second grade! (I explained this rule to you before).

Besides learning there were many other activities in gimnazium. First time in our school's history with cooperation with school administration our parents (my mother included) organized a committee for students enjoyment in mind. This program proved to be so successful that other gimnaziums in the area adopted it. Three times a year we used to have so-called picnics, no matter inside or outside with good food and entertainment. For some reason they used to call it "Tea Hour". Many boys in our class had show business possibilities. Even I once or twice had some roles and was forced to recite some poem about an old tailor. They also made me up to look like an old tailor.

My Jewishness didn't prevent me from good friendships with my Polish friends. The only time I felt down when I tried to join the Polish Scout movement. I was rejected and told that according to rules only Catholics were eligible to become members.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise

There was no scouting movement in Poland in those days for Jewish young people. Jewish leaders used to keep telling us to join the Zionist movement. There were many organizations. It seemed there were more then necessary, some of them to the right and some to the left. Those Jewish leaders told us also that being a "Halutz" was the same as being a boy or girl scout. In reality it wasn't so. It is true we had many idealists in those days but most of the boys kept joining those organizations just to be close to girls. Majority of parents urged their children to beware of leftists groups. Polish authorities considered them as communist subversive organizations even thou they weren't. But most important was a school rule which didn't allow any student to belong to any organization not sanctioned by school authorities.

Yet the danger was real because many of those groups under the umbrella of zionism have been engaged in communist propaganda. Those were real communist cells who shortly after joining went on with brainwashing those innocent kids. In many cases it worked and sometimes it was to late for parents to do anything about it.

I knew a boy who was an orphan raised by his hard working sister who was a librarian in one of those private libraries who for small fee loaned books to individuals. This boy in his early age got involved with those undesirable elements. He tried to recruit boys and girls from prominent Jewish families and was many times in trouble with authorities. I knew one of those girl's. She was Halina Kuehnreich whose parents in Cracow owned a chain of kosher delicatessen. They always talked in riddles like somebody who tried to keep a secret but on another hand would like you to know what it was all about. Well Halina got wise soon enough but I am quite sure he succeded with many others.

One of my schoolmates Henrik Goldfinger tried to get me to join the right wing Akiba group. Once he talked me in to go with him to their camp on the outskirts of Cracow. I didn't like what I saw and I did not join at that time. Quite few years later when I attended the Commercial Lyceum I finally joined a youth group but not for political reasons. Just for fun and as I said before to be closer to girls. My friend Henrik Goldfinger was a very nice boy and a good student very active in his junior and senior years in the Self Help for poor Jewish students. As a small child he burned his face beyond recognition. He recovered but his face was full of terrible scars.

Now let us go back to our family life. As far as I remember that was the time when aunt Rose's brother Sigmund Zimetbaum lost his job as bookkeeper in the bank. He had some money saved and tried to join some business venture, so uncle Ludwik suggested to him to go into business with my father. Well we didn't have this kind of money for my father to go into business but uncle Ludwik pointed out that with my fathers knowledge of transfer and delivery business and with Sigmund's money they could make it go. Needless to say after many months of meetings and negotiations the whole idea colapsed. I guess Sigmund didn't trust my father and on another hand aunt Rose probably also had lots to do with her brother's decision. At the end Sigmund Zimetbaum became a bookkeeper in uncle Ludwik's store. His children Heniek and Nina used to be aunt Rose's darlings. Then they attended the primary school in Hebrew Academy and I am quite sure that aunt Rose was paying for it also.

At that time my mother hired another tuitor to help me with math and other subjects when necessary. Janek Unger was a very good friend of my cousin Saul in his last year before graduation at Sobieski gimnazium. When he was to busy his sister who used to go to Queen Wanda gimnazium with my cousin Zosia was always available. Both of them Janek and his sister used to be very good students and helped me for couple of years.

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Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

As a young kid many times I had to come up with many ideas who either never worked out or they were plain stupid. I don't know why but I even don't remember since when I had this passion about Polish name "Stanislaw". I was jealous of any kid whose name was Stanislaw. I finally realized how childish it was when I was second year in gimnazium. A new boy came to our class and took his place next to mine. Ofcourse he told me his name and then asked for mine. Without hesitation at last I saw my chance and told him that I was "Staszek" short for Stanislaw. But soon enough he found out what my real name was, so I explained to him that Staszek was my second name. And then I ceased to be Stanislaw. This short story will probably remain you of Marvin Leuchter who when asked about his name he used to tell people; "Just call me Jones".

Our school day started everyday at 8am and lasted until almost 1pm. The acctual learning period every hour was only 45 minutes. There 5 minutes recess after the first hour, 10 minutes after the second hour and the longest one 15 minutes after the third hour. After the fourth hour the recess lasted only 10 minutes. Once a week we have had a sixth hour after another 5 minutes recess. Also once a week we didn't go to school until 9.45 am because of lack of equipment for Handi Works in which case our class was divided in two groups. As I said before we had one more hour of gym once a week in the afternoon when we played volleyball, basketball or other games. In wintertime we used to go iceskating or sometimes played ice hockey. Ofcourse with this schedule and lots of homework everyday we didn't have to much time for fun on weekdays. Besides all this our gimnazium as well as others maintained its own cultural room were in the afternoons students could come there read books and magazines, listen to radio or play ping-pong. Once a year there was an all school ping-pong tournament. under the direction of Jerzy Boland who by the way also was the manager of the cultural room.

Well so came June of 1933 and my second year at Sobieski gimnazium to a successful ~~year~~ END. My best year ever in gimnazium. My report card showed all "2s" (good) except one "3" (Fair) from math. As always math was my weak subject.

Vacation time was on hand again and all the signs pointed out that it will be a good one. Our group on Farat street got even larger. Some new people moved in and their kids joined our so called club. One of the newcomers was this Tencza family. He was a pharmacist. They had three kids; a boy Marek and two girls, One of them was Olga, the others name I no longer remember. Anyway for quite a while Olga and I used to be good friends, until this new boy moved in to the complex so she dumped me for him to find out soon that he liked somebody else.

Another family was this Yekiel family. Mr. Yekiel was a sergeant in Polish army stationed in a nearby fort. ~~XXXXXXX~~ Him and Mrs. Yekiel used to have lots of children and it was obvious from the begining that they don't care to much about them. Those kids were never dressed properly their apartment was always dirty and almost not furnished at all. It was also obvious that most of their money went to buy spirits.

Because their oldest boy was a very good soccer player so we took him into our club. But soon enough we found out that he was a notorious thief. He used to steal our things like watches and clothing when we put them on side while playing soccer. Sometimes he demonstrated for us how he was stealing small objects. He manipuleted his hands so quick and was able to hide those objects but there was no way for us to find them on him. Once my mother caught him wearing my watch. Without an argument he gave it back to her just explainung that he found it somewhere.

On other occasions this guy used to organize boxing matches in his empty apartment. He lured other boys to box with him and at the end he used to give them a good beating. In addition to beating he also cleaned them ~~up~~ out claiming prizes for his victories.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

The Bronner family another Jewish family moved to the new addition of the complex. Nothing to complain a nice family especially mother and daughters, also good looking. Daughter's name was Ruth but the father and their son Stephan was another story. To describe them midly only one word would fit them "ugly". Their long noses longer even then the one of Max Q. Klinger's of Mash fame added much to their bad looks. Ofcourse Ruth was accepted by girls and Stephan joined our club because he was a proud owner of a guitar and knew how to play it.

There were many more after another addition to the complex the third one was finally finished. Among them was Mrs. Basarabowicz with her two grandsons whom she was raising after both of their parents passed along. Two other families with older girls and small sons moved in. Those girls attended the Queen Wanda gimnazium for girls and used to walk with us to school every morning. Needless to say one of them suddenly died from a mysterious illness. All kids from the complex who knew her went to her funeral. I was the only one who didn't go because of some reason not known to me my mother strongly objected to my participation.

Another student from Sobieski gimnazium moved in and he also was one of those important people because his parents bought him a brand new soccer ball.

When Andrew Albrecht came to Falat street, he caused some kind of a sensation. A good looking kid 12½ years old still with long blond hair. Ofcourse nowaday he would be very popular but then boys took him for a "sissy"which really he wasn't. Being good looking he was adored by girls. Anyway he changed his style shortly. Andrew was the boy who became an object of attention of Olga the girl I was friendly with but as I said before he had his eyes on another girl much better looking who really returned his affection.

My most important friends in those days used to be the Putz brothers. Younger Julius didn't like Jews to much but he never showed in my presence. Needless to say his anti-Semitic feelings led him to get involved during the German occupation with the enemy. Because of his activities he was forced to leave Cracow with the retreating German army.

The older brother Adam was a very nice boy. Both him and his brother never were good students and were left behind on couple occasions. Adam attended a private gimnazium. Mr. and Mrs Putz were very nice people. Acctualy Mrs. Putz was a stepmother to the boys and one older girl. Mr. Putz was a supervisor of one of the departments in City Hall. Adam Putz was a very good goalkeeper for our soccer team. I saw him in Cracow after the war. As everything at that time a meeting with him wasn't pleasant anymore. He told me that he fought Germans during the war as a member of the underground Land Army.

During summer our main attraction was soccer. From time to time we even played baseball called in Polish "palant ball". Parts of our clothing served as bases, plain thick sticks use to be our bats and a tennis ball served as a baseball. That remains me about a game we played once on a cow pasture. Couple of cows came and ate some of our clothing including cry baby's Eddie Fluss' jacket. Imagene the big surprise of Eddie when next day he found his jacket not damaged at all in a big pile of cow's manure.

To organize our soccer team we first collected money to buy our uniforms; White shirts and light green shorts. We also bought soccer socks black with green trim. For protection of our legs we used our old school books. Old unusable winter shoes served us as our soccer shoes for a while. Our team turned out pretty good. We had enough players to put two teams on the field. Ours was a club called in Poland "Wild" which ment a club without organized affiliation.

There used to be hundreds clubs like ours all over Cracow. You could compare them to American style "sandlot baseball". Every Sunday during summer we played a game with another team similar to ours. We had a home field at a stadium located on a far end of Bronie. For a small fee the Catholic Youth Group called "Iuvenia" (Latin for youth) rented to us the facilities locker rooms included which actually were broken down shacks where we could change to our uniforms and store our street clothing for the duration of the game. The same organization also provided officials for the game.

Years went by and our club grew as more and more members joined us from other nearby neighbourhoods. Finally it got to a point that we couldn't handle it by ourselves so we started to look for an adult supervision. And we found perfect family to help us out. Mr. & Mrs. Niedzielski had two boys on their own who already were members of the club. He was a sergeant in Polish army and Mrs. Niedzielski was a very nice and kind lady, always ready with advise and help. A retired gimnazium Profesor Lukiewicz who was the brother to my biology profesor Alexander Lukiewicz and also lived in the complex also joined as an assistant. The first name of our club was "Blocks" becaus of the shape of our apartment buildings.

Thanks to Mr.& Mrs. Niedzielski's leadership our club became more a social club but with a strong emphasis on sports. We expanded into basketball and volleyball. Because of Mrs. Niedzielski girls joined also. They used to play volleyball. And ofcourse there was very nice and pleasant with girls around. Boys found ways how to show off in their company.

I think Mr. Niedzielski was a smooth operator. He not only made sure that we from somewhere recived a new equipment but with the army's help constructed for us a new basketball and volleyball courts on an empty lot nearby. Besides all this our main priority was soccer.

Looking back on those times this club was a perfect example how young people regardless of their religion and believes could live, play and enjoy each others company. ~~Not~~ A seldom occuremce in Poland of that particular era.

Not far away from our complex, near to Henrik Jordan park was a small street called Oleandry famous of the role it played in Poland's independence in 1918. Oleandry was the place where Josef Pilsudski organized his Legions who from there started their march which finally culminated with Poland becoming an independent country under his leadership.

To commemorate Pilsudski's heroics during the period between the two world wars Poles bilt in Oleandry a four story building for the use of former Legioniers and for the new generations who were willing to join this organization. A beautiful monument in the middle of the garden honored all those who gave their lives for Poland.

The Legioniers organization together with the young newcomers changed their name to Rifle Association. They all dressed in uniforms exactly as Pilsudski's Legions. Only the color ~~xxxx~~ changed from blue to army green. During national holidays they used to attend many of their own ceremonies, and took part in parades either on foot or horses. Keeping up with Pilsudski's motto "Freedom For Everybody" many Jewish young people mostly sons of former Legioniers also joined-up. Once I saw couple of Jewish boys I knew raiding horses and struggling to keep them in formation during a parade. They told me later that they didn't have a slightest idea about horse raiding. They just wanted to show off a little but were scared to death with fear that their pants could feel up anytime.

Our Mr. Niedzielski was also a member of this Rifle Organization and worked out an agreement with them to incorpoate our club ~~xxx~~ with their association. This was a big plus for our club mostly as far as finances were concerned. They gave us our own club hall. We still played on Iuvenia field but changed our name from "Blocks" to "Oleandry."

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

With all those changes in our organization friendships between all of us didn't change at all. Yet in an isolated incident one of the boys gave in to the influence of the anti-Semitic propaganda and on one occasion refused to shake hands with me. After a while he tried to resume conversations with me. Well we played ball on the same club and I talked to him only when a situation required so.

This Sport Club Oleandry lasted a long time and reorganized after the war, under the name Sport Club Groble (another district in Cracow) and was accepted into Cracow Regional Soccer League Class A, of Polish Soccer Association. Many of my former friends from Blocks and Oleandry played on this club. If not the war I probably would be one of them.

Already being on the subject of soccer I would like to explain to you the structure of this popular sport in Poland in my days. Some rules changed after the war but the basics remained, THE SAME

The main body of Polish football (soccer) was the Polish Football Association. Members of that association were; The Major Polish Football League, and all minor provincial football leagues clubs with A,B,C,D, classifications.

Since year 1920 when the major league have been established only 10 or sometimes 12 clubs were privileged to participate as members. Those clubs represented cities like Cracow, Lvov, Poznan, Lodz, Warsaw and the province of Silesia which really didn't have a large city as those above. Since early 1900s Cracow was the craddle of Polish football Having during certain period in 1930s as much as four clubs in the league. Second was Warsaw with three. Other cities always had one club each. The trend changed in middle thirties when Silesia became the leader of Polish football having as Cracow before four teams in the league.

Major league championships usually started in March and lasted till November with a break for vacations in July. The team with most wins became champion of Poland. All teams played each other twice during the season. The last two clubs in standings played the following year in a minor league of the province where their particular city was located for the chance to become the champion of this province and be eligible to participate in playoffs for membership in the majors again.. Only clubs with the "A" classification could play for the minor league's championship of Poland. The same formula applied to B,C,and D classifications but their advancement to highier class was limited only to the province where they used to play. THE TWO BEST CLUBS FROM CLASS "A" REPLACED THE TWO WORST IN MAJOR LEAGUE

Officialy all players were amateurs. Clubs were responsible to provide jobs for them. But really all this was on paper only. No major league player was working. Rich supporters of the clubs payed their salaries. Students by law couldn't play in organized soccer but if by a chance a student showed how good he was he played anyway under assumed name. When he became real famous and school authorities found out about and if he made good grades they didn't interfere. University students used to have their own Academic Sport Association. I personaly knew some boys who made good in soccer. One was my classmate for many years. Another one was a year older also a student at Sobieski gimnazium, and three other boys I met on different occasions.

In pre-war Poland only two Jewish clubs made to major league. One was Jewish Sport Club Jutrzenka (Dawn) in early twenties they played themselves into Polands championship. But their fame didn't last to long. During the 1930s they struggled in the bottom of "C" class in Cracow.

The other major league soccer club in Poland was Hasmonea from Lvov. Their glory lasted one year only. As fast as they got to the league that much faster they departed.

Only one major league club Cracovia used to have Jewish players. And they were very good, many times representing Poland in international competitions.

Jews used to be the best and fairest referees in Polish soccer and all of them were in high demand all over Europe for international matches.

There have been hundreds of Jewish sport clubs all over Poland but all of them on minor league level. Besides those two clubs I mentioned before even if some of them were good they couldn't show it because of discrimination and abuses from Polish spectators. It comes to my mind a game I once attended between two clubs from class "C". The Jewish team was abused not only during the game verbaly and physicaly. They played the best they could but under no circumstances they would be allowed to win this game. And wasn't just during the game. Those wild spectators chased after them again trying to hurt those boys until they reach the safety of their cabs which took them away from that dreadful place.

The best Jewish club in Cracow was Makkabi. They played soccer in minor league class "A". They were good and strong and respected by all Jews and Poles alike. They never won a championship but always kept close to the top. They also had some players who represented Cracow in international competitions.

There was this rule in Polish sports that one club didn't have to be only soccer club. Most of them within the clubs used to have all kind of sections like; Track section, ice hockey, tenis, basketball, boxing and many others. So one of those clubs was Makkabi. Their women represented Poland in track and swimming.

Personally I considered many times to join an organized sport club. It probably would be Cracovia or Makkabi. I would be easy accepted because of my ability to play a good soccer but because of my bad right eye I would never pass a physical. That why I had to be satisfied with so-called "Wild Soccer".

Because sports always have been an important part of my life I can't help but reminisce about an advent which took place almost 55 years ago in Los Angeles California. I was 11 years old then and the advent was the 1932 Olympic Games. In those days we didn't have television and had to relay on newspapers reports and little on Radio. I don't remember to much about those games but I know one thing That on this olympic team of 1932 was an excelent long distance runner Janusz Kusocinski. Public opinion of that era concidered him second best to the great Finnish long distance runners who at that time were the best in the world. Us kids root for him with all our hearts and for that matter the whole country was behind Kusocinski. Everybody was hoping for a large upset and his victory.

Well! Kusocinski didn't let his country down. He won a gold medal outrunning the great Nurmi from Finland in 10,000 meters race. Two or three years later I had a great pleasure to see Janusz Kusocinski in Cracow victorious over another great Finnish runner Lehtinen.

Kusocinski's victory in Los Angeles was the first for a Pole as far as I know. When in 1936 next Olympiad took place in Berlin other Poles have had some success but none of them won a gold medal. Among them two Jews took two silver medals for Poland. A boxer Shapse Rotholz from Warsaw and woman discus trower Jadwiga Wais came in second behind the famous at that time and world record holder Gizelle Mauermayer from Germany.

I and my cousin Saul spent three days in Berlin while traveling to Vienna to visit our relatives there. We saw victories of American woman Stevens from University of Kansas in 100 meters dash and record breaking jump of Jessie Owens. We didn't witness Hitler's refusal to congratulate Owens because we had to leave.

Reflecting now on those days it was obvious that already than three years before the war Hitler was showing off his might to the rest of the world.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

During summer of 1984 when I was watching on television another olympic games coming from Los Angeles second time in my lifetime I couldn't help and compare this magnificent affair and all those young people from most of the world competing against each other in spirit of freedom and democracy to the moody and stuffy games in Berlin. The pomp of the Nazi era with their flags and trombones and the Stars of David on Jewish establishments or SS guards watching everybody with their eagle eyes. But the most depressing side were the German people raising their arms and yelling in their extasy like not normal individuals "Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil".

Hitler wasn't ashamed of his murderous deeds. He fooled completly all the world leaders and people of the world didn't realize at that time that disaster was just around the corner.

Few years later when Germany occupied Poland the Gestapo arrested and later murdered the Polish hero of the 1932 Olympiad Janusz Kusocinski.

We enjoyed many great moments in sports during the 1930s. Records have been made and broken. But the biggest sensation of that particular era in the world of sports was the sex change operation by a Czech famous woman athlete Kubkova. She was a holder of maybe a dozen world records in 100 meters and long jump, and the world track association declared them all void after Miss. Kubkova changed to Mr. Kubek.

When the school year 1932-1933 ended in June 1933 I was a very happy young man. I have anticipated a very enjoyable vacation even thou we didn't plan on leaving town. But then still I was to young to control my own destiny. Somebody had a different idea how to make me happy. Somehow my aunt Mala found out about a summer camp being sponser by one of the Jewish organizations. She convinced my mother to send me to this camp for one month so she and my father could get some rest and time for themselves. The name of the place was Rytro. The same Rytro where our neighbour Mrs. Ratz came from. A small resort with many vacationers from Cracow during summer. Rytro had the same mineral waters and baths as the two large resorts nearby. The only difference was that Krynica and Muszyna have been known internationaly. Those places operated all year around summer and winter. High society, even reigning monarchs and princes spent their time there.

Our camp was called "Camp Hope". It was located at the foot of Beskidy Mountains where many of those mineral springs used to be hidden.

From Cracow we took a train going east to Tarnów and from there south to Rytro. A ride of five or six hours. Two weeks before leaving I was forced to take some shots and then arrived in Rytro on August 1, with me many boys including a former friend from Krupnicza street Fredek Frenkiel. I had with me a suitcase and a bag with a pillow, blanket and couple of sheets.

Camp Hope was a three story villa, located in a valley about a mile from town. It stood near to the railroad tracks which suited me well because when I felt lonesome for my mother and father I liked to sit there and watch trains passing by. I didn't like that place. From the time I got there I was waiting for the day to be on the train going back home. Maybe it was the new environment. For the first time in my life I was alone together with strickly Jewish society and most of them from religious homes. Their ways of playing and doing things were different from mine.

The villa was surrounded by a nice fence. There was a large dining room and social hall on the first floor. Across the hall was a large kitchen. The two upper floors served as our living quarters. At first I was in a small room with Fredek Frenkiel. Later I changed my bed with another boy from the large room because I couldn't stand Frenkiel's behavior. He declared himself Room's elder. Next to the villa there was a small creek.

A small creek flowed slowly nearby. Rytro itself was a very nice and pleasant village. I am quite sure I would be quite happy there with my family with me. It was a valley with tall mountains all around and many nice homes and hotels for people and guests to rent. Ofcourse there was much quieter there then in Krynica or Muszyna and also much cheaper.

The Paperle family very close relatives to Mrs. Ratz our neighbour from Falat street owned one of those hotels. The Ratz family used to spent many vacations in Rytro but not that particular year. They knew from Mrs. Ratz that I was coming so they greeted me warmly. I thought about them as at least one friendly family away from home. I used to visit their dairy restaurant almost daily. They served many specialties; Delisious yogart, many kinds of diary creams and ice creams but the best was their milk shake called "Lactol".

The leader of the camp was one Dr. Marienstrauss from Vienna. A very good looking bachelor. Young women from all over Rytro wouldn't leave him alone. With all this attention there wasn't to much time for him left to properly run the camp. His assistants Spanlang, Pinkas and Schek didn't have a slicest idea how lead or supervise young boys. All they knew how not to advise young people (If you can guess what I mean) and be a part of silly pranks they used to pull on us at night. Some nights I slept all dressed up because I was afraid that my clothing will be gone when I woke up in the morning.

An old lady from Cracow Mrs. Haber was the kitchen supervisor. She had few helpers and their food was good, tasty and in plenty. Mrs. Haber's son used to work with my father so he told her about me and asked her to take good care on me. Well she called me once to her room, asked me how was I doing and gave me an extra piece of cake. And that was the last time I saw her, except from the far.

Little by little I got used to the daily routine. Believe it or not I even made some friends. Most of them boys who also missed their families. The whole camp kind of ran by itself. We played games, mostly soccer as back home. On nice mornings we used to go swimming in Poprad a large mountain river with many dangerous spots. Ofcourse our area was safe enough for us to swim. But not far away from our beach there was this large stone sticking out of the river. The water around this stone seemed like a very fast moving whirlpool. Throughout the years many young people because of their curiosity swam to close to the stone and drowned. Nobody could find them later. The local population used to call this place "Topielec" or "The Drowner" in English.

Most boys in camp were good boys. But black sheep is always present in a large gathering, like ours. Some of them used to be con-artists cheating other kids out of their things. One of those boys cheated me out once of the half of my food package I recived from my mother claiming that I broke a very important part of his game. Later somebody told me that there was nothing wrong with his game. That was just a part of his regular sceaming routine.

.. Another boy have bothered me for many days to wrestle with him. It was always against my nature to take any part in fighting games. I finally gave in just to get rid of him. We scrambled all over a pasture, both finishing our wrestling in a big pile of cow's manure.

You probably remember the boy I wrote about before. The one who was a member of a leftist organization. He was in this camp also. Once he made some damage to the railroad station. Authorities came looking for him. He managed to hide. He kept out of side for a while till the whole thing blew over.

The attraction of the month was when a carnival arrived in Rytro. This was the entertainment of the year for the locals.Most of the guests from large cities didn't go for this kind of fun.

The main feature of this carnival was a long post smeared with soap and fat. A valuable prize have been promised to a man who could reach the top. Many local cowhands and other boys tried to impress their girlfriends but to no avail. Few brave boys from our camp also joined the act. It was a sorry sight watching them slip to the ground after reaching the halfpoint. Somehow our chief doctor found out about all that fun. After all he was responsible for the safety of all of us. He didn't have any other choice but to leave his girlfriends and made us all to return to camp.

Among many adventures of the good doctor one stood up when he and Mrs. Haber left for an outing leaving the whole camp without supervision for a day. Without Mrs. Haber no food could be served. Somehow we managed for most of the day. They didn't show up at suppertime and all of us got restless. Frustrated religious boys started to sing an old Hassidic song which went as follows. "Zol shoyn zein gedule. Zol shoyn zein gedule der doktor zol shoyn kumen" and so on. In the real song the gedule would be when Mesiah would come. Dr. Marienstrauss and Mrs. Haber arrived shortly before midnight. By that time most of the kids have been asleep. Only few of us ate.

When I was in Rytro a large part of our family was spending their vacation in the nearby resort of Muszyna. My aunt Janette from Tarnobrzeg was there with her children Zosia and Sigmund. Aunt Mala with her daughter Zosia and son Saul who was recupareting from his illness was also there. Uncle Ludwik was visiting with them for few days. So on one very nice afternoon they surprised me with their visit. I was flabergasted when I saw them. Before I could realize what was going on they stood in front of the villa all in smiles hoping probably that I would jump from joy. Well to tell the truth after the initial shock I was very happy to see them. Uncle Ludwik, both Zosias and Sigmund spent with me few hours. Everything would have been very nice and pleasant if I wouldn't show off in front of them with my new not so nice vocabulary which I learned in Rytro. I made them all upset. Later uncle Ludwik made a big fuss about my behavior. I was sure he would leave me some money but because of my faulty language I didn't get a penny. All they left me was a large pakage of milk chocolate from aunt Janette, which I ate all at once after they left. Two days later I went to the station to greet them all when they passed through Rytro on their way home. I was scared to death thinking all the time that aunt Janette would ask me if I still had a piece of her chocolate. I was reliefed when the train finally moved out from Ritro.

The unwanted vacation in Rytro finally came to an end. We celebrated the last night with a tremendous fire burning all kinds of junk. Ofcourse Dr. Marienstrauss celebrated his parting with his girls. We didn't sleep to much that last night because we expected some silly pranks from our three nutty assistant supervisors.

I was very happy to see my parents next Sunday afternoon in Cracow. Even thou there were only three days of vacation left I was glad to be home again.

It was great to see my friends after this month of separation. I would be much happier to play soccer with them all that time instead to be in Rytro.

In a way September of 1933 marked an end of an era in Poland's education system, until then based on old systems of Austria, Prussia and Russia. My third year in Gimnazium was just about to begin but according to the new rules I found myself in first grade again. All students born in 1921 became the pioneers of the new system. The same one system for the entire country.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

By the decree of Poland's parlament the basic education, seven years of public school have been kept intact, for kids who did not desire to further their education. Others who wanted to continue with high education were required after six years of public school pass an test which would allow them to enter gimnazium for four years followed by another test to let them continue their education in so called Lyceum for two years. After graduation from Lyceum the way to universities was wide open. The new system reduced years in gimnazium, lyceum included to six years instead of eight years of the old system. According to new rules kids in elementary schools have been called pupils, the ones in gimnaziums used to be students and university students got a title of academics.

There were no more gimnaziums with classical, humanistic or mathematic studies. Instead lyceums took over those classifications with addition of commerce, administration and industry.

The old Austrian style grey uniforms have been also abolished. A new official student's uniform was a navy blue with a double breasted jacket with silver buttons, with blue braids on each sleeve and with a blue shield on left sleeve showing the number of the school in numerical order from one end of the country to the other. (For example my Sobieski gimnazium had assigned number 358). We used to wear long slacks with a blue braid in outside seams. Knickers still remained in style from the old days. For lyceum students the braids have been red. Our caps changed from the square ones to round ones also with a blue or red braid. There always was a metal round pin attached to the front of the cap showing a book and flame (meaning knowledge) coming out of the book. Winter coats also changed from black to navy with the same trims as uniforms. Mandatory for important occasions were white shirts and navy ties.

There were no uniforms for public and elementary schools. Pupils used to wear the old square caps with a school color braid and SP pin meaning "Public School".

Academics as in the past didn't wear any uniforms. Their only indetification was a velvet cap; Black for law students, navy blue for philosophy students and maroon for medical and phisical education students. Often they used to wear their fraternities caps.

1933 was the year when many new students came to all gimnaziums all over Cracow, not only from the city but from many small towns and villages nearby. Those kids would never come to gimnazium if not for this new reform. These kids either took rooms with some families in Cracow, others commuted every day by train but most of them lived in dormitories provided to them by Catholic charities. It was a hard life for them away from their homes. So no wonder that little by little most of them have been forced to quit. Only a small percentage remained. I remember one student who came to our class from a small village near Cracow. By his appearence you could tell right away that he was a country boy. But he really was amazing. He was smart and witty and most of all polite. Everybody liked him. No wonder that in his first year we elected him our class president. He always was an excellent student. I could easy compare him to today's Pope John Paul II.

So our classrooms were full again. And again the administration divided our group to four rooms "A"capital, "a" small, "B" and "C". Room "A" was for exceptional students. With them my old friend from Santa Barbara Alfred Blonder. The other three rooms used to be just for good and average students. I wound-up in room "C" again not to my mother's liking, but nothing else could be done about it.

The next four years haven't been to much different then the ones before. Even the line-up of the faculty didn't change except of couple additons.

Our new room class master was for the next four years the instructor of German language profesor Josef Szaflarski. It wasn't his real name. Somewhere along his life he changed it from Cipori to avoid being rediculed because ~~another~~ word with a little different pronounciation was a very dirty word.

We finally got rid of singing and art classes but as far as I was concerned it didn't get any better because those above got replaced with "Handi Works" classes. For the next four years we have been taught how to make things from metal, wood and glass. To ~~xxxxxx~~ instruct those subject school administration hired another artist profesor Jan Ksionrzek who so happened also was our neighbour in the comlex. His wife was also a starting profesor of Polish literature in Sobieski gimnazium where profesor Ksionrzek met her,,fell in love with her and finally married her. Unfortunatly my mother used to know profesor Ksionrzek very well and responding to his invitations she was an often visitor to my handi work classes. Those visits were extremely embarrassing for me because Ksionrzek used to ask me all kind of questions to impress my mother. And poor me I didn't know to much about metal, glass or wood. Most of those questions I couldn't answer because most of my works have been made by profesionals and I suspect that down deep Ksionrzek knew about it. Besides I wasn't the only one cheated this way. Once even because of my bad eyesight my mother tried to get me out from handi works, She secured from our good doctor Rosenhauch a special certificate and gave it to profesor Ksionrzek but he politely told my mother that he has a great respect for ~~M~~ doctor Rosenhauch whom he knew personally but because of rules and regulations I couldn't be relived from handi works.

Our math profesor for next couple of years was profesor Oswiemcinski. Our washing lady Janova was also his family's washing lady. Always telling us what was going on in Oswiemcinski's ~~hp~~ household.

Well! Profesor Oswiemcinski was OK but his assistant a Jewish man was a real S.O.B. This guy was teaching for nothing like many other Jewish profesors of that era who didn't have to much chance ever to get a paid teaching job. Only few were the lucky ones. Rudolph Wolf (that was his name) was tough and mean hoping that his attitude will get him a job soon. But still after four years he was teaching for nothing.

The most important addition to our curriculum that particular year in second semester was Latin. Our profesor also for the next four years was Mikołaj Kaszyczko. Also a very tough cookie from a poor peasant family who made ~~it~~ good. Any chance he had he used to tell us his life story how for the sake of learning he was always cold and hungry but he never gave up. He used to have a tremendous sneeze claiming he needed it to wake up the sleepy and lazy students. He was also one of those educators who liked to have parents sitting in his classes. Ofcourse his views used to be my mother's views, so you can imagene three and half years of suffering on my part. Profesor Kaszyczko was a hard nut to bite. he was always serious and demanding. He taught us like Latin was ment to be a language of our future. And for some of us it was. His two assistants were two good looking young ladies, also teaching for nothing. To one of them we gave a name Atalanta, a beauty from old Roman or Greek history. I don't remember the name of the other one but I know she was Jewish. She was blond petite, not only good looking but a very good person also. We called her Venus from Milo.

Physics and chemistry also for the first time completed our curriculum.

I had to work very hard for all my grades. Somehow I managed but I had help. After Janek Unger left my new tuitor was profesor Zinn, also one of those Jewish men who taught botanics and zoology assisting profesor Łukiewicz for nothing.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

Profesor Zinn taught me at his so-called apartment. You would never believe the conditions a well educated man like profesor Zinn had to live just to survive. He was a tuitor because he needed money to live on. Being out of town he used to share an apartment with a poor Jewish family in the Jewish district. Mr. & Mrs. Szmulevicz had four children. For his money profesor Zinn had a bed to sleep and three meals a day. They also allowed him to use their bedroom so he could teach me. I also knew one of their son's from the camp of Hope in Rytro.

Before I finished gimnazium I had one more tuitor. He was Dziunek Horowitz a law student at the Jagiellonian university. He was a respectable young man with lots of knowledge. His sister was one of the lucky Jewish profesors. She taught German language with full pay at Queen Wanda gimnazium for girls. My last tuitor shortly before graduation from gimnazium was one very good Latin student whom Profesor Kaszyczko recomended to help me with my last Latin test.

My favored subjects always have been geography and history. For my last couple of years I had very tough profesors who taught both subjects. Profesor Felix Szpunar had special ideas how to quiz his students. During his hours while he had a student in front of the map asking him all kind of questions he also used to pick other students at random asking them from their places. Toward the end of the hour he always called one of them to come to the map and immediatly managed to confuse him with some tricky question, for which the student most of the time wasn't prepared because he thought that the hour was almost over. Ofcourse the student got a bad grade and Szpunar sent him home with a remainder to study more and harder.

The other profesor was Mr. Krajewski whose family used to have ties with Polish former royalty. This man paid more attention to spelling and pronanciation of Polish words. I always had good grades from him but still on couple occasions he complained to my mother that I don't pronance some words the way it should be. We used to have in our class his nephew, his sisters boy. To our big surprise he never treat him as well as he should.

At this particular period, 1933-1934 I started to look at the world around me from a different point of view. Until then going to school, do my homework and play with my friends on Falat street has been the main thing of my life.

I started to realize that whatever I was doing was under a tremendous preasure two ways. A preasure from myself and preasure put on me by my mother. As I saw those kids around me all relaxed and cool I envy them. I kept asking myself why I couldn't be like them and I came to a conclusion that I should work on some kind of a diversion to help myself to be more free.

Spring was just around the corner so I decided to join a group of boys in my room hoping they will be the diversion I so badly needed. Well for time being everything was coming alone just fine. I had very good time and thanks to those boys for the first time I met girls away from our complex which ofcourse made me very happy.

In those days the main meeting place of all young people in Cracow was Deptak the walkway near Blonie. My friends used to be Adam Brzezinski, Jurek Litwin, Karczmarczyk, whose first name I don't remember, Josef Goldstein, Julian Sonnenblick and many others. On Deptak we met one free spirit boy Tadek Chawala whose behavior for those days was rather Unsual. He was in love with a Jewish girl Luda Josefsberg. As far as girls were concerned some of them attended gimnazium, others finished the mandatory seven years and didn't do nothing anymore and some of them even thou still young hold jobs.

As time went by I finally realized that I choose the wrong company. Most of those kids never amount to anything and was forced to quit school.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

It was the time not only of all kind excuses but time of lies. Suprisingly my grades didn't suffer because it was close before the end of the school year and I was sure then I will pass to the next grade. It got to a point when on afternoons when mother had to leave house for some reason for couple of hours and left me there to study I used to get dressed in my best uniform and spent this time on Deptak which was just short walking distance from our house to meet with my friends.

Our girlfriends with some exceptions were good girls and from good families. One of them Halina Kleinman started her carrier in bad ways. First it was an innocent romance with one of my friends Edek Weissberger. A very good looking young fellow. Then came another and after that another one. For Halina all ended when together with her older sister they choose the oldest profesion in the world. EDEK WEISSBERGER ALSO QUIT SCHOOL BEFORE TIME.

Luda Josefsberg always kept saying that she was attending a gimnazium for girls right on the other side of Sobieski gimnazium divided with a tall wooden fence. Well I never knew for sure. She had her friendship with this Polish boy Tadek Chawala and a later with couple of others. Year or so later she quit gimnazium and our friendship ended. During the next few years I saw her many times walking with the same Jewish girlfriend. Except occasional Hi we never talk to each other. Many years later after the war I am quite sure That I saw her in Ebelsberg D.P. camp in Austria. In a matter of facts she used to live with her husband and their baby across the hall from our apartment. Even then we didn't say a word to each other. All the time we looked at each other. Her with some kind of smile without saying anything.

Among the nice girls used to be Nusia Kemp, Maryla Nussbaum and others. One small and skinny girl Hania Klopper few years later made a carrier for herself when she married one of the richest boy in Jewish Cracow. In those days when for most of us to own a bicycle was almost impossible she and her husband drove one of those very expensive foreign cars. Once I came across her in our temple during the High Holidays. We had a very nice conversation and she even went out with me the same afternoon but she didn't say a word about her romance and the fact that she knew already that she will marry shortly.

But a romance of that era which started during the Deptak years was between Runka Wolf and Danek Redlich. Both very good looking. Her with beautiful blond hair and him dark complected with black hair and tall. He was one of the lucky ones who owned a bicycle. And I was the lucky one who rode his bicycle while he was romancing with Runka. This romance still was in full bloom at the outbreak of the war in September 1939.

In a way I was lucky that my friendship with some of those people ended with the end of the school year. We left Cracow for our summer vacations. So I learned few bad habits, but who don't learn them during a lifetime. As I said before most of those kids didn't make their grades. Some didn't pass and the others quit school. Yet few of them remained. One of those bad habits stuck with me for a while. Many times I choose not to tell my parents about my bad days in school, For example not giving a right answer to profesor's questions. And those were the important ones. In gimnazium writen tests didn't count. They used to be secondary. Oral examination were the important ones and good answers produced good grades.

I was just ready to embark on my fifth year in gimnazium, but third year of the new system. But the biggest disapointment of my learning carrier was just about to hit me in my third and fourth year. And the nemesis was profesor Szantroch the man who helped us for me to be accepted to Sobieski gimanzium.

I learned at that time that favors not all the time are as good as they are ment to be. Not in my case anyway. My experience tells me and I am quite sure of it that the intervention on my behalf by my cousin Zosia Nussbaum with their family friend profesor Lencznar brought me "4" (fail) from math at the end of my first school year in gimnazium. Luckily for me a regulation in those years allowed students with one "4" to pass to next grade only once. If not for her I probably would get "4" at the semester break but I would certainly improve by the end of the year to get "3" (fair).

Profesor Szantroch was my Polish language instructor during 3rd and 4th year. Since my spelling problem in first grade of elementary school I never had any problems with Polish language. Not with spelling, not with grammar. I wrote good essays, I had good marks in speech and for explaining meanings of stories in our books and my reports on books from library we have been required to read were always good. Yet despite all this profesor Szantroch always kept his one eye on me. (He had only one eye and students use to call him "cyclop"). Until this day I am convinced that he remembered me as the one whom he helped to be admitted to this gimnazium. He also was a very good friend with profesor Lencznar and I am quite sure that they discussed me not one time. Anyway to make long story short profesor Szantroch failed me two years in a row, at semester breaks. I was fortunate that both years he didn't return for second semester because of his health. With him around I probably would never made through gimnazium. Profesors who replaced Szantroch gave me good marks on my crucial tests.

Besides my problems in clutch I always managed to come through when my chips were down. Among those students who failed throughout the years was also my good friend Salek Potok. He didn't pass from second to third class. He tried for another year the second grade but finally decided to quit. His parents then sent him to an one year business administration course. After he gradueted there he took a job with some commercial firm. My other good friend from my childhood years on Krupnicza street who was one year older also didn't make a grade one year.. He was a student in different gimnazium. Later he improved and gradueted from a commercial lyceum the same year I did. (JUREK KIRSCHNER)

No state gimnazium would also accept Jurek Drzdz who used to live in the same building on Krupnicza atreet as we did. His parents sent him to a private school. In those days people believed that for the high tuition they used to pay for their kids private education that there was no way for them to fail. And this theory was mostly true.

For all kinds of reasons parents transfered their kids from one school to another. The ones who left our room soon got replaced by others. This particular year we recived three newcomers. One was Mietek Schearer who came to us from Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy. In his case he switched from private school to public. The other was Henrik Reissman. No relation to the Reissman who was with us since the first day. The third one was a real surprise. He was Jurek Schoenberg the one who was with me all four years in Santa Barbara school. Before he came to our class, he was a student at Witkowski gimnazium. This gimnazium was exactly behind the wall of the Kapucins Brothers monastery located on Loretanska street. The Kapucins used to have a beautiful garden in the back of their monastery with all kinds of fruit trees.

There was a beautiful summer day and some Jewish boys have had a free hour because of Catholic religion class was in progress in their room. Being bored Jurek Schoenberg and his friends decided to claim the wall and taste some of those delisious apples on Kapucins trees. But as an old proverb says that crime doesn't pay, Schoenberg and his friends got caught by the holly brothers, later suspended and thanks to their parents influence transfered to other schools. Schoenberg wound-up at Sobieski gimnazium.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

Jurek Schoenberg finished gimnazium and later graduated from Lyceum. He always was a good student. A rumor in 1940 made us believe that their family somehow arrived in United States and settled there. Ofcourse the rumor was just rumor. I saw Mrs. Schoenberg after the war in Cracow. They survived the war in Soviet Union except Mr. Schoenberg. Jurek was one of the lucky ones. Despite being Jewish he was drafted into the Polish army in Russia. He ended up with a rank of a lieutenant and at the time was still serving somewhere in Poland.

After the war Jurek Schoenberg went back to school and finished with a degree in engineering, specializing in construction of heavy bridges. Later he left Poland and settled in Paris. I heard from him last time in 1986 when he returned to Poland with his six years old son. He was married twice and divorced. I believe that he lives in Warsaw now.

In meantime life on Falat street went as normal as possible. Our sport-social club kept dominating our lifes. Many new young people joined up including even one older academic who studied at the Highier School of Commerce. Until today I can't figure out what he wanted with us much younger kids, except that his interest was in girls only.

Speaking of girls that was the time that us boys began to look at our girls with whom we just played before with different eyes. As us they matured also and believe me there was something to look at.

New families moved in. Not just with sons but with quite few girls. We kept playing soccer in summertime. We used to have players on our team who played in organized soccer but anytime for some reason they got mad at their parent club they always came to play with us. Among them was one Polish young man with whom I was always impressed. His name was Cesiek Martiniak. He was tall and good looking. He used to go to gimnazium and later graduated from industrial lyceum. He was only an average student but never had bad grades. He was never in trouble, always relaxed, and with plenty time for everything. His school uniform made him even more handsome. He played soccer on a junior team of a major league club Wisła (Vistula) and was so good, some day a shoe in to be on their major league roster.

Oposite to Martiniak was this other boy. He was Elek Seirlhuber. He was doing terrible in school and his only passion was soccer too. He also was very good in it. His father was an officer in Polish army. They were of German ancestry. They looked like Germans; Stuffy, skinny and unfriendly. Their neighbours didn't like them and many suspected them of being German spies.

Among the new arrivals on Falat street were the two Navrot sisters; Christina and Nusia. Andrew Albrecht used to like her very much. Andrew was the boy whom Olga Tencza used to like, the girl who damped me for him. But Andrew wasn't a fool. Nusia Navrot was much prettier. Others were Maria Biedron and Janka Michalski. For time being I was friendly with Janka, but one of the Niedzielski Boys the son of the leader of the club got so jelous over her, and you know me I always hated confrontations and felt sorry for him and decided to step aside. Janka didn't like him anyway.

You see there was a difference between the girls from Deptak and the girls from Falat street. The ones from Deptak were mostly Jewish. The ones from Falat street with one excepton used to be Catholics. I no longer remember the name of this Jewish girl. She was nice and helpful and from a very nice family but her looks were terrible. She was a very good sport and always around. She used own a large collection of records leting us use them anytime for all kind of occasions.

The other Navrot sister Christina had her eyes on Salek Potok and I think for awhile she really liked him. But then came along Szczęsny Zachuta. Blond, big and handsome. No wonder Christina droped Salek for him.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

A boy with a name Szczesny Zachuta in those days in Poland and ofcourse his entire family have been thought about as something special. There was no doubt about that someplace along the line his ancestors had been a part of Polish nobility. Yet this particular family was a middle class and as plain as anybody around them. Szczesny was also a student at Sobieski gimnazium. As you can see by now most of the students from the complex for one reason or another attended Sobieski gimnazium. By the way name Szczesny translated to English means "Lucky". Zachuta also was one of those Polish patriots. Well with his background he had to be. During the war he was a member of Polish underground, caught by Gestapo and executed with many others on the grounds of Cracow's botanical garden.

When winter arrived most of our activities moved inside. On cold days when iceskating was possible we spent most of our free time on Cracovia iceskating ring. Cracovia also used to have one of the best in Poland ice hockey team. Four of their players always represented Poland in international competitions. Weather played very important role in Poland's hockey championships. Anytime it got warm during winter in order to finish the championship games all competition was always moved to Katowice a city in Polish Silesia. The only one in Poland who had an artoficial iceskating ring.

Anyway most of us enjoyed iceskating very much. Meeting girls and flirting moved from Deptak and parks to the ring. We all moved up a notch when our parents finally bought for us the rattling. Skates screwed to special shoes. Ski slacks and heavy sweaters were also in style and ofcourse special ski-caps. We used to all get dressed up in those clothes even thou it was against school rules. The most fun and trouble also caused boys who didn't know how to skate but rented their equipment anyway just to keep their eyes on their girlfriends who knew how to skate.

On some evenings at our homes just for relaxation after we finished with our homework we developed so-called buttons game. We created teams from buttons and played a game similar to soccer with soccer rules. All this on a square dining room table. Each team had eleven midium size buttons. A goalie was waxed together from three or four larger buttons. A small black button used to be the button ball. The goal was made from boxes with special measurments. We used to place those button teams on the tables in the same formations as soccer teams on a soccer field. We moved the buttons with pieces of plastic similar to those used in playing guitar. We manuvered the button players and the ball into a position to shoot. Before every shot on the goal the big goalie requaried an adjustment to defend the goal. Each one of us was obliged to say the word "shot" before shooting. When the small button went to the goal past the goalie that was the score.

We named our button teams after major league soccer teams and colored them with those teams colors. Every winter we played two games against each other. One game on the home table and the other at the home of the opponent. WE PLAYED TWO FIFTEEN MINUTES QUARTERS WITH 5 MIN. INTERMISSION.

An other popular game we used to play outside on warm and sunny winter days was the "cents" game. During Austrian occupation of Cracow before world war one cents were the change of Austrian currency. In Polish times we still called the game cents game but we played the game with Polish change (groshen). The trick was to bounce those coins of the wall and anytime a coin bounced of the wall close enough to the opponents coin and reached the measurement between the thumb and small finger the person who bounced that coin was a winner. Sometimes lucky boys used to win many coins, enough to go to the movies or buy some cookies or pastry.

The year was 1934. That year we spent our vacations in Makow a small picturesque resort on the edge of Tatra and Carpathian Mountains. Rabka and Zakopane the two large resorts wasn't to far away. NEAR

Many villas and private homes served mostly Jews from Cracow for many years, especialy years between the two world wars. Makow was about two hours train ride from Cracow. And again like in those years when we took our vacations in Stryszawa we got off the train in Sucha and from there on a country wagen we continued to Makow. Our friends the Reisbergs came also with their two sons and our fathers commuted on weekends.Reisbergs rented a home about half a mile from our house which was a brick building located directly on the highway between Cracow and Zakopane. Many rich tourists used to come that way in their automobiles on the way to the rich resorts in Tatra Mountains. Once even my uncle Gabriel passed by there in his friend's car on the way to Zakopane. Later he told us that he saw me in front of the house but wasn't sure 100% so he didn't stop.

On the other side of our back yard about few hundreds yards away railroads tracks ran through, so few times a day we could watch trains going by to Rabka and Zakopane and other small resorts on the way.

Beyond the tracks the River Skawa slowly flowed by. The same Skawa who flowed by near Stryszawa and then to Vistula River. On nice days we used to swimm there. At that point the waters were not deep with a very soft river bottom. The owners of the house were nice people and had a son my age. When he was free from doing chores we played together. His parents didn't own to much land. They used to be small businesspeople who sold all kinds of merchandise on market days in all those small towns around. They traveled with a small wagen. Until then I thought that this was exclusivly Jewish patent. The wandering Jew was being challenged by a Wandering Pole.

We also made many trips to Sucha. Sometimes even walking all the way. On one of those outings we found out from an article in a newspaper that the Nazis made their first move in Austria on their way to overtrow Austrian government. They killed their chancellor Dolfuss but still couldn't replace the government with their people. They had to wait few more years.

On each Sunday afternoon local boys played soccer. So again I had the opporunity to play my beloved game. It was the first time in my life that I saw players playing in one shoe only. The lefties played in left shoes and the righties in right shoes.

Another experience was watching when the owners of the Reisbergs house killed their pig for winter, then prepared the meat and smoked ham.

This was also a year when a long rainfall flooded large parts of southeastern Poland. Our house was surrounded with waters from the flooding Skawa. But there was no water inside. The highway nearby and the railroad tracks have been closed for quite few days. But we weren't in any intermediate danger, and we didn't run out of food.

The 1934 flood remained me of another flood in 1925 when I was a little boy in Cracow. In those days Vistula River didn't have yet secured banks. Many areas of Cracow were under water. I still remember people walking on stimulated bridges above the streets level and others moved by small boats.

And again our vacations finally came to an end. In Cracow I started my second year in the new system gimnazium.. Not to many changes occured. Our new math instructor was Profesor Antoni Swaryszewski a very smart man who also taught mathematics, physics and asthronomy at Jagiellonian university. I had good grades from him. I amm only sorry to say that he was one of the first profesors rounded up by Germans in 1939 at the university, arrested and later killed. With him at that time few other profesors from Sobieski gimnazium got killed. Among them a latin profesor Skimina whose son was married to a Jewish woman.

Learning latin as I said before was hard on me. My mothers visits in my classroom made it even harder. But in time I finally managed to cope with this situation. Suddenly at one point my mothers visit ceased to bother me.

The most preasure was on Latin grammar. It was murder to learn all that stuff and memorize and figure out all those exceptions and where to apply them. Other Latin profesors concentrated on reading and reciting poetry, which also wasn't easy because reading poetry in order to get a rhyme you had to know how to conect some of those words with other words in order to achieve a particular rhyme. So no matter what the struggle went on. On a more pleasant side learning a new language always brought to our minds words we didn't suppose to learn. Let me give you a modest example. Others were much worse. The word "publicamus"in a nice explanation ment "tax Collector"but if somebody wanted to it could interprate it as "public house or plainly brothel". In another case "publicus locus" could mean a "government house" but to us it was "latrine". But most popular in those days used to be poems which had to do with "pedes" (legs). No explanation here. Draw your own conclusions.

In 1934 I was involved in rather close friendship with a new classmate of mine. Jerzy Latko came to our class I don't remember from where. He was a big and sloppy young man and for a while it looked like we will be good friends. We used to live not far away from each other and visited often in each others homes. Even my mother was happy with this development, because Latko was a good student and she met few times with Mrs. Latko. Yet after a while all this togetherness blew up and turned into hatress. Latko started spreading lies around that I was insulting him and also beating up on him, which wasn't possible at all because he was much stronger then I. Besides it wasn't in my nature to insult people. At school we got separated and weren't sitting together at the same bench anymore. For the rest of our school years we never spoke again. The only explanation of his behavior as far as I was concerned was that his anti-Semitic upbringing at home finally surfaced and took the upper hand.

After graduation from gimnazium he became a cadet in Polish military academy. I saw him many times in last couple of years before the war walking the streets of Cracow always dressed up in his uniform. Never in anybody's company. Always alone. No friends.

At that time one of my former friends from Sobieski gimnazium warned me that Latko was looking for an occasion to get me and give me good beating up. Thanks God it never happened. As a cadet Latko probably joined the Polish army and as everybody knows he got a very good beating from the Germans. It is not that I was happy about it but as an individual he deserved it.

In autumn of 1934 Marshal Josef Piłsudski made his last visit to Cracow before his death. He was already ill then but came to town to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the creation of his Legions which eventualy led to Poland's independence in 1918.

Piłsudski's visit also coinsided with the 300th anniversary of the birth of the King Jan Third Sobieski, the last strong king of Poland, and after whom they named our gimnazium many many years back. Marshal Piłsudski supposed to take part in our celebration, but canceled his visit later.

There was a tremendous parade and a field mass for thousands of people on Błonie and Piłsudski revued his troops and former veterans of the 1914 campaign. People of Cracow greeted him with open hearts. I still remember uncle Ludwik standing there and yelling like a fool and weaving his hat. On this day we had many guests in our house because the whole ceremony could be seen from our balcony.

In May of 1935 about six weeks before the end of the school year our principal Mr. Władysław Rutkowski summoned the school's faculty and all students to the school's playground and told us that Poland's liberator Marshal Josef Piłsudski passed away. A very good friend of Polish Jews was gone forever. His funeral was magnificent. Many important dignitaries from all over the world attended, among them Goering, Laval who in few short years became Poland's enemies.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and otherwise!

Poles burried Pilsudski in Wawel Cathedral right there among Polish Kings against tremendous opposition from Catholic church which considered him sort of atheist and because of rumors all over Poland that his mother was Jewish. My class was standing in the first row, right behind the guards during his funeral en route on Dunajewski street to the Wawel Hill.

At that moment an era in Polish history was ending. A man who gave Poland her second life was on his way to an eternal rest. We already could see the new forces emerging who would like to rule the country into the uncertain future.

One of the closest Pilsudski's comrades of arms from the Legions era General Edward Smigly Rydz was given the tittle of Marshal and Commander in Chief of Polish Armed Forces. Pilsudski's party the Bipartisan Block of Cooperation with Government was disbanded and his heirs immediatly went on to promote and campaign for bringing to life a new political party.

Pro government demonstrations in Poland used to be as common as for us students going to school every day. Few anti-government demonstrations have been delt with with efficiency and ofcource with police brutality. Anytime something important was just about to happen, like changes involved with Pilsudski's death, or political problems with other countries, we the students have been called on to take part in so-called demonstrations. We didn't do nothing and didn't say nothing. We used to just stand there on the Main Market Plce, all dressed up in our uniforms. Another large group of people, I think those were the Jagiellonian University students were sitting all over the large monument of Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz and doing all the yelling for the appropriate cause. In this particular case they were yelling for the creation of the new political party. On another occasion Poland had some problems with Lithuania. So we all stood there. It was already late at night and those students on the top of this monument prepared everybody for the war against Lithuania. Their main slogan was "Let us go on Kowno (capital of Lithuania)" They chanted that slogan for a while. Suddenly some jerk came up with an idea to mix in Jews in this farce, so the slogan changed. Those hudlums on the top of this monument picked up the new chant and declared in unity "Let us go on Kowno but without Jews".

But the demonstration after Pilsudski's death was rather peacefull. We listened to few important speakers and at the end the former Pilsudskis friends who all those years kept their mouths shot because they were afraid of him formaly annouced the creation of a new political party.

Ofcourse the next day press and radio all over Poland and the world reported about the peacefull student demonstration and that the new clique accepted without reservations the students new demands.

They called the new party The Camp of National Unity. The creation of this party marked the begining of the raise of the anti-Semitism in Poland on much larger scale.

Not to long after Pilsudski's funeral the school year came to and end. I was on my way to the third year of the new system. My grades were good and I even fergot all my problems with profesor Kaźmierczyk in first semester. My biggest worry during the second semester was when couple of times I broke windows in my room while throwng a ball not knowing how to explain gently to my mother that I needed money to replace the broken glass.

In summer of 1935 we spent our vacation again in the old Stryszawa. That time my cousin Saul came with us to recuparete some more from his heart problem. My uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala knew for sure that their son will get the best attention possible from my mother.

That time around we rented our rooms from the Fluder family. The people with their house on the hill, with two sons, small bea farm and father working for Polish railroads.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

As always we had very nice vacations and visits from all our relatives. Uncle Gabriel came couple of times to see his son and ofcourse uncle Ludwik spent with us a week or so. Aunts Rose and Mala never came to see us. For them village like Stryszawa was no high class enough.

We spent one weekend in Rabka a larger resort closer to Tatra Mountains. We had a room in a kosher villa. We ate there couple of delicious dinners. Saul met there with some of his friends from Cracow. Also in Rabka in this villa Janka Patatoff was staying. On Sunday afternoon we all went to a five o'clock dance in a place where Mr. Byczkowski and his orchestra were performing. Mr. Byczkowski was the future husband of aunt Mala's sister Genia. In the evening we all returned to Stryszawa. As always we left the train in Sucha and from there with a doroshki we went to our village. Uncle Ludwik continued on this train to Cracow.

In Stryszawa I got together again with my former friends with whom I played on our previous vacations there. They all grew up ofcourse. Most of them besides going to the local country school helped with daily chores on their parents farms.

My cousin Saul was a very handsome young man and many of those country girls used to give him lots of admiring looks. So when once a gypsy band with a dancing bear came to Stryszawa and we were just standing there looking on those gals wouldn't leave Saul alone. Each one of them wanted to dance, making their country boyfriends jealous. All that hoopla almost ended in tragedy when the bear put one of his mighty paws on one girl's foot almost crushing it. As far as I can remember she later recovered.

That time around we also got acquainted with two families from Silesia who also spent their vacations there. Very nice people. One family had a son my age whose name was Koko and a daughter Lesia. The other family had two daughters. The younger was my age and the older one used to go out with Saul. We had lots of fun together going out on outings in the hills or swimming in the Skawa River. Many times we went on long distance marches all the way to Sucha.

Back in Cracow after the vacations there weren't to many changes in my third year of gimnazium. All subjects have been the same as in previous year. This was the year when profesor Szantroch caught up with me in first semester by giving me "4" (Fail) from Polish language. This also was the year when my mother continued with her visits during Latin lessons and a year of many book reports, and essays. As a rule we have been required to read certain books and later to coment on what we red. To make easier for us to coment or write those reports we used to buy in book stores abbravieted editions of those books. We called those books "bricks". To use them was against school rules and anybody who got cought with a brick could face serious consequences and "fail" grade. As for the essays our assignments called for writing a report or story on famous people, facts about nature, biology or zoology. We used to call them referats. Student who wrote one of those referats was obliged to read it aloud in class and later explain what he was writing about. Some of them used to just copy the subject from the book and didn't have a slightest idea what they were reading about. Ofcourse a performance like that ment another "fail". At the end to many failures started a big shake-up of the process of preparing essays.

To prepare an essay or a book report here in United States a student goes to a district library or a school library and studies there or gets all the information required before he goes home to do his work.

In my days in gimnazium we didn't have this privilege. School libraries weren't stuffed with all the books necessary. Only univerities had very large libraries and the one at the Jagiellonian university in Cracow kept their books in many old buildings around the city.

In Poland in those days to own a library was a business. They used to call them "Bibliothecs".

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and otherwise!

Those bibliothecs used to be loaded with all kind of books, for school reports, for small children, and ofcourse for adult reading. For a monthly fee of 2 zlotys everybody could become a member and borrow books anytime. If somebody wanted to borrow a second book a 10 groshen extra per book was required. So besides reading books for school reports we used to borrow so-called forbiden books. Most popular books of that era in Poland were stories, fictions or other books by French and English authors. Many people prefered German writers and certain Polish writers enjoyed wide spread popularity. Polish movie industry depended a lot on those Polish writers.

There was this one book which wasn't sophisticated, yet all the students enjoyed very much to read it. The book "Memories of a Blue Uniform" by Polish author Stefan Gomulicki was a story of students in Cracow during the Austrian occupation before world war one. Students in those days used to wear dark blue uniforms. This was an exciting reading about those boys their problems in and out of school, about their relation with their profesors, about the rich students and the poor ones who came to Cracow from far away places to struggle and to be hungry just to study and to make something out of themselves and to have better life then their parents whom they left behind. The book convinced us that the discipline, the life of a student, and the way of educating him didn't change at all. Even romancing a favored girl didn't change at all.

Speaking of discipline even thou all schools used to go overboard to enforce it boys of my era were much smarter ~~xnxxaxx~~ to find ways to go around of any kind of discipline. We used to have a student in our class who was much older then most of us because all his years in gimnazium he spent two years in every class and the guy was a son of a pricipal of a commercial gimnazium in Cracow. But he was a notorious one. Soon after school early in the afternoon he could be seen already in civilian clothing in company of some girl or even older woman. At school he even had nerve enough to smoke during the hours in the classroom bypassing the restroom where others enjoyed smoking during recesses.

Anytime profesor entered the room we were obliged to stand up and greet him. Even our German language profesor we greeted with "Guten Tag Herr Profesor" when he entered. When he was leaving at the end of the hour we used to say "Aufwiedersehen Herr Profesor". To our Latin profesor we used to say "Salve" when he enter and he responded with "Salvete". When he was leaving we used to say "Vale" to which he answered "Valete".

It was the same on the streets of Cracow. Seeing a profesor walking down the street a student was required to take off his cap to greet him, not just to tip his cap. Students were forbiten on the streets in late evening hours but many of them always took chances. Older students especially when walking with girls who tried to avoid a profesor on the street by looking into store windows until they saw him going away became objects of nasty remarks and some choice words mostly for those with bad grades. It came to a point that even some profesors used to know some things about those girls their students used to go out with and spoke about them with some sarcasm during classes just to ~~xidx~~ ridicule the boy.

The set-up of the school administration was also the same as in Austrian times. All primary schools used to be govern by School District Advisory Board. Gimnaziums were under the jurisdiction of the District Curatorium, and the Universities governed themselves with lots of rights and academic freedoms. Even the national police was prohibited from entering the university, even thou a dangerous situation would require police intervention. Such was a case at the Jagiellonian University when once Endeks killed a Jewish student and the murderer was never found.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

As in previous years some students left and others came. Still there were more of those who left. After five years in this gimnazium classes got smaller. The attendance picked when there were four rooms of our education level only. But by the end of fifth year there were only three rooms. Since the begining between 30-40 students left for one reason or another.

In June of 1936 I finished my third year of the new gimnazium. This was also the year when with my cousin Saul I visited Vienna and Berlin and watched for couple of days the Olympic Games of that year. Seeing the streets of Berlin of Hitler era it made me very sad.

1936 was also the year when Hitler made his first move for domination of Europe. This was the year when he broke the Versaillies treaty and called the rest of Europe bluff when he occupied the demilitarized Rheinland with only few batalions of German army while 100,000 French soldiers watched on the other side of the border afraid to move into German Territory. In those days Hitler was still weak and the French by moving in could easy stop Hitler and by doing so prevent the disaster of world war two. Internal problems of France stop them from being heros of XX century.

Back in Cracow I found out that the older Reisbergs son also quit gimnazium. Contrary to Mrs. Reiberg's constant bragging how good a student he was. To me as a young boy Mrs. Reisberg always was like a mystery woman. Not that she was good looking. She was far away from that distinction. I guess this notion of mine was strenghten by her stories presenting herself as a lady from Vienna which later I found out also wasn't true. But the mystery aura for me became even more real when during our vacations together in Makow when I saw her for the first time in a bathing suit taking a swimm in Skawa River and her body covered all over with black hair. Not at all like a woman, more like a man.

During the next few years I saw Fredek Reisberg from time to time. Then he told me how hard gimnazium was for him. He also told me that when he used to have a bad day in school he couldn't bring himself to tell his mother about it. Finally after a while Mrs. Reisberg discovered that anytime Fredek had a bad day in school he used to walk in to the house with a murmur which sounded like "Bzzz-Qua-Qua-Qua". During the years to come the murmurs became more frequent and ended when Fredek left gimnazium. He never went back to any kind of school. His younger brother Sigmund was a student in Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Industrial Gimnazium. Because of the war he also never finished. I presume that their entire family perished in the holocaust.

In August my mother went for a rest to Rabka, and to drink there some of that miracle water like the other Jews from Cracow of that era. It controled their bowel movements. Mother rented an apartment with Janka Patatoff. As per my mother everything would have been fine with only one exception. Janka used to come home from her dates late at night. She intended to keep quiet so she used to remove her shoes in the hall, but when inside the room she kept forgeting while she took off her shoes in the hall by droping them with a such loud noise to the floor causing my mother to wake up and stay awake for most of the night.

Before leaving for Rabka my mother didn't feel well at all. As for me she arranged with aunt Janette in Tarnobrzeg to spent the rest of vacations there. That particular time I traveled in a company of a Jewish man from Tarnobrzeg. In those days people used to call a man like that "Frahtiash" which ment a "Freight Man". A man who every morning of the week traveled from Tarnobrzeg to Cracow.(In a matter of facts such men traveled like that from most of the small towns in Poland to the closest large city). People in Tarnobrzeg gave him money and he took care for them on all kinds of business in Cracow. Including to escort a young guy like me on the train.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

The ^frahtiash^ from Tarnobrzeg was an orthodox Jew with a long beard and earlocks. My father and I met him at the station. They had some conversation in Yiddish. I guess my father told him to take good care on me. The man just kept shaking his head. Shortly my father said good-by to me and left. There was already very late in the afternoon and the train was late also. Our train was one of those international trains going from Paris to Bucharest in Rumania with all those modern conviniences. When it finally arrived we couldn't find an empty seat. I felt kind of weird standing in the company of that Jewish man. We traveled fast and after couple of hours we passed Tarnów. From there after a short ride we came to a small town of Dembica. There we left the train which went to Lvov and from there to Bucharest. After couple of hours waiting in Dembica a local train came at last and we were on our way to Tarnobrzeg. It was already late at night. Later I found out that this local train also came from Cracow and that we would be much better of just ~~xx~~ waiting longer in Cracow for that local train. At least we would have place to sit down and travel without leaving the train in Dembica.

Even thou it was late at night a doroshki ordered by aunt Janette was waiting at the station for me.

As always I had very good time in Tarnobrzeg. I met many new boys and girls overthere. The only problem was that aunt Janette didn't like for me to go out with those girls on dates. It took a lot of convincing her to let me go out in the evening. My ~~xx~~ uncle profesor Josef also was upset when I arrived in Tarnobrzeg ~~xixkxxx~~ without my student cap with only a white summer cap. But I explained to him that this was the way students dressed in Cracow. Truly it was against the rules in Cracow also. Uncle Josef wanted me at least to stick to my cap the student's pin, but I used to take it off any chance I got.

In those days my cousin Zosia was already engaged to Roman Kahane. As I wrote before my cousin Sigmund was exceptionaly good student and most of the time kept his nose studying Polish literature. We didn't get along to well but somehow we managed. I kept out of his way riding around town on uncle Josef's bicycle.

I returned to Cracow few days before the new school year began. Mother was due to arrive from Rabka couple of days later on Sunday. Because Janka Patatoff was all that time with mother That particular Sunday aunt Fran invited me to a delicious dinner in her house. I still can't remember when I ate more then that day. After the dinner I went to a ball park to see a major league soccer game. During the game I got sick in my stomach from overeating. My father and I supposed to meet at the station to pick-up my mother. On the way to the station I felt so bad that I was forced to step to nearby building and vomit in one of the halls. I spilled my guts all over the place. Luckily nobody saw me and besides there was tavern in this building and many drunks used to spill their guts in the same hall.

I felt much better when I came to the station. I was very happy to have mother home again.After all we didn't see each other most of the summer.

I was very excited going back to school on ~~November~~ SEPTEMBER 3rd. This was my last year of gimnazium and I was looking forward ~~xxxxxx~~ to the two years in lyceum. My happineed didn't last to long. Shortly I discovered that my Polish language profesor will be my nemesis Tadeusz Szantroch again. He failed me for the second time at the end of the first semester. God was watching over me. Szantroch got ill again and never returned for the second semester. With him I probably would never finish gimnazium.

Our faculty didn't change at all and as always my mother was hard at work to keep my education going. One thing she made sure from the begining having again a frank conversation with Rabbi Dr. Schmelkes to assure my very good for Religion on my final exam.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

(OR FOURTH)

The Sixth and final year of gimnazium would be a real good for me if not for some problems with Latin and ofcourse the trouble with profesor Szantroch. At least my Latin profesor Mr. Kaszyczko recommended to us one of his better students from highier grades to help me out before the final exams. We took his advise and Kaszyczko gave me "3" minus on my final test which resulted in "3" (fair) on my last report card. Well as far as Polish language was concerned the substitute for Szantroch also gave me "fair" at the end of second semester.

That last year as part of physics and chemistry classes we visited many industrial establisments in Cracow. On two other occasions we observed the workings of Cracow's gas and electric companies as well the largest soap factory in Poland.

The visit at the Cracow's Press Palace the creation of Mr. Marian Dombrowski who was the owner and chief editor of the Cracow Daily Courier, was an exciting experience by itself. It was great to see how a great newspaper was put together before hiting the streets every morning. This Ilustrated Every Day Courier (full name of the paper) have supported all the way policies of Polish government and Mr. Dombrowski was one of the first of so-called big shots to leave Cracow when German armies approached the city. He lived all those years in New York City and passed away not to long ago.

Mr. Dombrowski's Courier also published an afternoon edition under the name of "Beat of the Day" and many weekly magazines famous all over Poland; like One,Two,Three Sport magazine. Kino the entertainment magazine, and Eyes of the World a worldwide publication.

Except the Courier there were many small paper publications in Cracow like a socialist papers, conservative and others. The worst ones used to be the Catholic church publications and the papers published by the Endeks with their tremendous anti-Semitic propaganda.

The only Jewish publication in Cracow was "New Daily". Besides news concerning Jewish matters this newspaper provided their readers with all other national and international news.

The most important newspaper in Poland was Polish Gazette published in Warsaw under complete influence of Polish government.

In the school year 1936-1937 for the first time in Polish schools history the authorities added military education to our curriculum. It was something like R.O.T.C. here in United Sates. And there again thanks to my mother's initiative I was excused from participating in military education. A paper from our friend Dr. Rosenhauch about my right eye was that time accepted by our school doctor who issued a certificate which I in turn delivered to our commanding officer relieving me from his classes. This was a big victory for my mother. But on another hand as far as I was concerned I was glad to be out of it.

Classrooms in gimnazium used to be dull not pleasant at all. On the walls except of pictures of President Moscicki, Marshal Pilsudski, Polish White Eagle and Crucifix no other decorations have been hanging. Students used to sit on simple benches with narrow tables attached to them. Blackboard, profesors table on an elevated podium and one chair and small wardrobe constitued the entire furnishing. A special book called "the daily" was laying on the table. In school jargon we used to call this table "Cathedra". In this daily the class roster was listed. Each profesor was required to mark in this book names of absent students. The other section of the daily used to be pages where profesors signed in and explained there what was the theme of the day. In the remarks sections profesors wrote the names of students who for some reason didn't behave for the future concideration by the head master of the room.

Throughout the years some parents organizations came up with an idea to refurnish the classrooms, on their own expence. The idea initiated at Sobieski caught up with authorities and soon other schools followed.

Parents including mine bought new tables. One table per two students. Two chairs per table. They also bought a new large desk for profesors to replace the old "Cathedra" with a new comfortable chair, new inkstand and fancy pen. Our parents also saw to it that walls got decorated with some appropriate pictures.

As I wrote before Jewish students of Cracow have supported for many years so-called Self Help Union. One of the leaders of this organization was Henrik Goldfinger the young man with badly burned up face. Under his direction this organization grew tremendously throughout the years. Mostly supported by Jewish students donations this Union helped many poor boys many of them from out of town whose parents didn't have enough money to pay for their food and lodging while they studied in Cracow. On many occasions the Self Help also paid the ₱110.00 240 ZŁ for student's tuition. The most popular fund raisers used to be the Saturday nights dances where always the crop of Cracow's Jewish studentry met.

In early 1930s Jewish Cracow didn't have a facility I mean indoor facility for physical fitness programs. But thanks to the cooperation of American YMCA who owned and operated a beautiful five story building in the center of the city with gyms, all kind of sport equipment, indoor swimming pool and an outdoor one on the roof of that building Jewish youth have been free to use it anytime.

In the middle of 1930s Jewish organizations finally financed and erected such a building in the Jewish district of Cracow under the name of Jewish Sport Association. During the occupation German soldiers used the facility. I am quite sure that now a day Polish authorities also put this building to a very good use. When I was in Cracow after the war this building was in Jewish hands as long as most of them remained in the city.

For us soccer lovers and fans of the Sport Club Cracovia 1936 was a very bad year. Our beloved club played very bad soccer, almost unheard for a club with Cracovia's statue in Polish Major Soccer League. The club finished last and was forced to vacate the major league to play 1937 in minors. As was expected of them they won the Cracow district championship and later went on to win their playoffs which put them back in the majors for 1938 season with an amazing ~~season~~ COME BACK which culminated in winning Polands's championship.

Besides the Park of Henrik Jordan on Błonie not far way from the place on Fałat street where we used to live an older even Park of Cracow used to be a favored place to meet and play for us students. This park was in another part of the city and not far away from Sobieski gimnazium. On nice spring days we used to come there after school to rent small boats or kayaks to have some fun in a small lake. In wintertime this lake served as an iceskating ring. Many mornings or evenings we used to skate there as part of our physical education ~~hours~~. PROGRAM.

In older days Park of Cracow had its own zoo, a nice pastry and candy place, a restaurant, pavilions for concerts, theater and cinema, swings for kids and tennis courts. A swimming pool there served not only the public but also for swimming competitions and water polo games, until the time when those facilities have been bilt as part of the Cracow's NEW sport stadium. There was also there a ring for bicycle races later converted to a rent a bike business. All those fun places became just a memory after the war. Swimming pool and bicycle ring have been destroyed. The lake filled up with dirt with grass growing on the top of it. Once after the war on a lovely afternoon I set there with my cousin Zosia Kahane and her daughter Yoel in a buggy. For a moment I saw myself drifting lazyly in a small boat. I opened my eyes and asked myself; Where did the past go?

For a young man to own a bicycle in my days was like to own a car today. That why an establishment like rent a bike in Park of Cracow was so important.

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

There was another bicycle place on Blonie nearby the famous Oleandry street. For 10 or 15 groshen I could ride a bicycle there maybe for an hour or sometimes longer. Depend on the mood of the man who owned the place. He was an older man. Small build but he could run like crazy when it came to chase boys who wouldn't bring in the bicycles on time. The fun was ours. This man didn't have a choice for the few groshen he just couldn't refuse us and so the show went on. He never caught up with nobody but still all the time he kept doing his act.

Once I almost had a bicycle on my own. When my cousin Saul became ill with his heart uncle Gabriel was ready to give his bicycle to me not knowing that aunt Mala sold it already. So again my dream didn't materialized.

In my younger years another way of having fun were carousel rides. Carousels in those days used to be pulled by a horse or boys power. Most of the time five or six of us claimed to the top and just kept pushing this thing for couple of hours. Since it was hard only to make first few pushes, the rest of it was quite easy. For our work we got another hour of rides free. Carousels operated by electrical power came to Cracow much LATER. During winter of 1937 I met this girl. Her name was Rita Rosenzweig and her mother was a cousin to Mrs. Ratz our neighbour from downstairs on Fałat street. I met her in the Ratz's apartment and our friendship would blossom if not for some twists created believe it or not by adults. Mrs. Rosenzweig Rita's mother was even better looking then her daughter. They both used to live in the first skyscraper ever bilt in Cracow, the Phoenix on Main Market Place. Yes Rita's parents have been divorced and that was the main reason that my mother wouldn't allow me to go out with her. She was a third year student in commercial gimnazium for girls. I liked this girl and despite everything we even went out few times and couple of times I also was invited to her house. On few occasions on Wednesday afternoons instead to go home after my religion classes I used to meet Rita when she was leaving her afternoon French classes. Then somebody told my mother that I was skiping religion on those days, which really wasn't true. Somehow our friendship lasted until the end of 1938 when Rita and her mother left Cracow forever to settle in Brazil. Since then I never heard from her again. The most embarrassing moment during our friendship was when with another boy and Rita's girlfriend we had a double date scheduled. When they came up to our apartment to pick me up, my mother wouldn't let me out of the house telling them that I had to study.

Winter of 1937 was also a good skating year on Cracovia's iceskating ring. In those days this was the place to meet for young people. Who was who in sports world I mean any kind of sport could be seen there. One of those popular young men was David Nelkin a figure skater. He was a Jewish boy. He wasn't great but he was pretty good. Good enough to impress audiences in Cracow and in winter resorts of Krynica and Zakopane.

In summer shortly before vacation began people of Poland started to build another of those dirt pyramids to pay tribute to their late leader Joseff Pilsudski. Hundred thousands of Poles came from all over the world to Sowiniec a small village near Cracow to sign their names in a large memorial book and contribute with at least one wheelbarrow full of dirt to the construction of this pyramid. I was one of them. Today's rulers of Poland even dont mention this fact in Poland's history books.

So after many years of ups and downs on my way to be a "mensch" like my mother used to say I came to a point to the first hurdle which if successful will bring me over so I can continue my education and will be able to make something out of myself. Sorry I couldn't be like Nussbaums but at least I could try to resemble them. Just a little!

Chapter 35 (cont)

Life in Gimnazium and Otherwise!

My report card was average but enough to graduate from gimnazium a culmination of ten years of many things combined. When all started at Santa Barbara elememtary school I was a scared kid who went to school to early. Pushed by my mother who was calling the shots even paying the custodian for serving to me on cold winter days for lunch a glass of hot cocoa at the time when he was serving milk to poor and unpriviledged children. I could write a whole book about those years and probably it would take many months to complete it.

Later the important change to gimnazium. Just a look at those old profesors who still remembered those days when they served the Austrian Kaiser Franz Joseph, made me shiver all over. And how about those days when I was standing in front of that large blackboard or map of Poland trying to figure out a math problem or to explain a geographical position of some town or river while looking from the side of my good eye for the reaction of my profesor.

At least for time being all that was behind me. The last day of gimnazium came on June 15, 1937. With sweat and cold throughout those years I won the right to participate in exams which adventually would put me in Lyceum and later in the University.

Needless to say my mother who put so much of her ability and strengh to get me through all this for the first time in all those years of my schooling wasn't able to attend the end of school ceremonies. Like most of the parents she always was there with me but she couldn't make it on an important days when I was finishing gimnazium. She was laid down in bed with a swollen leg and large black pimple on a lower part of this leg. Aunt Mala went with me for this important occasion to thank profesor Szaflarski our class master for his cooperation and advise throughout the past four years on behalf of my mother.

Doctors in those days were puzzled with her condition and took them quite awhile to get down the swelling. Eventually the black pimple disapeared also but left a scar on the spot. Little all of us realized then that this pimple was the begining of her health problems many years later.

School authorities gave us two weeks to rest a little and prepare ourselves for the exams. And again we gathered at the halls of Sobieski gimnazium for the moment of truth. Few of the boys have been exempted from the exams because of their excellent grades. Among them not so good friend of mine from first grade Jurek Hauser and my old friend from Santa Barbara Alfred Blonder.

Members of the examination commission chosen by the district curatorium were profesors Lederer who taught me Polish language when I first came to gimnazium. Others were Skimina whose specialty really was Latin and Greek, my former class master and German language profesor Szaflarski and profesor Szpunar from history and geography.

As you can see from the line-up of profesors the subjects involved were a written exam in Polish language and orals in German or Latin and history.

In Polish language there were three essays to choose from. The first one was on; Theater, cinema and radio in the life of modern society. The others concerned: Deeds and characteristics of one of the famous and important person in Polish history, and the one I choose was an essay about Poland's gains after regaining her independence following world war one. Later I regreted choosing that particular subject but I still managed to get "fair for it". In history examination I had to answer some questions about treaty of Verssailes which brought me a "fair" grade also. In German because of the presence of profesor Szaflarski I felt much more relaxed. I was asked to describe the city of Berlin while walking around as a tourist. (We discussed that subject many times in class). It was so-called "Rundgang durch Berlin". I guess thanks to profesor Szaflarski I got "good".

After short deliberations profesor Szpunar announced that all od us passed

OUR EXAMS. EXAMS TO LYCEUM

Life in Gimnazium ans Otherwise!

Later the notice on the billboard made the previous announcement official. The test I passed was for liberal arts education to be continued at Sobieski gimnazium (lyceum). Students who choose to follow their classical education also remained at Sobieski gimnazium. Others with whom I was since 1931 went to different gimnazium (lyceums) all over town so they could study nature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, commerce and industry.

After seeking advise from the rest of our family my mother and father decided to keep me in Sobieski gimnazium. There was some talk about sending me to an industrial or commercial school but this probably would require another test and on another hand already then wasn't easy for a Jewish student with not so perfect grades to be admitted to one of those lyceums.

After her illness my mother finally felt well enough to leave Cracow for well deserved vacations. This particular summer we went to a mountain resort of Zakopane. A small picturesque town on the foot of Tatra mountains and the last railroad stop not to far from the border with Czechoslovakia. But to cross there one had to climb high mountains. Couple of years later these mountains used to be one of the routes WHEN German army invaded Poland.

In peacetime in summer and winter alike thousands of tourists from all over Europe enjoyed the beauty of Zakopane.

We rented a room and kitchen from a local family next door to one of the most elegant hotels in Zakopane "Hotel Lvov". That year as on previous occasions Saul was with us again and as always my mother took a very good care on him. Yet after all the anticipations the vacations of 1937 turned out to be a disaster because due to a terrible weather. Rain was falling most of the time so there wasn't to much time left for pleasure.

Saul used to have also many friends in Zakopane especially one very good looking girl. He spent most of his time with her many times in nightclubs and restaurants because of the weather ofcourse. Once the whole group of Saul's friends decided to take a raid in one of those electric small hanging trains to the highiest peak in Tatra mountains and then come down on foot. Having in mind Saul's heart condition my mother strongly opposed this idea. But without his parents around to stop him he went anyway. It was a terrible day for mother and me before in the evening we saw him back home safely. As far as I remember he was tired but the whole affair ended without serious consequences.

As for me those were the most boring vacations of my young life. Downtown of Zakopane I met couple of times my friends from Cracow and on some other occasions some profesors from Sobieski gimnazium whom I carefuly avoided. I didn't meet any girls in Zakopane. Not that I didn't have opportunities. Some of them used to live in the area and I saw them many times walking back and forth probably bored as much as I was but I was to shy and didn't have nerve enough to start conversation.

So I was very happy when time came to go back to Cracow. At least I could join again my friends on Florian street and salvage whatever was left of the lost vacations.

My friend Rita Rosenzweig also came back and kept telling me about her fabulous time she had wherever she was which made me even more mad.

Little by little I started to prepare myself for the approaching new school year. On the urging of my mother I went to Sobieski to check again the official list to make sure - sure that I was in.

September the third was getting closer and closer. I still slept well at night but thoughts about my future in lyceum kept creeping in my mind more and more. I was hoping for good and easy profesors, for good old friends and wondering about grades I will be making. But my bigest wish was not to see anymore profesors Kaszyczko, Szantroch and Lencznar. Well it wasn't to long that I found out that my new nightmare was just about to begin.

Chapter 36

Days of Cracow!

Each year during months of August and early parts of September people of Cracow used to celebrate so-called "Days of Cracow". The city fathers and Cracow's leaders came up with that idea of showing off this beautiful old and historic place to the rest of the world. And Cracow in those days really was like a beautiful flower blooming in the mist of summer. It didn't take to long after the proposal that the idea caught on fast. And so year after year it was getting better and bigger. Besides enjoying the scenery and hundreds years old buildings, palaces and churches the visitors from all over Poland and other parts of the world could attend many other events; Cultural, sports international and domestic, shows put on by best actors of Poland and some foreign. During that period every year the famous all over the world Polish singer Jan Kiepura used TO perform in Cracow with his also famous Hungarian actress wife Martha Eggerth.

Foreign dignitaries and even Heads of States visited Cracow in those days. Particulary one year before the war I remember a visit by the Regent of Hungary Admiral Horthy. With him came many Hungarian dignitaries, and members of Hungarian army all dressed in colorful uniforms. Horty himself resided on Wawel in the castle of Polish kings.

President of Poland Ignacy Moscicki was due to arrive in Cracow for talks with Horthy. When I was getting my haircut that particular day IN PATRIOTS PLACE a tremendous crowd gathered on the nearby Grodzka street to get a glimpse of the president. Suddenly somebody outside started to yell; The president is coming. We all ran out to the street I with my haircut half done. We reached the route just in time to hear somebody howler from a passing car; Next car, meaning that the president was in the next car. But when this second car arrived the President wasn't there. And again somebody yelled next car. Until today I am quite sure that the president wasn't there at all. O yes he was in town but they brought him in secretly. That was already second time in my life when they have passing the buck from one car to another. First time was quite few years before during our vacations in Stryszawa when the president was passing through on the way from his summer place and people kept waiting for him an-route to greet him with salt and bread and flowers according to an old Polish custom but he never showed up. Evidently they always protected him from assassins who used to kill Polish presidents before.

As I said before most of Cracow was Poland's history. In some parts of the old city guests stayed in hotels bilt in 16th century. Very interesting was Michalik's Grotto amd Green Baloon old restaurants where famous actors, authors, critics and other intelectuals used to meet.

There wouldn't be possible for me to list all those places and I wonder sometimes; Are those buildings still there like the fortifications of old Cracow who stood there in my time since 14th and 15th centuries bilt in Gothic style?

In the district of Zwierzyniec where we used to live a 12th century monastery and church of sisters Norbertans was standing on the banks of Vistula River. Next to walls of that monastery we used to swimm during summer. Not far away there stood another relic of history a small church bilt from stone in 10th century which in modern times served as a chapel for Brothers Albertines Home for homeless boys named after a monk brother Albert who during Austrian times used to walk around Cracow picking up those boys and bringing them to the home.

As I understand Days of Cracow are still being celebrated, even thou many of those relics and buildings have fallen apart. Only skeletons of those buildings still are standing. As I was told by a friend the government don't have funds to restore them and the same goes for the old City of Kazimierz (Kasimir) where Cracow's Jewish population used to reside. Only winds blow through them and the noises of people used to make have been replaced by broken window frames also pushed by winds. LIKE IN GHOST TOWNS OF OLD WEST STILL WRITE ABOUT THEM. BUT THIS ALL WHAT REMAINS. HISTORIANS

Chapter 37

Changing Times!

An un-expected change occured when school authorities finally agreed among themselves to pay more attention to inter-scholastic sports. At last they started to realize that Polish sports suffer in international competitions because the lack of youth movement. 1937 was the first year when interscholastic soccer championships took place in Cracow. And for the first time all those gimnaziums have been able to show off all those students as members of their teams who under assumed names played long before in organized soccer. Even thou everybody knew about it, still the new ruling didn't allow students to participate in organized soccer's games.

Another big change came when new models of radios which allowed people to listen without earplugs showed up in all radio stores all over the country. It was a big sensation to have those boxes at home with names of cities from all over Europe listed in front and listen to the music from any country just with a turn of a switch. We could even hear music from New York and London on short waves. Ofcourse only rich people bought those radios first. My uncles Ludwik and Gabriel also had them in their homes. It took a while before we had one. The most popular used to be Philips from Holland.

Anyway the time came to learn how to dance. The most popular dances of that era used to be: Tango, foxtrot, slowfox, waltz from Vienna and the slow waltz from England. Later cha-cha-cha made a big splash and shortly before the war also from England came Lambeth walk named after some street in London. Everybody knew how to dance polka we didn't have to learn that number. The most popular station we listened to was Sofia in Bulgaria. They used to play most beautiful dancing music every day from 6-8 PM. Listening to London helped us to pick up some English words. Acting like an Englishman became an obsession with some young people who kept dressing in tweeds, carried umbrellas and smoked pipes. And ofcourse you would never catch a guy like that without the London Times under his arm.

Because of those radios dance parties became very popular all over town. In private homes mostly prepared by girls we used to call them picnics. All kind of organizations quickly adapted those dances as a way to raise funds. These people called their parties "Herbatka" (Tea Time). WIZO, the Women's International Zionist Organization used to be a leader in this kind of entertainment.

Kids little older than I frequented already some nightclubs, braging later about the good times they used to have with so-called "older women".

As far as I was concerned soccer still was my priority. Sure I liked girls but going to dances came a little later. See in those days I was still 16 years old, and my birthday was five months away. Most of my friends have been one year older.

There was only one radio network in Poland under the name of "Polish Radio" with stations all over the country mostly in large cities. The station in Cracow was called "Radio Cracow", with few local programs but most of broadcasting came from Warsaw. They played all kinds of music, presented comedy hours, revues, operas, plays and ofcourse news and weather Alive sport broadcasts came only when Poland participated in international competitions.

But the most popular in the country was the "Small Orchestra of Polish Radio" under the direction of Wladisław Gurzynski, from Warsaw. Another popular program was a comedy act from Lvov coming to the public on Sundays only. The name of the program was Tonko and Szczepko. Two funny names so popular in Eastern Poland. One of those guys was Jewish and played the smart one always explaining to Szczepko how life really looks in Poland (ofcourse on the funny side) by criticizing actions and making fun of Polish government.

Changing Times!

About two years before the war Mr. Gurzynski finished his season with Polish Radio and with his two sons came to Cracow. It was a sheer coincidence that he rented an apartment in our complex. He was a divorced man having his two sons with him. Would you believe that I never saw this man even thou he was our neighbour but I met his two boys. A very popular restaurant The Pavilion engaged Mr. Gurzynski and his orchestra to play for them in the afternoons on weekends and until late at night every day of the week. Pavilion was a restaurant owned by the family Bizantz who used to owned most of the reataurants in Cracow. Their was a German ancestry. I knew their son who also was a student at Sobieski gimnazium. Before he came there he attended a private elementary school. They called this school Evangelic school frequented mostly by children of German families who either believed in Calvinism or Martin Luther.

I don't remember anymore the names of the Gurzynski boys. Anyway one of my friends told me later that the Gurzynskis used to be Jewish and converted to Catholicism. One Gurzynski boy was a redhead and the other had a dark complection with black hair and large glasses always on the end of his nose. Much later he told me that the story about the conversion was just a story. They changed only their name which was Greenberg to help their father's carrier. In a matter of facts every Sunday they used to go to a Jewish Sunday School.

When I said before that I never saw Mr. Gurzynski I ment that I never saw him at the complex because most of the time he slept in daytime. But I saw him couple of times in Pavilion when we sometime met there with our family on Saturdays or Sundays afternoons.

Now going back again to Days of Cracow as here in America a venture like that had a tremendous impact on business community. Stores have been selling their merchandise and souvenirs from Cracow like hotcakes and even thou the propagandists urged Poles to mark their stores with "Christian Establishment" signs, Jewish stores did a very good busineess themselves.

One thing never changed in generations. As Polish law demanded with few exceptions all establishments and stores have been required to be closed on Sundays. But many of Jewish businessmen treated this law like it didn't concern them, especially the ones who worked and lived in the Jewish district of Kazimierz (Kasimir). Those Jews kept their stores closed for Shabat on Friday nights, all day Saturday and opened them Saturday evening and on Sundays. You see each store owner in this district had a friendly policeman on his payroll. During his beat on Sundays this policeman made sure that those Jews wouldn't be bothered. They used to let their customers in either on the knock on the door or through the back entrance. And their customers weren't Jews only. Many of Poles used to shop on Sundays. They knew very well that it was much cheaper that way.

Speaking of changing times, they really changed since Pilsudski's death. Most of all the Endeks (extreme right) became more visible and violent and government not having a man like Pilsudski watching over them closed their eyes supporting this way the rising anti-Semitism. It was getting harder for Jews to get government jobs and harder for young Jews to study at universities. Many Poles approved Hitler's policies against Jews and Germans residing in Poland became more blunt and outspoken.

My uncle Ludwik used to have this German customer who lived in Bielsko. A city about two hundred miles away from Cracow with rather large German population. This customer was a big fan of Hitler. Anytime Hitler pulled a new stunt in Europe this German was all smiles having a nerve to ask uncle Ludwik; "Was sagen Sie jetzt zu unserem Fuehrer Herr Nussbaum?" (What do you say about our Leader now Mr. Nussbaum)? What could uncle Ludwik tell him. After all this German had plenty good reasons to be happy about.

Chapter 38

Family Ties!

Throughout the years mostly when I was a little boy and even later there was this one thought which not only my parents but my close relatives also tried to convay to me; "Be always nice and good boy, don't offend nobody but most of all be polite to your parents, relatives, teachers and friends and even some strangers".

Along with that advise came a lesson in etiquette. There was no other choice for me but to listen and obey. Nobody wanted to know my opinion about those many advises.

Even today I still remember those many different ways how to greet people. Anytime we left our house to go and visit somebody my mother used to remain me what to say. "Don't forget to kiss the hand of so and so". The worst part of it was that sometimes I also had to kiss the hand of a man. Like the hand of uncle Ludwik or the hand of the principal of Santa Barbara school after saying a poem to him on the occasion of his birthday. If I didn't have to kiss nobody's hand my mother insisted for me to say the following few words "Całuje raczki" which means in English "I kiss your hand madam".

As years went by little by little those ways changed. Ofcourse I kissed my aunts hands as long as I could remember but the other greetings changed to good-by or according to the time of day.

Like here in America the most popular way of greeting somebody is to say "Hi" in Poland and other European countries the word was "Servus". Servus was a leftover from Austrian times before world war one. I assume that in Austria and Germany people use this way of greeting until today. It comes from a latin word "serve" and means in a polite way that people are ready to serve each other even if sometimes they are not. There is this old Austrian proverb which really describe the meaning of "servus" - Sag bei Abschied leise servus.Niemand Lebewohl oder adieu. Translated to English it says. When you leave say servus only. Never say goodby or adieu, which also explain that servus means "I will see you soon".

It wasn't until I saw the movie Roots on television never didn't occur to me how important are close family ties. It is true that our family was a close tie family, especially the Cracow branch. Yes we kept our ties with our relatives in Zbaraz, Tarnopol, Lvov, Tarnobrzeg, Gliniany, Vienna and United States but not all of them were people who used to be around. Those who I never saw during my lifetime I heard about them plenty from my mother and father so I had some ideas about them. All of them were good people always ready to help with advise, good words when somebody was in trouble and also financially which most of the time came from good old uncle Ludwik, even thou his wife not always aproved.

I never met my mothers sister aunt Etka from Lynn, Mass, my mother's sister in law aunt Regina Nussbaum also from Lynn. My aunt Rose Nussbaum and her children whose husband and father was my mother's brother Josef Deceased I met them for the first time after Hitler forced them out from Vienna. On my father's side I knew everybody except his sister Rose and her younger daughter who used to live in Lvov.

Ofcourse all this was very nice but the real shame was and in a way still is that I never asked and never was told by my parents nothing about their families, about my roots. Surely my parents had their grandparents and my grandparents whom I never met had their brothers and sisters. I realize it now how sad it is not to know enough about your family. I am quite sure that these people used to be rigtheous people and knowing their lives story would make me even more proud of my family.

I met a man here in Kansas City. His name is Herman Mondschein. After some talks with him I am almost convinced that we are related because certain facts point out in that direction. It looks like our families used to live in the same area in Eastern Poland or close nearby but it is very hard to prove it.

Chapter 38 (cont)

Family Ties!

After the war when my father was ill in Cracow the local Jewish Committe there once notified ~~my father~~ that a cousin of his one Rose Weintraub Kleiner was looking for him. At that time she was residing in Salzburg - Austria. Until then I never knew of any relations by the name Weintraub or Kleiner although a brother in law of my father was Kleiner. On behalf of my father I wrote a letter to this lady and then I went to Salzburg to meet her but by then she was already gone. She left without leaving the forwarding address. And then there were those other relatives from my grandmothers side the Altschuelers who used to live in New York and in Toronto. They wrote to me once when we lived in Displaced Persons camps but never answered after I wrote to them.

My mother used to mention many times that Mondscheins and Nussbaums were friendly with each other long before marriage of my parents. My father's two sisters were best friends of my mother since their childhood and uncle Ludwik was the best man at my uncle's Adolf's wedding.

Because my grandparents on my father's side passed away rather young there was no real reason for their children to stay in Zbaraz. They settled in nearby Tarnopol, Lvov and Cracow. They seldom came to Cracow but still I was able to meet them. I never met the other Chester my cousin from Tarnopol.

On my mothers side of the family only uncle Nissan and his family and aunt Dora never left Zbaraz. Between the two wars we kept in touch. Uncle Nissan and his wife Adela and their daughter Milka I met for the first time during the war. I met their older daughter Nusia when she came to Cracow to attend the wedding of Zosia from Tarnobrzeg to Roman Kahane which took place in Cracow in the large Esther Goldstein's apartment. During that period of time my mother went to Zbaraz only once to take care on her very ill father. And then few years later aunt Dora came to Cracow to live with her daughter Esther after her husband Shlomo Balin passed away. She went back shortly before the war.

After aunt's Lora's misfortune with her fashion line in Cracow we didn't see each other again. Her son Fritz left Vienna for then Palestine and her daughter Irma if I am not mistaken settled in France. As far our other relatives from Vienna were concerned, after Hitler's Anschluss my uncle Julius and his wife Regina went to America and my other aunt Rose the widow of my mothers brother Joseph came to Cracow with her son Ignatz. Her other son Alfred was able to escape to Palestine and her daughter Helen moved from one country to another finally settling in Yugoslavia.

There were always bad feelings between my mother and uncle Adolf and his wife Gusta. But their son Alexander loved to come to our house. After we moved to our new apartment on Fałat street uncle Adolf finally swallowed his pride and came to see us but not aunt Gusta. I never knew the reason for their feud.

Mother and aunt Gusta used to be very good friends in their youth in Zbaraz. As for uncle Adolf he was a very influential person in Cracow because of his position with the treasury department.

There also was a cousin Andzia in Cracow a daughter of my father's sister Rose from Lvov. She worked in Cracow and had a room in uncle Adolf's apartment. Uncle Morris his wife Helen and their children Alexander and Wishka and my father's other sister Sala and her husband visited in Cracow quite often.

Still on my mothers side her brother Salo and his wife Dina from Gliniany used to come to Cracow on business and so their son Tolo. Their daughter Lusia and her husband Sigmund Foerster I met after their marriage before they opened their medical offices in the resort of Krynica.

The same way as with our family in Cracow we used to have very close relations with aunt Janette and her family in Tarnobrzeg.

Chapter 38 (cont)

Family Ties!

Our family in Cracow used to see each other often. We visited with each other without calling before. You see our relatives had their own phones, but not us. When somebody in the family got sick, everybody suffered. My cousins Saul and Zosia used to come to see us all the time. My mother adored them. Sometimes I thought that she loves them more than me. Aunt Mala always played a role as the main advisor to the family. Aunt Rose was O.K. but to a point.I don't think she liked us to much. Twice a year we had big family gatherings. After the fast of Yom Kipur we all ate a big super in uncle Ludwik's house. During the Passover holidays the family gathered in our house for a Passover meal. The whole family loved my mothers pancakes. Later after Goldsteins settled in Cracow we used get together in their house from time to time.

As the years went by uncle Gabriel and aunt Mala left their old apartment on Dominican Place and moved to a much nicer place on Kremerowska street. Just around the corner from Sobieski gimnazium. When I was in second year there I could see the windows of their apartment from my classroom. Later they moved again to a high class apartment on Słowacki Allee in an elegant part of Cracow.

Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose also finally decided to leave their old apartment on Berek Yoselewicz street where I was born and moved to a brand new luxury building on Saint Retoryk street. Their faithful maid of so many years finally left them and went to live in her native village.

Besides our family there was another Mondschein family in Cracow. But this particular Mondschein was a famous man. During world war one he served with Piłsudski's Legions and worked himself up to the rank of a colonel in Polish army. The only barrier for him to become a general was his Jewish faith. So on the advise of his Polish friends Bernard Mondschein became General Bernard Mond after converting to Christianity. We didn't claim that he was our relative because we didn't know for sure. Anyway he was selected by the military high command to be the Chief of Staff for the Cracow military district. My cousin Alexander Mondschein knew him very well. During his service in Cracow's panzer division he was assigned to General Mond as his personal driver. I am quite sure that Alexander and General Mond discussed the origins of our two families many times.

Like other boys 13 years old I have been prepafing for my Bar-Mitzvah, and my parents made arrangements for the ceremony at Cracow's Temple. A special teacher used to come to our house to teach me all the bruhas and prayers. Needless to say a family crisis involving uncle Gabriel and his firm Polish Lloyd made my Bar-Mitzvah impossible.

I don't remember if I wrote about this before but an employee of Polish Lloyd while uncle Gabriel was president of this firm stole a substantial amount of money from the company. Ofcourse uncle Gabriel because of this incident was forced to resign. Anyway later this man was apprehended and convicted. After all was over uncle Gabriel joined as partner with the Przewóz the same firm my father was working for. The other owner was a lawyer Dr. Halpern. They changed the name of the company from Przewóz to "Protos."

So after all that everybody fergot about my Bar-Mitzvah. The most hurt was my dear mother. She never forgave them for this, especially when few years later uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose hosted a big reception on the occasion of Heniek Zimetbaum's Bar-Mitzvah (Aunt Rose's nephew) and even didn't invite us.

As far as my father was concerned he was obviously a healthy person. With few exceptions he hardly missed a day of work. During his working days he was involved in couple of accidents breaking his leg and ribs. Once he had polyps removed from his nose so he could breath better. Strawberries always made his stomach sick but he loved to eat them. His worst illness was when once they brought him from work with a kidney stones attack. It took him a long time to recover.

I remember very well the physician Dr. Wilhelm Armer a young man who used to live in the heart of the Jewish district of Cracow who treated my father after his kidney stone attack. He was highly recommended by uncle Ludwik and his popularity was raising fast among Jews of Cracow. But during the occupation he was forced to join the ghetto Jewish police as their doctor. He tried his best to be objective. He was a decent person just trying to help his family. He saved many Jewish lifes by giving out affidavits that their circumcisions were just scars from old surgeries or from injuries. His biggest humiliation came when gestapo forced him to wear Jewish policeman's uniform. As long as the Germans needed him they kept protecting him by giving him a passport certifying that he was a Hungarian citizien which would allow him and his family to go to Hungary after all was over. Needless to say they didn't keep their promise. Dr. Armer and his family were killed together with the last banch of Jewish policemen after the liquidation of Cracow ghetto.

As I said before my father was a good and quiet man but he was stingy with his money. He always kept saying that he don't have any money even thou I always saw money in his wallet,to which he replied that this money wasn't his but belonged to the company. Granted;;Yet some of that money must to been his. I always had to fight for every groshen to get from my father for some of my pleasures. If I needed more money for some expensive things, that was a disaster. In 1938 when I went for one month to a vacation camp in Kowaniec I still don't know how my mother was able to finance this trip. And again about half a year before the war when I went with my class to Warsaw my father wouldn't give me any money at all. I was able to make this trip thanks to my mother and uncle Ludwik.

Now! What else can I say about my mother besides that she was an angel as far as I was concerned. The best for my mother wasn't enough, she was doing her atmost best. Now when I reflect on all those years I feel sorry that I couldn't do better.

As I see it now my mother wasn't really a strong person but she had a very strong will. Her health was fragile after she lost her second baby which followed by a nervous breakdown. Since then she was extrimly nervous, most of the time on edge. She saw doctors frequently but I never found out what really was bothering her. Her love for the family was above everything, not just for me and my father but for all the family. She was always proud of their accomplishments and sad when something went wrong for them. She used to have her ways with teachers, profesors and other important people when she needed their help. She had a beautiful singing voice and everybody liked her to sing. I inherited some of that voice from her. There was a time when I sang very nice and my friends used to call me "Kiepura" after the famous Polish singer whose villa in Krynica was next door to my cousins Dr's Sigmund and Lusia Foerster. Kiepura and his singing wife Martha Eggerth died few years ago in New York.

My mother used to run a very nice household. Looking at us people would never suspect that we didn't have to much money. Thanks to her our appearance was always good and neat.

When I got older I used to ran into uncle Ludwik every Saturday at the same place and at the same time. I guess it probably was prearanged by my mother. For him that was the time when he visited his Polish customers in their stores and collected from them for the sold merchandise. Anyway on those Saturdays uncle Ludwik secretly used to give me an allowance of 5 or sometimes 7 zlotys which by my standards was lots of money. I kept for myself couple of zlotys and the rest I gave to my mother. I am quite sure that aunt Rose wasn't aware of this arrangement. It wouldn't make her happy at all.

My cousin Zosia Nussbaum from Cracow as her brother Saul also finished her studies at the Jagiellonian university with a degree in Physical education a great accomplishment for a Jewish young woman.

Chapter 38 (cont)

Family Ties!

In those years before world war two only two JEWISH students IN CRACOW recived this degree which also required many the same subjects taught in medical school. Those two students were my cousin Zosia and a young man whose name was Reder and who played for soccer for the Makkabi team.

At the same time Zosia met a man about 1o years older then her. His name was Robert Abeles. He was a son of a rich Jewish aristocratic family who used to own Steelworks in Cracow area. Zosia and Robert fell in love and got married about three months before the war in a very nice ceremony in the Temple. Rabbi Dr. Schmelkes performed the wedding. Reception took place in uncle Ludwik's apartment.

My other cousins Paul and Stefa Balin lived in Cracow all those years until September 1939.

As arranged two months earlier I went in September of 1937 to Lyceum at Sobieski gimnazium. It seamed from the start that everything will go normal for me and that I will finish my studies at Sobieski Lyceum.

I already bought all necessary school supplies and many books for certain subjects hoping that none of the profesors with whom I had problems before won't be part of my class faculty. But not such luck. Well first came profesor Szaflarski my former class master for the last four years. He taught us German again but It didn't matter I never had problems with him before. My Latin profesor Kaszyczko got replaced but much easier instructor profesor Rozmarynowicz who once before ~~before~~ because a shortage of Polish instructors taught me Polish literature. Others came and it seamed that I might enjoy some so much needed tranquility.

Well it wasn't ment. In couple of days after school started to my horror; who walks in to teach us physics? My No. one enemy Profesor Lecznar. First I thought this was it. But again it wasn't ment. Next day my No. two enemy walks in. And who do you think it was? My tormentor of the last two years in gimnazium. The cyclop himself profesor Tadeusz Szantroch. Seeing him if the floor would open in this room I was ready to jump in. It didn't take to long for Szantroch to notice me. His first question was; What are you doing here? Did you ever passed the tests for Lyceum? You see he thought I failed somewhre along the way while he wasn't around.

At home I told my mother the bad news. She was concerned but she didn't panic. As always in a crisis she turned for advise to her family. And their advise was to get me out of Sobieski. They thought and probably rightly that Lecznar and Szantroch would keep preasure on me all the time and that my life in Sobieski would be miserable. Their first idea was to enroll me to commercial Lyceum but the public one was already filled up to capacity and they probably wouldn't be to much excited with another Jewish student. They already had quite few of them enrolled. And besides all this I probably would be required to pass some more tests.

After few days od family deliberations and me still going every day to Sobieski they all came to an conclusion that the best for me would be the the private Jewish Commercial Lyceum which would take me for sure without any new examinations. This school accepted all my grades and examinations from Sobieski gimnazium. All I had to do to brush up on Hebrew. They assigned to me one of their top students a girl who for a while gave me some lessons. Most of their students came from other Hebrew schools or from Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy so they knew Hebrew well. The monthly fee was 35 zlotys per month a little to high for us but somehow we managed. The faculty in this school was excellent. Those profesors would teach in any high class gimnazium if they wouldn't be Jewish. As other private schools in Cracow this school was coeducational. Like in any private school graduation exams have been conducted by profesors from public schools assigned to this task by the Cracow District Curatorium. This procedure made the "matura" complete making it sure that we could be accepted by any university in the country.

Chapter 39

Jewish Commercial Lyceum!

The school I enrolled in autumn of 1937 was a Jewish private school with all rights of public schools under the auspices of Cracow's Jewish Businessmen Association. The director or principal of the school was one Dr. Stendig. Besides lyceum the above association also underwrote a lower school like a commercial gimnazium. Most students in this gimnazium used to be kids who had their entire education in Jewish schools. Many students in this lyceum came from their gimnazium, others like I came from public schools and there were many who came from out of town from small towns and villages in the area. Some of them took up residences with families and some traveled every day back and forth on suburban trains. Because the name of the school Hebrew Commercial School of Jewish Businessmen Association was rather long to say people used to call it the Stendig school after their long time principal and it was called this way long after Mr. Stendig retired and his position was taken over by one Mr. Freeman who came from out of town.

It was a brand new experience for me to enroll in this school. Until then I never been together with a very large group of Jewish kids and a Jewish way of life the way those kids used to practice was rather strange to me. Many kids in that school came from religious homes. Among them even some orthodox fanatics. Another large group of students came from homes which by today's standards you would call conservative and some were non believers at all just sending their kids to Jewish school because of the political situation and some like me who didn't have any future in public lyceum. Some parents of those kids used to be so ignorant and didn't mind to sent them to Jewish school with a ham sandwich for lunch.

We wore the same uniforms as students in public schools. Now being in lyceum our braids changed from blue to red. The shield on the arm was red too and the number of the school was 444. Most of the profesors had doctor degrees and only anti-Semitism stood in their way to teach even at universities.

In addition to normal curriculum of Polish language, math, history, geography, biology or hygiene and physical education subjects connected with commerce have been added. Chemistry and physics were combined into one subject called merchandising. Others were business administration, economics, bookkeeping, business math and English language, and calligraphy.

To round-up the whole program Hebrew, Jewish history, bible and Palestinography gave us a whole week of hard work with extended school hours from 8am to 2pm.. Demands from profesors and discipline used to be rather strict but the treatment was really good in a more relaxed atmosphere. I had a good feeling about that school. Profesors didn't manipulate their students to push them in a corner with certain questions. To my surprise many students used to do manipulating. No they didn't manipulate the profesors but they tried to take advantage of their fellow students with all kind of things and proposals for crooked business. Those were the ones who saw at home how their parents cheated people in their business. Those were the religious ones. Also the religious ones were terrible as far as sex was concerned or eating "treyfe" sandwiches in dark corners of the school.

I finally convinced my mother that I didn't need tuitors anymore. The only thing hard to adjust to was going to school on Sundays. As per special regulation all schools this type like commercial and industrial public or private had only five days school week. Jewish schools had their off days on Friday and Saturday. Later on our request the school administration agreed to let us have an off day on Sundays instead of Fridays in spring and summer. In winter we went back to the Friday and Saturday schedule.

Even thou the school was coeducational all classes were not mixed. In my first year there were only boys in my room.

Jewish Commercial Lyceum!

Right from the beginning I made many new friends and very quick I gained their confidence because on first ballot they elected me to our class president. I was doing pretty good in my office and probably wouold be elected for the second year except that I goofed off on one very nice spring day. One of the boys came up with a brilliant idea to convince the whole class to play hookey. Ofcourse most of the boys agreed only few remained in class. Instead to oppose this idea I went along. This gag cost me the presidency and I was forced to resign. In a way I was lucky. In public school I would be suspended for sure or maybe even expeled. The good profesors here reprimanded me and my behavior grade which as a rule always appeared on our report cards droped from "very good" to "good". Some of the profesors even praised me for not revealing the name of the real leader of the walkout.

Besides all the above my profesors liked me and my good grades kind of kept soaring.. In some subjects like for example in regular math I had some advantage because I already learned in gimnazium their particular program. I joined a circle of boys and girls and our friendship and cameradery lasted till war parted us all. My best friend in those days was one Zyga Kranz Blitzer. Here was again one of those situation when parents married in religious ceremony only. Another was Edward Wasserberger who came to Cracow to study from Oświęcim (Later the famous Auschwitz). Needless to say he became ill went back home and never returned. Believe me it feels very good now to remember all those names like Adam Frey, Chaim Grossmann, Henrik Sternberg, Monek Trachtenberg, Dudek Brenner and girls Eva Lundner, Tina Godfluss, Olga Agatstein, Jadzia Tiras and Rose Stemmer, and many more.

In many cases I was able to help other students with subjects like Polish, history and geography. I caught on fast to the commercial studies and I enjoyed very much. Hebrew was difficult for me but many of my friends have been eager to help me. Most of them already spoke fluent Hebrew.

Our Hebrew instructor was Rabbi Dr. Hersh Guzik who came to Cracow with his teenage sister from Yaroslaw a small town on the line between Cracow and Lvov. Besides Hebrew he taught us Bible and Jewish history. He was a gentle-man, good looking and with great sense of humor. He was a bachelor. His sister Lydia was a very good looking girl. If she wouldn't be Rabbi's sister she would be very popular. Boys weren't to eager to ask her out, they didn't know how to handle themselves in her presence. Obviously she was religious person. Boys didn't know what about her other interests and what would be her reaction to other things. Well you know what I am talking about.

Our Polish profesor was Dr. Mala Hoffstetter and in love with her was Dr. Stanisław Mandelbaum our commerce profesor. He chased after her for many years until finally shortly before the war she agreed to marry him. History and geography have been taught by an old Miss Schillinger (never married), and another old miss taught us commercial math. Profesor Dr. Horowitz was our regular math instructor and lecturing bookkeeping was profesor Nattel. In some ways a funny gay. He could ask a student the same questions two or three days in a row even thou the student gave him right answers all the time. On other occasions he used to give written tests to one group of students on one day and the next day the other group got the same test knowing all the questions and answers from the previous group. In our first year we had a young lady who taught us merchandising. During her hours boys could hardly keep their minds on learning because her nipples stuck out hard under her dress. The other instructor of merchandising who taught us in second year profesor Dr. Barth was a tremendous lecturer but had very bad relations with his rich wife. Rumors used to circulate around that they didn't have children because of him. They never divorced but kept going in different directions.

Profesor of Palestinography was one Dr. Silberberg. A man who visited then Palestine for many times. He was a smart alec. When I first came to his class and reported to him he thought that I was there from the

BEGINNING AND NEVER TOLD HIM ABOUT IT.

Dr. Alexandrovicz taught us hygiene and things about human body. He was a known Cracow's physician not only among Jews but among Poles as well. His wife Maria used to teach girls physical education. They had one small boy. During the war Dr. Alexandrovicz distinguished himself as a hero with Polish resistance against the Germans.

As doctor he was drafted into the Polish army and sent to the frontlines to take care on the wounded. In the first clash with the Germans his batalion was destroyed. Dr. Alexandrovicz and two other men escaped with a wagen and couple of horses. Marching at night and sleeping in daytime after two weeks they finally reached Cracow already occupied by German forces. By then his wife and son were already hiding in a safe place. Dr. Alexandrovicz found refuge in his parents house on the other side of Vistula River on the edge of the district of Podgòrze (Under the Hill) the future side of Cracow's ghetto. Eventually he and his family found themselves in this ghetto in March of 1941. As a doctor he worked in the ghetto hospital and for time being was able to safe his family.

In 1942 after many ghetto actions and deportations and being a witness to murder of many innocent people mostly children and seniors by the S.S. him and few other brave people decided to leave. They accomplished this by walking through a large sewer pipe until they reached the opening near the Vistula River. Dr. Alexandrovicz tried to contact his former Polish patients who used to own him money for services performed. Most of them turned him down accusing him of being selfish, puting them in danger and slaming doors in his face. Only one man showed some compasion. He put up the doctor and his family under an assumed name in a small apartment and also gave them food and money. Being unmobilized and trying to kill time Dr. Alexandrovicz worked on some medical research he hoped to finish before the war. And still he wasn't able to finish it during the war. Couple of Gestapo agents looking for some easy money one day knocked on their apartment not knowing even that a Jewish family was living there. To get rid of them Dr. Alexandrovicz gave them the last money which the good Polish man left him. Recognizing that it was to dangerous to stay in this apartment Dr. Alexandrovicz took his family to another friendly family in a small town Wieliczka near Cracow about twelve miles away. Himself he reported in Cracow to the headquarters of the Polish underground and got himself assigned as a doctor to a partizan unit in central Poland. Since then he spent his time with this unit in a deep forest not only treating sick people but also taking part in many raids against German targets fighting and killing them as well. In winter of 1944 this unit disbanded and Dr Alexandrovicz was forced to return to Cracow. And again his former Polish friends refused to help him. Not having to many choices he went to Wieliczka to join his wife and son. He knocked on the door with an pre-aranged signal.He spent rest of the war with his family in Wieliczka. With the underground he took part in in the liberation of Cracow, and was a member of the first group who worked to establish and organize the new medical facilities in the liberated city. He and his family never left their beloved Cracow. After the war he became an important personality in Polish medicine. I saw him in Cracow after the war. If he is still alive he would be now around 85 years old.

To round up the rest of the faculty it is worth to mention our calligraphy and advertising instructor. A very good looking woman who couldn't get respect from nobody. Students wouldn't listen to her. I still can't figure out how she was able to convay her message to us. She even got mad at me when I was trying to restrain the mad bunch.

A scholar and a gentleman was our English profesor Dr. Kreutler. A very good looking man. Girls students used to be crazy about him. He was a bachelor still living with his mother. A Polish Jew but acting like a 100% Englishman. He was the one who gave me the first inside to English language.

Chapter 39 (cont)

Jewish Commercial Lyceum!

The last and probably the least important from all my profesors was our physical education instructor Leopold Pfeferberger. Still a young man he used to treat us like his friends but demanded to be called by his title "profesor" ofcourse. Yet many students refered to him simply by his shortened first name "Poldek". He was a nice and pleasant young man and it was a pleasure to be around him. He had a beautiful sister with long blond hair and very sportlike minded. I met her when she came with her brother for a weekend to our camp in Kowaniec on the edge of Tatra Mountains. Then it was for the first time in my life when I saw young woman wearing a very reveling bikini which in those days in Poland was rather unusual. She showed off her gimnastic abilities approved with many "oh's" from the extatic audience.

Pfeferberg's parents owned a curtain and draperies store next to Marian Patatoff's barber shop. Their clientele used to be the high class of Cracow.

Poldek Pfeferberg left Cracow for a better paid job in the city of Bydgoszcz near to the former Polish-German border. He came back as soon as Germans occupied our city and in 1941 joined the Jewish Police in the ghetto. After the war people who knew him told me that he was one of those who tried to help people in trouble as much as he could. I think that he survived the war but I am not sure. X OVER.

As you already know the game of soccer always was in my blood. So with the cooperation of profesor Pfeferberg we put out on the field a pretty good soccer team and few other sports like; Track, volleyball, and European version of Handball (played with the same rules as soccer only with hands). Every year on Lag-Baomer we competed against Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy with mixed success. Our school soccer team also played against youth teams of the area Jewish sport clubs.

Attending a Jewish school didn't mean that our cultural life suffered. In contrary we enjoyed it both ways. As in Sobieski gimnazium we saw every month a good play in Cracow's Julius Slowacki theater. In addition to it we also saw good Yiddish plays in Cracow's Jewish theater with such famous Jewish actors like Ida Kaminski and Turkow and many others. Jewish movies also were on our agenda with the famous picture "Dybuk" on the top.

We also organized dancing evenings to help out our school financially. "Jolly Band" was our favored orchestra who played jazz and all other modern music of that era.

Once during my second year in lyceum we had a dance evening scheduled. we sold all our tickets and expected a capacity crowd. Needless to say this particular Saturday Pope Pius XI passed away, ~~on this day~~. The authorities in Cracow declared a mourning period and canceled all happy activities. But we didn't cancel our dance. Everybody showed-up and we all had a very good time. A passing-by policeman happened to hear the music and made an attempt to find out what was going on. Luckily he was one of those policemen who ~~who~~ on Sundays protected the open Jewish business. He just took our custodian's excuse for granted and left.

My pleasant life in the new school went on. For the first time in my life I found out the real meaning of Purim, Hanuckah and the holiday of planting trees in Palestine. At Purim times we sent gifts to our teachers and for the first time in my life I saw real Purim parade. I was also a part of a marvelous Hanukah show attended by students and parents alike.

The Polish church holidays ceased to be my holidays. Those holidays then became my school days but still we celebrated Polish national holidays.

Some other activities which used to be part of schooling in gimnazium still applied in my new school. For example I competed in the city wide competition for gimnaziums and won a Polish Sport Pin. Also R.O.T.C. was part of the curriculum but I was free from it as in Sobieski gimnazium.

READ ALL ABOUT LEOPOLD PFEFFERBERG (PRICE) IN THE BOOK. "SCHINDLER'S LIST" ABOUT JEWS IN CRACOW GHETTO.

Chapter 39 (cont)

Jewish Commercial Lyceun!

The school year 1937 - 1938 was coming slowly as far as I was concerned to a very successful end. After seven years of studying and other hardships only one more year remained for me to finish gimnazium-lyceum and to attempt to reach the thresholds of our local university.

First month of my vacation I spent in Cracow doing all kinds of things, still playing a little soccer, going with friends to swimming pools or enjoying a day on the banks of Vistula River or going on hikes to certain places few miles away from the city.

The month of August I spent in our school camp in a mountain village of Kowaniec near Zakopane. My mother again went on vacation alone with my cousin Esther Goldstein to another mountain resort Muszyna near Krynica. Also one of those places where people used to drink another kind of a miracle mountain water. As I said before I didn't know how she financed those trips her's and mine. For a good measure she also have it made for me a brand new suit. My first civilian suit not a school uniform. The father of my friend Zyga Kranz made this suit for me.

I was very happy in Kowaniec. The camp was under supervision of profesors Horowitz who was there with his family, Kreutler who as a bachelor was there alone making some girls very happy and profesor Bart whose only happiness was to be away from his wife. A lady representative from PTA was the kitchen supervisor making sure that our food was first class and delicious. Every morning before breakfest and evening after supper we used to have so-called appeals, talking over things, presenting our Jewish Flag and singing Hatikvah. After that most of the time we were on our own. We were quartered in two villas. Our first day in camp was rather stormy because of a very bad weather. It wasn't until late at night before our group assigned to the second villa was able to go there. It wasn't to far to go but it was dark and the road was in terrible condition so walking and carrying our luggage was rather adventurous. Sliping and sliding along and also helping our girls we finally made it but not before encountering a group of Gorals (local peasants) who with their girls stood in the middle of the muddy road singing their mountain songs. All of them were rather reluctant to let us through which made us scared and edgy until they steped aside to let us go by.

I always had very pleasant memories from Kowaniec. This was my second camp. As you probably remember the first one was in Rytro a far cry from Kowaniec. We all used to be a very happy group. Among us were few boys and girls from religious homes. Boys gathered every morning and evening for their prayers and girls also followed their orthodox routine.

We enjoyed a nice, small swimming pool made for us in the middle of a lazy flowing stream. Along this stream there used to be few villas occupied by vacationers from Cracow. Walking early in the morning to our swimming pool we observed many peoples from those villas washing themselves in the cold stream. I guess this was first time in my life when I saw there half naked women.. They never made a slicest move to cover themselves while we passed by.

We played a lot volleyball. We made long walks to the mountains and to one of the large Polish rivers Dunajec. We visited often the nearby small town Nowy Targ mostly to buy ice cream in the local parlor. On Saturday afternoon we observed Jewish women sitting on benches in front of their homes gossiping and many times talking about us. I used to know a girl in Nowy Targ who went to school in Cracow. I went out with her couple of times.

On one occasion a group of us went on a hike from Kowaniec crossing the mountains to Rabka. On the way we met many Jewish Halutzim training and preparing for eventual emigration to Israel. After a very pleasant day we returned by train to Kowaniec.

On another occasion when profesor Pfeferberg came with his group to visit us in Kowaniec I went with him to Zakopane to see my uncle Gabriel and

AUNT MALA THERE.

They vacationed in a nice villa in picturesque surroundigs few miles away from the town of Zakopane. Their son Saul was with them still recuperating from his illness. Even thou he resumed his studies long ago his doctors advised him to take it easy as much as possible.

I spent a whole day with them eating a good dinner and left them after a nice afternoon in the park with 5 zlotys in my pocket from uncle Gabriel. Also the same afternoon in a reataurant I came across a boy Josef Goldstein who few years back was with me in the same class at Sobieski gimnazium. He was older then I and was making the same grade second year around. Finally he quit gimnazium and became a freelance doing nothing. When I saw him in Zakopane after all these years he told that he wouldn't go out with girls anymore because he spent most of his time with married women. I guess he just wanted to impress me so when I get back to Cracow I would tell his story to other boys who used to know him, Later when he came back to Cracow he met Wanda Piech a daughter of a respected and famous law profesor at Jagiellonian University. Wanda was a Catholic. They went out together until war did them part. Profesor Piech was one of the first intelectuals killed by Germans after serving a short time in concentration camp.

On the same trip profesor Pfeferberg had with him an older woman. Ofcourse she was young but much older then I. I still don't know maybe I was just imagening but I had a distict impression that she was coming on to me. I felt very strange about it and being bashful I didn't know how to handle the situation. Yet at the end when finally I get up enough nerve to make my move I discovered that she was just pulling my leg.

So back in Kowaniec it didn't take me to long to forget the older woman. Slow but sure our vacation were coming to an end. During that period we went to the station in Nowy Targ to greet another group of our friends who came to see us from Cracow. They spent a night in a barn behind our villa and next morning went on a hike taking the same route as I and my friends have done couple of weeks earlier.

We finished our vacation with a dance party to a tune of the local gypsy band. Couples used to huddle together on this last night of freedom. It wasn't like we wouldn't see each other again. After all we would meet again in school in three days. But considering the circumstances that night was rather special. Even young people who spent their vacation in Kowaniec not with us but with their families also came farewell party.

The last morning in Kowaniec we got up very early.Outside there was cool and beautiful. The sky was so clear that for the first time we could see Gevont the highest peak in Tatra Mountains with an impression like we would stand there in front of it.

On the train couples huddled around the windows to exchange their last pleasntries. Coming closer to Cracow the atmosphere became rather subdued. Most of us started to sing a song which I no longer remember but I am quite sure that it ended with "until we meet again".

My mother was home already when I came from Kowaniec, and came to the station to pick me up. She also had nice vacation and well deserved rest. Cracow as always at that time of the year looked festive because of the "Days of Cracow".

Couple of days later school year began again. And again we gathered for the opening day ceremonies. It was only one difference from the years past. For me in Sobieski gimnazium this was another day off. Polish students on that day used to start their school year with prayers in church.

On this September 1938 our school as all Jewish schools around Cracow went to pray in Cracow's Temple for our health, happiness, for Jewish people and good learning.

Few new students joined our class, all from different schools and some from out of town. Our instructor of typing and stenography profesor Waxman became our class master, replacing Dr. Guzik. Hugo Schlesinger replaced me as the class president.

Jewish Commercial Lyceum!

Hugo Sclesinger was out of towner. He came to Cracow to study. His hometown was Bielsko. He was tall redhead good looking young man. He was an avid Zionist and member of then Betar. After world war two broke out Hugo headed east as many other Jewish refugees. Although he wasn't a member of Polish armed forces with their help he managed to cross the border first to Rumania then Hungary, Yugoslavia and Italy and from there to Palestine.

To my surprise I discovered that Hugo was much older then many of us. Later I found out that we had in our mist few more university students who among others studied law, medicine and other important profesions but because of the situation in Germany and as Jews seeing their future rather bleak they decided to take courses in administration and commerce. They all kept to themselves forming couples with older girls like a law student Roman Margolies with Bronia Tuchfeld, Hugo Schlesinger with Ida Loeffelholz or one Miss Rice with Mr. Schechter. The last couple was much older that why I call them Mr and Miss.

In addition to Mr. Waxman who taught us typing and stenography a known economist from Cracow profesor Dr. Thaler taught us economics. A very inteligent man but ill. He missed many hours.. His replacement wasn't explicit at all which under circumstances at hand could be disastrous later at the finals. We were lucky that the commission testing us took the absence of Dr. Thaler into consideration.

In February of 1939 some students from our class went on a field trip to Warsaw. We visited there many places connected with modern commerce. Among them most interesting was the first self service department store in Poland. We also attended theaters, revues with famous Polish actors, couple of night clubs and many historic places around Warsaw.

A point of interest to us also aws the Jewish district of Warsaw so-called "Nalewki" the future side of the famous Warsaw ghetto during Hitler era. We had our rooms there in a hotel called Home of Jewish Immigrants because staying there was lots cheaper then in normal hotel.

For Saturday morning services we went to Warsaw's main synagogue. The senior Rabbi there was Dr. Schorr one of the two Jewish senators in Polish parlament. The other was Dr. Schwarzbart from Lvov. Dr. Schorr survived the holocaust and was a member of the first provisional Polish government in Lublin after Polish and Soviet troops crossed into Poland in 1944.

Another student who came with us to Warsaw was Ludwik Gelbarth whom I knew since my childhood years on Krupnicza street. He was one year older then I and attended different gimnazium but we met again in Lyceum. Ludwik's father was a lawyer so Ludwik also planed to go to law school. Well war interupted his dreams. Some close relatives of Ludwik used to live in Warsaw so they invited us for a pleasant evening in their home.

While in Warsaw I went to American consulate to see how our application for numbers to immigrate to United States was progressing. And indeed shortly after my return home we recived our numbers.

First days of spring 1939 found all of us getting ready for graduation (matura in Polish from the word mature). To be prepared was important for us because our exams were closely monitored by profesors from public schools selected by the Cracow's Curatorium. Our regular profesors were merely observers and when nobody watched could only give us some encouragement. Grades for hebrew subjects didn't matter. All test were written and oral. There were very hard and anxious ten days but most of us menaged to survive. As far as I remember only two or three of us didn't make it. One silly episode almost cost one of the students his diploma. A history profesor wanted to know what was written in Latin on the top of the entrance to Wawel castle. To tell the truth nobody of us knew the answer. Ofcourse there was there some Latin proverb carved in the stone. Yet this particular student didn't loose his cool and told the profesor that the sign on the entrance in said that the ticket was 10 groshen.

Jewish Commercial Lyceum!

This smart alec answer saved this student's diploma.The profesor who asked this question was flabbergasted and because of this boy's alertness gave him a "fair" grade/ The story soon spreaded all over Cracow and everybody was talking about it.

All exams over found me very happy with my good and fair grades. I soon started to realize that probably I would never make it if I remained at Sobieski gimnazium. Anyway my diploma in fold I could begin to enjoy myself at least for a while.

First of all we had a large celebration at school attended by all graduets and profesors which was a custom all over Poland in those days. We also organized a big get together without profesors. The last reception was for all the students who spent all those years together at Sobieski gimnazium even thou many of us gradueted from different Lyceums. We took this opportunity to renew our friendships and to reminisce about the good and bad old days. Little did we know than that this was the last time for us to be together as a group of old friends.

Throughout all those horrible years I carried my report cards and my diploma with me packed in a save place, hoping that some day I will need it in my future life. At the time when we returned from Soviet Union we didn't have to much to carry. But my diploma was still in safe place hidden in an old pillow. My father slept on it. After he passed away somebody threw the pillow away and my diploma disapeared forever.

To graduate ment a lot to me, and I wouldn't be able to accomplish this without help from my ~~fax~~ parents but mostly from my mother. Because she was so firm and always on my back insisting that I study. Parents involvment in their childrens lives was common in Poland and not until much later I started to realize that my mother's involvment was for my benefit only. Never mind that my mother practicaly ~~xuxx~~ ruled my life, even visiting me at school all the time. In many cases parents used to be the ones who told their kids what subjects they should choose to study and what university they should attend. And believe it or not, those kids listened to them.

The most logical thing for me would be to enroll to High Academy of Commerce. But because I was Jewish first and didn't have top grades there was no chance for me to be accepted.

During gimnazium years my best subjects were history and geography and because my mother wanted so badly to have a son at the university I applied for acceptance in philosophy department to study history at the Jagiellonian university. To tell the truth I never expected to be accepted, so imagene our big surprise when in the middle of vacation I recived a notice from the university telling me that I will be a freshman at the university beginning October 1939. Nobody in our family believed what happened but they all were very happy for me.

I didn't worry at that time about the future and about the fact how I will adjust to the rigors of the university. If I only would think a little farther I would realize that there will not be any university for me. In about six weeks later our fate the fate of Poland and the fate of six million Jews was sealed by one mad man who choose the road of destroying the world and mankind.

Because of a miracle and the Grace of God Anna and I and some members of our families survived this terrible war. In 1946 when I lived in Cracow for couple of months when my father was ill at the hospital and from the goodness of the heart of my cousin Roman Kahane I got a job with the Cracow branch of Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society an organization with headquarters in New York. A part of my job was to deliver notices to people around Cracow notifying them that they are being considered for addmission to the United States. Many of those applicants used to live in dormitories which before the war used to be Jewish schools, social halls and other organizations. One of those dormitories was located in my former school,

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A three story building was converted to living quarters of hundreds homeless people with wooden beds one over the other. I wanted to cry seeing this mass of people in my former classrooms. For a split of minute I imagened that all those students were there. so the profesors in their conference room and the principal in his office. On another floor I thought that I was seeing the old Mr. Kalb behind the counter in his snack bar and I was buying a sandwich from him on credit. I have done this lots of times. But the worst feeling came over me when I saw my last classroom where I spent my last year in school. Still I kept seeing my old friends sitting there and listening to profesor Mandelbaum's lecture. They were all there. I saw them before finally I got hold of my senses. Only few of them survived. Most of them perished.

Well! Going back to the summer of 1939 graduation behind me I went for few weeks to work at uncle Ludwik's store. His brother in law Sigmund Zimetbaum used to show the ropes of bookkeeping the way was done in business, which was different from the ways they taught us in school. Then my cousin Sigmund Nussbaum came to visit with us from Tarnobrzeg. By then he finished his first book which was never published because of war and I helped him to type it on the typewriter in uncle Ludwik's store.

On August 1 1939 my mother went for her annual rest to Krynica where she lived at the Foersters villa. As for me I spent my last vacations in freedom again in Tarnobrzeg when I joined Sigmund when he returned home.

It was very nice in Tarnobrzeg at that time. It would be much nicer if I could see eye to eye with my cousin Sigmund. A genius as he was, he spent most of his free time in all kinds of books mostly studying Polish literature, reading and analyzing them and keeping in touch with who was was who in Polish literaly circles. When some well known Polish writers or poets used to come to Tarnobrzeg to visit Nussbaum's next door neighbours one of the most prominent family of Dr. and Mrs. Pawlas they never left before talking to Sigmund first. Needless to say the daughter of Dr. Pawlas never shared in the enthusiasm of those writers about my cousin. Anytime he came to their house she used to make herself invisible. Her name was Alice. Once in his more cheerful moods Sigmund promised to take me to their house and introduce me to the girl. When we arrived her mother told us that Alice went swimming and suggested that we should go to the river and meet her there. In other words Alice's mother sent us on a wild goose chase. We looked for her all over the beach while she was all the time home.

Yet for one thing I am very sorry. In fact the war ended what would be Sigmund's briliant carrier in Polish Literature. Instead his bones rest with many others in a mass grave behind the Zbaraż railroad station.

Being almost 18 years old then I had much more luck with other girls in Tarnobrzeg. Sigmund introduced me to some of his friends from gimnazium, sons and daughters of other profesors and other dignitaries from Tarnobrzeg. I also wanted to meet very much a girls from across the street. There was this Jewish religious family living there. I don't remember this girl's NAME anymore but realizing that Sigmund wasn't to eager to introduce me to her I played a trick in reverse on him. Usually girls used to drop handkerchiefs for boys to pick them up. On this occasion seeing this girl walking behind us I droped my handkerchief and she picked it up. And this was how we met. Sigmund couldn't get over the way I handled it. Our friendship blossomed for the rest of my stay in Tarnobrzeg. The only problem I had with aunt Janette who didn't like me to stay out to late.

So as you see there were many possibilities of good time in Tarnobrzeg. Once in the movies I was even introduced to daughter and her mother who WAS a wife to the head of the county. You could say she was the first lady of the county of Tarnobrzeg.

When I came back to Cracow mother was still in Krynica. She arrived couple of days later. You could say we WERE just few days away from the begining of the end.

Chapter 40

The last Hooray!

It would be pointless to describe to you from the political point of view the turbulent years in Europe between the years 1918-1939. The first signs of trouble came into prospective when in February 1938 Hitler became Germany's supreme military commander. As such on March 12 he marched into Austria to quell so-called civil disorder and next day declared that country as part of Germany. Few months later on September 23 he forced Czechs to evacuate the Sudetenland and one week later Hitler signed the Munich agreement with Chamberlain (England), Mussolini (Italy), and Daladier (France) for "peace in our time" and after which prime minister Chamberlain made a public statement that "Mr. Hitler is a Gentleman".

Well finally 1938 came to an end. As always in Poland people celebrated the Saint Sylvester day (New Year's Eve), and the actual arrival of 1939. Parties were going on all over Cracow. Restaurants, night clubs, theaters and other drinking establishments were full. Nobody even thought for a minute what was going on not to far west from us where our Jewish brothers and sisters were the first targets of Hitler's murderous SS and Gestapo.

Ofcourse Polish Jews celebrated too. Even some German Jewish refugees celebrated also. But at least they had something to celebrate about. O yes they lost their wealth, but they were happy being alive at least for time being.

Shortly after new Year on March 15, 1939 German troops invaded Czechoslovakia and occupied Prague, breaking the Munich agreement, and Chamberlain accused the "gentleman" Hitler of breaking his word.

At the time when Hitler annexed the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia Poland and Hungary also joined the bandwagen. Poles demanded and recived from already weak Czechoslovakia a piece of coal rich land south of Olza River which was a borderline between both countries under a pretence that the majority of population who used to work in those coal mines were Poles. The Czechs ceased those lands under the threat of invasion by Polish volunteers who trained in Cracow on Błonie with wooden arms and yelling lots of silly slogans. Hungarians got some land from eastern part of Czechoslovakia.

On the way to his showdown with Poland Hitler also took Memel a port city on Baltic Sea from Lithuania. Finally then Poles began recognising a parallel between Memel and Danzing in Poland. Danzing was a free city giving Poles acess to the Baltic Sea, so on March 28 1939 they announced that any German attempt to alter Danzing's status without Polish consent would lead to war. In order to help Poland on March 31 England extended to Poland guarantees against German aggression.

As the situation worsened day by day all Western Powers on one side and Germany on the other prepared to better their relations with Soviet Union trying to get them to commit themselves to one side or another. Well as you alredy know from history Stalin choose to go along with Hitler.

Many of my friends in those days used to live in the old Jewish district of Kazimierz (Kazimir). In my younger years I never realized how much of Jewish history in Cracow was contained in those old and delapidated buildings. In a matter of facts until then Kazimierz was of no interest to me. But all that changed when my association with Jewish boys and girls became more and more much friendler. With much pleasure I noticed that Jewish businesspeople became interested with new development for that area. First few new buildings were used mostly for Jewish organizations like the new ORT building or the new Jewish Gymnastic Association where our gym classes took place.

The so-called picnics or rather get together affairs (I wrote about meaning of picnics before) used to be much common in those days. They were mostly inside at homes and the host or hostess were responsible for food and drinks. Guests never brought anything, On occasion like that we had good times and dancig to that era favorite music.

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The Last Hooray!

Once after long discussion with my mother who really was always against such get togethers she finally agreed to let me invite some friends to our house. She even prepared a very nice table for us and promised to stay away from the apartment. Still she didn't keep her promise. Yes! In the beginning she left to visit a neighbour, but later she sent upstairs some kids from the project which I even liked and didn't want them to be there. Well it was wasn't the same anymore and the party finally broke down when my mother showed up and started reading the paper in the kitchen. As in some cases before I was terribly embarass. I guess my friends weren't to much disapointed I am quite sure some of their parents would have acted in the same way. One of my guests that evening was a girl Gena Worthman. She was a very nice person and also in love with one of the boys who attended this picnic. But all this is besides the point. During the German occupation this girl was a member of a Jewish war organization. All the members of this organization used to secretly leave the ghetto and many time lived outside for many months. as long as they could recive arms from Polish underground they harassed Germans on many occasions and ambushed and killed their transports and soldiers. Their heroism is remembered in many writings about Jews in Cracow during the occupation. Many of them perished, but I don't know nothing about the fate of Gena Worthman.

There was this another picnic in a very nice home of a well to do family. At this home I met young Ruth Wanderer. Ruth was the granddaughter of the man who owned the business where my uncle Ludwik got his start as a clerk which later led him to become a successful businessman himself. And this was also the business where uncle Ludwik met aunt Rose. So Ruth Wanderer was also aunt Rose's cousin.

A story about this family used to circulate in Cracow and finally even hit the press. You see Ruth had a sister who wouldn't get along with her parents. After many arguments she finally left home and for quite a while nobody could find her. It took a long time when somebody found her wandering alone in Tatra Mountains near Zakopane very much hungry, sick and tired.

At the same picnic I met two other girls. One was Ilona. She was from Lodz and attending school in Cracow. I never could figure it out why parents from a large city like Lodz would send their daughter to school in Cracow to live with strange people. Well anyway she was a happy girl. All it took for a boy to have a place to come with her. The other girl was Ruth Wolf who was was a sister to Mrs. Loeffler who lives now here in Kansas City.

With Adolf Hitler on the march the non-believers finally started to believe that the war was closer as they realised. More and more Jewish leaders sounded warnings about the up-coming disaster urging people to leave Poland to go to Palestine, America or other places around the world. But all that was easier said then done. To go to Palestine it was impossible. The hardships of traveling illegaly on so-called ghost ships were enormous and only young and strong people could survive and still not reach Palestine by falling into British hands patroling in their war ships near Palestine's shores. The militant, revisionist movement Betar urged young people to go anyway. Anytime their leader Vladimir Jabotynski came to Cracow fights used to break out between Betar and Bund (Jewish socialists in Poland) who were against Zionism. Other leftist Jewish parties used to join in the fights until the Polish police broke them apart and arrested most of them.

I myself joined a youth group Yehuda, an offspring of Akiba. All our members were mostly students in our Lyceum. We used to have our own hall for meetings, discussions and social events. The first wave of panic hit us when first group of German Jews arrived in Cracow thrown out by Hitler because after all those years in Germany they never gave up their Polish citizienship. They swarmed all over Poland. As the story went on those wealthy German Jews came with nothing so Polish Jews were oblidged to help them which they did. But later came out that these people still had plenty of money on themselves and in foreign banks. Our Yehuda hall became a temporary quarters for them Our school hold evening classes for their children to teach them Polish.

All my life in Cracow before the war I saw and still remember this man. Many people young and old concidered him sort of a city bum. Nobody knew his name but for some reason they called him Ceasar. They said that it was something wrong with his mind but he wasn't stupid at all. Another version was that he was a member of a wealthy and important family. Yet nobody was sure of his origin.

Ceasar used to walk the streets of Cracow with an accordeon and played real nice tunes, some of them his own compositions. He wrote poems and manifestos pointing out the wrongdoings of people, government and warning them about the upcoming disaster. He had many followers who swarmed around him like locusts laughing at his jokes and "Ceasar Ceasar".

This man lived through the war. Evidently Germans didn't mind his presence. I saw him after the war. The same Ceasar with his accordeon and his many followers. Maybe more grey and wiser and people around him still yelling his name.

Anti-Semitic propaganda didn't stop in Poland. On the contrary it intensified and Polish endeks supported by the church played Hitlers's tune. Sunday sermons about Jews doing wrong things to Poles and stories about Jews killing young Poles because they needed their blood to bake matzos for Passover took place mostly in rural countryside because there priests had more attentive audiences. Polish real patriotic groups kept warning the nation but to no avail.

As long everything was allright in the country Polish government quietly supported anti-Semitism by adopting a policy of trying to ruin Jewish business economicly even thou deep down they knew that most Poles used to be farmers and that they needed Jews in commerce and industry. The biggest trouble in Poland was that anytime they were in trouble they needed everybodys help; Jews and Poles alike. They kept proclaiming their old slogans spelled in the constitution about the liberty, equality and brotherhood which we always thought had some meaning. But not so. As soon the situation improved the same old story began and ant-Semitic slogans took over again.

Ant-Semitic demonstrations in universities incited by endeks used to be common all over the country mostly to make Jewish students to sit on the left side of the lecture hall. Kind of like a ghetto inside the university. And many profesors went along with that idea. During one of those demonstration at the Jagiellonian university in Cracow an endek killed a Jewish student Goldman. His parents owned a restaurant-bar just across the street from the university and many of those endeks used to eat and drink there. Universities in Poland were off limits to the National Police.. Whatever happened in Cracow remained a mystery. Police even didn't wink their fingers. There was no investigation and the murderer was never found.

Despite everything there still were in Cracow and all over Poland important Jewish personalities in government, teaching, sports and show-business and in Polish literature as well.

From Jewish intelectuals in Cracow the most respected was profesor of law at Jagiellonian university Dr. Taubenschlag. The profesor and his family used to live in their own villa just across from our apartment complex. On his trip all over Europe he even was invited by the Pope to come and see him in Vatican. The umbrella he always carried with him people used to say was a gift from the Pope. Many times on the way to school I walked behind him and listened to him talking to himself. His son Stanisław was also a student at Sobieski gimnazium and graduated there in 1938.

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The Last Hooray!

Among the sport figures there was in Cracow the only Jewish player in Polish Major Soccer League Roman Gruenberg. He was the best player in his position but because of anti-Semitic attitudes he never made the Polish National soccer team. Also the Cracow Makkabi hockey TEAMS twin brothers Rittermann never had a chance to play on National team but other teams from all over the country used to borrow them for their international games. Even the anti-Semitic Falcons used to put them on their team when they played teams from German Silesia. Rittermans also excelled in water-polo.

Polish movie industry was rather weak but many good Polish actors, directors and producers were Jewish. Also best Polish comedians were Jews performing under assumed names. Famous Kazimierz Krukowski passed away only couple of years ago. Other Jews were Josef Orwid, Wladislaw Lawinski and Michal Znicz who perished in a terrible missery in Warsaw ghetto.

Famous Polish composer and singer of that era was Mieczyslaw Fogg also a Jew who survived the holocaust and was still performing in Poland until few months ago. A real Polish songstress Hanka Ordon got famous just singing Jewish songs like: Yiddishe Mame, Rebeka and Shtetele Beiz.

Beautiful stories and Poems were written by another Jew Julian Tuwim who transmited his patriotic poetry to Poland from London during the war.

And this list wouldn't be complited without the two characters on radio Lvov who under names Mr. Aprikosenkranz and Mr. Umtenbaum (one of them was Jewish) on long winter nights kept half of Poland laughing to tears. All these people above represent only a fraction of famous Jews about whom many Poles even didn't know about their Jewish indentity.

Polish singers used to sing all those popular American songs but many times the real meaning of the songs got lost in the translation. Not until I came to this country in 1951 I found out that the song "Serenade to the fish to fish and the water" in Polish translation came out as "Quiet play for me oh your gypsy violin".

Some famous people in those days couldn't stand anymore Hitlers tyrany so they kept defecting to other countries. Ofcourse we know about Einstein and other famous Jews. But also two famous figures in tennis in those days left Germany. One of them was Von Cramm an internationaly known tennis star who defected to Egypt and the other was Count Bavorovski from Vienna who with his mother came to Poland telling the authorities that actually he was was Polish not Austrian. Well we never knew for sure why. Maybe they both were German spies.

Every young man 21 years old in Poland was a subject to draft and service in Polish army for two years. Only students who graduated from gimnazium at 18 years if accepted could be admitted to an officer school serve there for one year and come out with an rang of second lieutenant. Many students took advantage of this law, some Jews among them, even thou it was NOT easy for a Jew to get there. But shortly before the war a new law went into effect. A graduate student before joining the officer school had to serve for a year in a labor batalion. A father of one of my friends who served in Pilsudskis legions and had lots of influence enrolled his son in this labor batalion, and you should see the boy how strong and with re-build body he came back after a year. Needless to say the war prevented him from joining the officer school.

Little by little I drifted away from Falat street. Ofcourse we still used to live there and I kept playing soccer but not as much as before. Some of the first oldtime families like Herzogs, Potoks, Ratzes and other moved out but I kept in touch with them mostly with Salek Potok.

It seemed in those days that my life was changing in rapid pace. I graduated from gimnazium, lyceum and still I even wasn't 18 years old. Slowly I tried slip out from under my mother's wings. And she finally realised that One of those days I really will leave. As far as I was concerned I didn't want to leave I just wanted some more freedom. And it came shortly but under different circumstances.

Chapter 41

Zyga Kranz Blitzer!

A highlight of my young carrier came sometime in September of 1937 when with help of my then classmate in Lyceum I met Zyga Kranz Blitzer. Actually his name was Sigmund but everybody called him "Zyga". He was a product of one of those Jewish marriages without official marriage certificate like many of us from that era. His father's name was Blitzer but officialy at school he was Kranz (his mothers maiden name). I knew him for couple of years until I saw him for the last time in August of 1939.

For most of the boys at that time it was an honor to know or to be a friend with Zyga. He was a boy one year older than I, born in December 192o. My classmate who introduced me to him was Edek Wasserberger from prewar Auschwitz (Oswiecim). He attended the lyceum in Cracow and we became quite friendly until he got seriously ill and was forced by his family and doctors to go back home to Auschwitz. He never returned to Cracow.

Zyga was a boy with a cloud. Actually I knew him before when once we competed in a soccer game. He was playing a goalie for a team from the Jewish district of Kasimir. Then he seemed rather small to me. But in the next few years he grew up considerably. He was very good looking, tall with blond curly hair, very good build because of lots of exercising especially boxing. No wonder that girls in Cracow were crazy about him and this was one of the main reasons that other boys valued his friendship so much.

Well I was one of them and rather more lucky then the others because Zyga really liked me and for those last two years before the war we were almost un-separable. As a token of his friendship he gave to me his photo with an inscription on it; "To the companion in many love affairs". Then it ment to me a lot but it looks foolish now. In reality this kind of inscription was highly exaggereted. It is true that Zyga had many love affairs because girls couldn't stay away from him but all that happened without my participation. Ofcourse it is also true that thanks to Zyga I met many girls and sometimes I could capitalize on it because of him.

Couple of years before I met Zyga he went through a very devastating experience. His mother died in their apartment fire. It was a nightmare for the whole family and it took Zyga a long time to get over it. When I met him they used to live in the center of the Cracow's Jewish district on 45 Cracovian street. This building was located next to the building of so-called "Yiddishe Gemeinde" sort off Jewish Affairs Committee which also served Jews during German occupation and then many members of that committee even thou not all the time willingly helped SS and Gestapo in their dirty work.

Zyga's father was a high class tailor with a high class clientele, yet his shop didn't look high class. It was located in good central area near Cracow's City Hall. Mr. Blitzer (Zyga's father) spent most of his time there with his three helpers, two Jews and one Pole. All three of them from a small town someplace in Poland. I think this town was the hometown of Zyga's mother. So the apartment on 45 Cracovian street was most of the time to Zyga's disposition. And this fact was also one of the strong points in his popularity with girls. His apartment was open for them anytime. Still don't get me wrong. There was nothing real wrong going on in there. Just little good time and innocent.

There was a Polish caretaker in Zyga's apartment building who had a beautiful daughter. Like others this girl couldn't take off her eyes of Zyga and anytime her father caught her admiring him he mumbled some choice words and dragged her back to their apartment.

After his mother's death Zyga and his father had this nice Jewish lady take care of them. She cooked their meals and once a week on Fridays used to bring her own maid to clean their apartment. SHE ALSO FED THE HELPERS IN THE TAILOR'S SHOP.

Because of his father being such a good tailor Zyga was one of the best dressed young man in Cracow. With suits, jackets, slacks and overcoats for every occasion. My first two civilian suits also were custom made by his father.

Zyga Kranz Blitzer!

Zyga was a student in Jewish Commercial Gimnazium. Before that he had couple of years of regular public gimnazium. Later thanks to his fathers influence he transfered to the same kind of school but public again.

Zyga was a very good Jew. His feelings for Judaism and Zionism used to be very strong. And that was exactly the reason why he didn't last to long in this public school even thou he was a good student. An anti-Semitic remark by a student in his class made Zyga very mad and hurt. On the way home still in the building he droped that guy with a powerfull blow from a flight of stairs. As the story continued I understand that this boy suffered some injuries but not severe. School authorities allowed Zyga to finish his semester there but next school year he wind-up back in our school. After graduation ha found himself a job as an accountant with a nice starting salary for a beginner as he was, probably also because of his farthers influence.

So as you can see he wasn't an angel but he always was good to me. I have done some things he wouldn't tolerate if they would come from OTHER boys. Quite few times when he had some hot dates I used to tag along. Just for the heck of it. I knew he didn't like it but he never said a word to me like to "get lost". He was patient with me and always kept waiting until I decided to leave.

There were no just girls that we thought about all the time. We had plenty other interests. We liked to go to movies together. Just the two of us. We took long walks around our beloved Cracow visiting and revisiting old and new places. Zyga had his own camera. Italian made "Retina". We used to photograph things. Interesting things like buildings, old walls of Cracow and ofcourse people. Many times I had to pay for development of those pictures. We discussed many subjects important for that era. Sometimes visiting some old churches or even old synagouges we were amazed to see tremendous numbers of beggars sitting outside those places and begging for money. Cracow used to be full of all kind of beggars. They were those who displayed their self/inflicted wounds. Others were invalids veterans of Pilsudskis former legions. Some of them sang religious songs and blamed Jews for their misfortune. The Jewish beggars were as bad as their Christian counterparts. All of them had one thing incommon. Even thou they claimed how hungry they were they never accepted bread or other food. They all wanted only money.

So in addition to my new friends in school I became a full pledged member od so-called "Zyga's circle". Most of them were older then I but they thought that I was their age. I even changed my birthdate on my old school ID card from year 1921 to 1920. Just in case if somebody wanted to see it. But Zyga knew my real age.

Fela Nebenzahl was Zyga's girlfriend. At least she thought so. She was from an extrimly religious home. Her father was a rich businessman who owned dry goods whosesale company. He was a real McCoy a Hassid "mit in ganzen knack". I hope you know what I mean. He would never let his daughter marry Zyga and he called him "Shaygetz". To him there was no difference between Zyga and a gentile person. I guess there was plenty arguments between Fela and her parents about her relation with Zyga which finally forced her father to sent her to some Jewish high class finishing school in Vienna. That was still before Hitler's Anschluss. Still Fela didn't break off the relation. She kept corresponding with Zyga. She was already in Vienna when I met Zyga, so I kind of met her through that correspondence. I always wrote in those letters on Zyga's behalf telling her how much he was missing her. After Hitler took Austria Fela came back to Cracow and their relation started all over again.

With Fela there were always her cousins around. Two very religious girls. One of them was also Fela Nebenzahl. I guess their fathers were brothers. The other one was Rose not good looking but good built. There was no monkey business with them. Strckly kosher.

Others friends of Fela in our circle were Maryla Muszynski and Lusia Riegelhaupt. (No relation to ~~XXX~~ Riegelhaupts our neighbours on Fałat street). She was from Nowy Targ near Zakopane attending school in Cracow. I used to go out with her for a while until she left Cracow and went back home. We wrote to each other and later we met again when I was in summer camp in Kowaniec. This village was just outside of Nowy Targ. For some reason she came to Cracow couple days before outbreak of war but I didn't get a chance to see her.

About couple of years before the war the teen-agers and other young people left Deptak and Błonie (the large pasture nearby for playing on weekends and feeding cows on weekdays) and moved to another area closer to mid-town. The new place of meetings and get together in wintertime was then the ~~XXX~~ Szewska street (Shoemaker street) and in summertime the neearby Planty between Bizantz Pavilion and Jagiellonian university. It wasn't a Jewish part of Cracow but everybody was there mostly on weekends (Saturday). Sometimes becuse of the closeness of the university we had to endure small demonstrations against Jews by young endeks students who with clinched fists yelling anti-Jewish slogans tried to make us move someplace else.. Usually always few minutes after endeks left Socialists used to make their appearence showing their support and trying to sell their daily paper "The Worker". Ironicaly they never met face to face. WITH ENDEKS

Once Zyga and I walking on the outskirts of Kazimir noticed a large crowd of endeks trying to braek windows in Jewish stores. Well! They did not succeded. They recived a tremendous beating from Jewish boys who at that time were ready for them. Also Zyga and I got hold of a young man who was known in Cracow for selling an anti-Semitic publication Orendownik. (All Around Paper). We took away from him hundreds of newspapers and with help of others we shreded them to pieces. The boy disapeared yelling for help which wasn't around because of the beating his comrades also disapeared quickly.

On another occasion Zyga and I just walked in the middle of Kazimir with Tusia and Helen Haber (cousins), when three Polish hoodlums behind us not only kept following us but also making nasty remarks about both of us and the girls. For few blocks we just ignored them leading them deeper and deeper into dark streets of Kazimir. Finally we came near a monastery of brothers Bonifrats who in Cracow used to be famous for pulling, fixing and making teeths better then some doctors. There we met another Jewish boy we knew and we told the Haber girls to step into a hall of some building. And then under the walls of that monastery the three of us gave those young hoodlums such a beating that I am sure they never fergot. They ran from us like probably never before in their lives.

Speaking of Haber girls I don't know what happened ~~XX~~ to Helen. But Tusia few months later met a handsome Polish man who was swimmer on Cracovia water-polo team. They fell in love despite her being from a very religious family and she never left him. Her parents owned an elegant fruit store in a fashionable part of Cracow. She was a student in Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy and for couple of years her and her brother and I used to walk to school together every morning. Her family probably perished but her young Polish man saved her life during the war. I saw them both after the war still together.

Winter of 1939 came and because of my new friendships I left Cracovia's iceskating ring and joined all my friends on Makkabi ring. Makkabi used to have a pretty fair ice hockey team. One of my friends from lyceum used to play on that team, but all of those players put together were no match for the terrific Cracovia hockey team. Zyga and I joined in a program on Makkabi for development of young hockey players. It seemed as lots of fun as long as~~t~~lasted. Winter that year in Cracow was rather warm.

Because of Zyga I met some players of the Makkabi soccer team. Among them two students from Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy. One of them was Jurek Bester and the other Arthur Spanauf. I heard rumors about him that during the occupation he was a policeman in the ghetto. I also met some boxers and couple of young ladies from the Makkabi track team. Those two used to run 60 and 1oo meters and few times were selected to the Polish national track team.

Many Jewish young ladies of that era when they reached certain age just listened to their parents advise and instead to continue with their gimnazium education got themselves admitted to "Ognisko". Translated to English the name of this school would be "Fireplace". But acctually this was a homemakers school. During one years at that school those girls learned there everything they should know to be a good homemaker. In meantime they kept looking for a husband. I knew few girls from that school. One was Blanka Ostrowiecki whom I met even before I knew Zyga. Her father also was one of those rich orthodox Jews. I went through a very funny expirience while I was going out with Blanka. It started when she gave me to wear her ring which she claimed had an old family tradition. She also said that the ring was gold. Anyway to make a long story short, later when I enrolled to Jewish Commercial Lyceum I met Eva Lundner there. She saw on my finger this good looking ring so she asked me if she could wear it. I wanted to be nice to her so I didn't mention that this ring belonged to another girl. Well! For this ring Eva gave me her ring which was small with a red bat on the top. In plain words it was a cheapee always leaving another green ring on my finger. One evening Eva and I were skating on the Makkabi iceskating ring when to my horror I noticed that Blanka was there to. Another horror swept over me when I found out that Blanka and Eva knew each other. Still somebody was watching over me. It was very cold night and everybody was wearing gloves. I knew I had to do something ~~when~~ next time when I saw Blanka she wanted her ring back. Somehow I convinced her that I will bring it back to her on our next date. So I got back from Eva Blanka's ring and returned to her the little cheap ring.

This story wasn't ment to end well. One weekend while I was walking with Blanka confident that I have her ring in my overcoat pocket ready to hand it to her I discovered a large hole in my pocket and a faint spell in my body with a feeling that the ring was lost forever. Blanka took it rather well even thou anytime I saw her I had to listen over and over again how valuable this ring was to her. I offered to pay her back for the ring from my weekly allowance which if not for the war would probably take the rest of my life. But Blanka was generous about it and wouldn't accept my offer. On another hand who knows maybe this lost ring was a fake to. After this incident our friendship practicly ended. Blanka joined the Jewish organization for young women called "Bais Yakoo". Quite few years later I was involved in another ring story. But let us wait till we get to that point.

Another girl Lola Owsiana who also was our neighbour on Zalat street was one of those girls who had a job already. In those days everybody thought that she will marry her boyfriend Wicek Goldman who was the brother to the young man murdered by endeks at the Jagiellonian University. The English saying "Whatever Lola wants Lola gets" Applied to our Lola 100%. Wicek never was sure what will happen next. Lola had all those men or boys wraped all around her small finger. Lola didn't wait for the Germans to arrive in Cracow. She left with one of her boyfriends. Not with Wicek. This guy Markiewicz was the worst looking from all her boyfriends. Anyway she married him and they survived in Soviet Union. This Markiewicz used to have a brother a very good student at Sobieski gimnazium. He finished his studies after the war and later got the profesorship of Polish literature at the Jagiellonian university. Some years later the son of this profesor Markiewicz accomplished the same feast and until few years ago both father and son taught there.

Chapter 41 (cont)

Zyga Kranz Blitzer!

To write farther about Zyga and about his friends and those people who were my friends because of Zyga would take another book to write. All I want you to know that all of them were nice and and caring. Each one of them had some kind education and many of them as I would continue with their studies if not for the war.

All these young people which I wrote and still write about used to be dear and close to me. I wouldn't want to miss my dear friend Elisha Weinberger who was a cousin to Fela Nebenzahl. He also had religious parents, and used to be close with Maryla Muszynski whose parents were completly assimilated. Boy! This guy loved to eat ham and ham sandwiches. What would his father say if he saw him to do that. Probably would throw him out from his house. Another friend was Zyga Schwartz; A hotshot, who thought that he knew everything. A go in between guy who loved to bring feuding couples together again.

There was this friend of Zyga. I only remember his first name Adek. Also a good dresser who liked to circulate around. Needless to say his father told Zyga's father that his son don't treat him with the right respect. So Adek was forced to live through a very difficult time because our whole gang and others boycotted him for quite a while.

My list could go on for ever. Still remain some girls to be mention like Fela Hoffman and Saba Scheinerman who still lived at home with their parents but had good jobs and were on their own. Fela Hoffman like many others had her eyes on Zyga and Saba liked very much Salek Potok my long time friend from Falat street. There also was a very nice girl whose parents owned a fur company who would be very happy if Zyga would go out with her. But Zyga was in a difficult position. Fela Nebenzahl was always around. Watching him like a hawk.

To complete this chapter I also should mention this couple who used to know each other since they were kids. Everybody knew that someday they will be married. He was a good looking redheag. She wasn't to good looking but not to bad. And here again it is hard for me to remember their names. Anyway from time to time he liked to slip away from his girls loving arms. He met once those two good looking redheaded sisters. Evidently they both liked him. But the stories he used to tell us boys about those encounters with those sisters kept us in a state of a shock. On another hand most of us didn't believe a word he was saying.

I also knew a girl (and again I don't remember her name anymore) with whom I used to play as a child on our playground on Planty. I didn't see her later for quite few years. I met her again maybe a year before the war. She also grew up to be a very good looking girl even thou a little on the chubby side. we reminscend about those good old days when we were kids. Those last few months before the war she had a good looking boyfriend who with his parents settled in Cracow after being forced by Hitler from Germany.

My former friend Blanka Ostrowiecki after joining Bais Yakoo I guess crossed back to her father's side. On Saturday afternoons Blanka and all those other girls from that organization, all very well dressed used to walk together. They kept ignoring male company. When a boy tried to be nice and friendly to them, all they got back just mean and unfriendly looks, like they wanted to make those boys aware that they weren't for them.

All these people I wrote above were from middle class families and some like Fela Nebenzahl and few others used to be better off.

But what about those many really rich people the high society of Cracow. They had children to. Well most of the time those rich kids kept to themselves but some of them were friendly and could be reached.

I thing the most prestigous rich Jewish families in Cracow were the owners of Suchard chocolate factory famous in those days all over Europe, makers of Milka (milk chocolate) Velma (desrt chocolate) and Bittra (bitter chocolate) and many other kinds of sweet goodies.

The second family used to be the owners of Ziarno (Grain) the largest bakery in the area located in a tall 4 or 5 story building on the outskirts of Cracow. During the occupation this building was destroyed by a tremendous fire.

I don't know if any members of those families survived the war but their kids before the war used to be like any of us. A daughter of the owners of Suchard was a beautiful girl and we all knew each other, believe it or not thanks to Zyga who had this gift and even maybe charm how to make friends with everybody.

There was this other rich boy Reinhold. The only one in Cracow in those days and also our age who owned his own car. He used to park this red DKW (maker of the car, I don't remember the meaning of those letters but I think it was German made) near the Planty and the crowd always used to gather around Reinhold and his car to admire it and listen to his bragging.

Another important figure was Kluger. A man few years older then all of us. He was a cyclist who owned few bicycles and motorcycles. Couple of them racing giants. He was a member of Makkabi cycling team. He had some soccess but his results were only fair. Under his racing uniform he always wore his regular underwear. Anytime he was racing his underwear used to slip out from under his trunks and the happy crowd chanted their old slogan in Yiddish; "Kluger du verlirst deine unterhosen" Which ment "Kluger you are loosing you underwear" He was a happy fellow. He survived the war, and later owned in Cracow his own bicycle shop which he purchased from some surviving members of the family who used to own this shop before the war. He was also then an active member of the Cracow district cycling association. When I worked for Hias I used to do some typing for him when he was in charge of organazing the Cracow district cycling championships.

So this bring us to the last two months. Sort of to the beginning of the end. Ofcourse the good times didn't ~~xxixxx~~ stop not yet. There was then living in Cracow this girl Bella Schorr. Not to good looking but good bilt and with nice personality and it was a real fun to be around her. And again Zyga was the one who first met her in a school especially for people who tried to improve in English language.

Well Bella was also rich. her parents were divorced and she with her mother and brother used to live in one of those elegant neighbourhoods. She didn't have nothing else to do just to wait for a right man to come along. She used to have many suitors. Even before we knew her we paid close attention to all her movements around town. Later when we met her she told us that none of those men ~~xxxxx~~ didn't even come close enough to be considered for marriage. Believe it or not but she was very happy with our company even thou those men who wanted to marry her were already established in their jobs, elegant and making good money.

We used to be very often guests in her very nice apartment. She had this very good friend Liza Gutmann whose parents were very rich but lost all their wealth for some reason. So it came to it that Liza had to take a job and so did her brother who worked for the same company as Zyga after graduating.

So the last few weeks before the disaster stroke we used to have lots of good times together, spending much of time in swimming pools or going dancing on weekends in Casanova or Ciganeria.

Liza also liked our company and many times we also gathered in her home. she always served tea and cookies. There we listened to radio or records ~~xxx~~ You see Liza had her eyes on Salek Potok but he didn't like her. Salek got involved with some guy Zimmermann who was a no good so and so... so we started to avoid both of them.

I finally finished with soccer. A long way from the time when I was still at school and stood up a nice girl Guscia Appfelbaum in favor of an international soccer game played in Cracow. Ofcourse she didn't speak to me for a long time. It took me long while before I had enough nerve to apologize.

Zyga Kranz Blitzer!

Girls always have been dressed beautiful. Their clothes either was made by their mothers or seamstresses or many times they made it themselves.

With boys was a different story. Without any reservations Zyga was the king. Thanks to his father he was always elegant. Only rich people dressed like him. The rest of the crowd was doing the best possible. If a kid could have couple of suits one for day and the other for evening he was very happy. I was very happy with my two suits. One was a dark beige sport suit and the other brown with light stripes double breasted. I used to have some other clothing I was able to wear when my cousin Saul didn't want to wear it anymore. Sport coats used to be in style also. Mostly in summer. The coat was always light and slacks dark.

Most overcoats have been made from English materials. Many people lined them with real furs. This was also an era of swade shoes and every young man was extrimly happy when he finally could wear a real man's hat. The most popular hats made a firm whose most popular model was called "Hickel". I guess this was a German firm because this hat was again popular in Austria and Germany after the war and those young Jewish boys who made their first money on black market kept buying them again.

There used to be all kinds of uniforms for going skiing and skating. And again everything modeled from Austrian and German styles. Those winter caps and hats Germans still wear them as many years ago. Skiing slacks were made narrow on bottoms so they could be sliped inside the ski shoes or skating shoes. People who wore knickers also wore German style white stockings. Later when Hitler started prosecute Jews no Jewish young man dared to wear them.

As I already mentioned before everybody was crazy about English. In anticipation of emmigration to Palestine they all studied Hebrew and English.

The terror in Palestine was even a daily occurence in those days. So this people trying to show off how good their English was used to walk or sit around Planty and many times just pretending reading the London Times even thou the only thing they understood was the headline "Terror In The Palestine". Together with the London Times a pipe was in style not necessary for smoking just for people to see it sticking out from the small pocket of a jacket.

Well! this was the situation in Cracow and for that matter all over Poland shortly before the war. And again as for many years before Days of Cracow were on everybodys mind. In the last two weeks of August Cracovians and Poles in other cities and towns celebrated the 25th anniversary of creation of Pilsudski's Legions and their joining in fight for Poland's independence in world war one. Lots of Polish dignitaries were expected in Cracow during those days. Many of them showed up among them Pilsudski's confidant and succesor Marshall Edward Smigly Rydz who while discussing the Polish German conflict declared to a yelling happy crowd,"We won't give away even a button". Little he knew then that in few days he will be one of the first who together with president Ignacy Moscicki left the country to seek shelter in Switzerland.

Anyway a sense of impending doom overwhelmed most of us. People of Cracow en-masse started leaving their resorts and other vacation places coming home. Half of the railroad station in Tarnow was already destroyed by an large explosion. Many vacationiers arriving from Carpathian Mountains told us that they already saw German troops trying to cross into Poland from Czechoslovakia It became clear then that the war was just around the corner. Still secretly Poland declared general mobilisation and we could see all over Cracow recruits being trained in using weapons. None of us realized how poor Polish army was equiped. I saw a group of maybe fifthy soldiers practicing with one machine gun only. It was a mess already but the worst was yet to come.

Zyga Kranz Blitzer!

As far as I am concerned everything about Zyga ends right here. Everything about him was different what I knew before I met him. Memories of the last two years before the war are still vivid in my mind. For me those years represent a crossover from puberty to manhood.

Ofcourse like most of us Zyga wasn't perfect but he was strongminded and always stuck to his principles. I am quite sure that the tragic death of his mother made him the way he was. He and his father had a very close realationship but he felt that he had a responsibility to take good care on himself, not to go astray and be respected by everybody around him.

Last time I saw Zyga two days before the war it didn't cross my mind at all that it was the last time in our lives we saw each other. And this is the way I see him today as always nice dressed, with a touch of tan on his face and his blond hair even blonder because of the tan, smiling and and saying; "I will see you tomorrow!" And this is another one of my many memories I will never forget.

While in Zbaraz I wrote three letters to Zyga but never recived an answer. Later when my half cousin Janka Patatoff came to Zbaraz from Lvov to visit her aunt she told me that she saw Zyga couple of times in Cracow walking with Bella Schorr. But this was still before all Jews of Cracow were herded in ghetto. After the war when I was in Cracow I came across my old friend from lyceum Josef Marcus. He was the one who used to help me many times with my Hebrew. The two of us also played hookey from school few times going to Cracow's main railroad station and watching the trains and girls going by. Believe it or not"Josiu"was a religious young man. He even had short earlocks hidden behind his ears but this didn't stop him ofcource without knowledge of his father to play soccer on Saturdays. Well anyway Marcus told me that Zyga survived the war which made me very happy but later with another friend Chaim Grossman they used to transport American cigaretts from Hungary to Poland and both died when their truck crashed into some other object on the highway.

The last two days before the war were rather hectic. We didn't know what to expect and certainly we didn't expect that Poland will go down in next couple of weeks. We discussed many possibilities and spent long hours on planty sitting there until late pondering the future. One day before the war Bella Schorr asked me if I would like to go to Liza's Gutmann house because her parents wouldn't let her out from the house. Ofcourse I refused.

By the order of authorities all lights in Cracow got dimed, and shades had to be pulled down in all residences and store windows at night.

The thoughts about what next day will bring coinsided with the thoughts of the past. About the happy days of the childhood, about the care and tenderness we had from our parents and for some reason which was really appropriate because of the circumstances the conversation turned to religion. We talked about our Hebrew teachers at home, about Rabbi Dr. Schmelkes who taught us religion in gimnazium and the funny Mr. Helfgott who taught religion in elementary schools and was the first one to teach us Mode Ani and Shma Israel. We even remiscened about the priest who at schools taught Catholic religion. About students who had to say prayers before every school day in the morning and after school and sing an appropriate religious songs different for every month.

The hour of reckoning was getting closer and closer. We said our good nights and went home. Even thou the situation was grave none of us expected that next morning we will see German planes all over Cracow and that very early that particular morning by the order of Adolf Hitler German forces were already marching on Polish territory.

And that how it was on the morning September 1, 1939!

Part III

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Chapter 42

Prelude To "Blitzkrieg!"

Since March 1939 Western Europe found itself in webs of diplomacy. Both sides Britain and France on one and Germany and Italy on the other tried to figure out on whose side Soviet Union will be in case of war. It was startling to the Germans and to the West as well when on May 4 Stalin replaced his foreign minister Litwinow with his right hand man Vyacheslav Molotov. Litwinow took over as Soviet ambasador to United States and Molotov started a game which culminated in the evening of August 23 1939. The Nazis and the Soviets signed non-aggression pact together with a secret protocol putting all the Baltic states, the eastern half of Poland and the Rumanian province of Bessarabia into Soviet sphere of influence. The rest of eastern Europe went to Germany.

In meantime Hitler had already given the order for Danzing to provoke a break with Poland. Since early in 1939 German-Polish relations were deteteriorating steadily, especially in the always tense area of relations between the Poles and the Nazi dominated government of the Free City of Danzing. On May 20 a Danziger was shot after an organised demonstration against the Polish customs house inside the boundary of Danzig.

The killing of this Danziger who was a member of the Nazi SA by the chauffeur of the Polish Acting Commissioner in Danzig provoked a rush of German propaganda attacks on Poland especially during the visit of Dr. Goebbels then Nazi propaganda minister. It became known then that the Danzig Senate had allowed a formation of a volunteer defence corps and had imported arms from East Prussia.

On August 9 Germans protested to the Polish ambasador in Berlin about Polish interventions in the internal affairs of Danzig. It said that any such repetitions would lead to more aggravations of German-Polish relations for which the Poles will be directly responsible. Polish reply was violent and uncompromising. The Poles were determined not to be bullied like the Czechs and they genuinely believed that they could defeat Germany. Hitler could now proceed to the next phase of his plan-the isolation of Poland.

Not waiting to long Hitler had already given another order for Danzig to provoke a break with Poland. After a meeting with his generals he set 4.30am on August 26 as zero hour for the German attack on Poland.

The crucial day was August 25 the day on which Hitler had to confirm the order to attack, and at 3pm that day his order was given. Then came two disasters in rapid succession. At 4.30pm Hitler heard that alliance between Britain and Poland had been signed formally confirming the guarantees given to Poland on March 31 in London meaning that Britain was not going to stay aside after all. And at 6pm Mussolini told Hitler that Italy could not support Germany without German supplies which were well beyond Germany's capacity to fulfil.

Hitler was considerably shaken by Mussolini's defection and at 7.30pm the order to attack Poland was withdrawn.

The cancelation of the order to attack Poland put Britain and France momentarily in a very strong position, but the divided government of France was still clutching at the hope of evading war. Hitler soon recovered his initiative and the German armed forces were commanded to be ready for attack by September 1. The final order was given on August 31. The invasion of Poland was to begun at 4.45am the next day.

The German attack ended any hopes of peace with Britain. French were still hoping.. On the afternoon of September 2 when Germans bombs were falling on Poland and the Panzers were rolling into the action against the Polish cavalry under the preasure of British parlament and cabinet that new Munich was under preparation Neville Chamberlain was left no option but to abandon the attempt to get France in line and leave her only to follow, an ultimatum was delivered to Hitler to withdraw from Polish territory by 11am September 3.

Chapter 43

Blitzkrieg!

Two hours later Sunday September 3 as church bells rang in Britain for morning service, the British ultimatum expired,. Britain and Germany were at war. The second world war had begun.

Going back to that evening of August 31 when when a group of us sitting on a bench in dark Planty with a dimed gas light above us, still none of us believed that a disaster was only few hours away. Down inside we dreamed about the impossible dream; Victory by Poland over Hitler Germany. We even mentioned a possibility to meet some day after the war on Unter den Linden the most fashionable street of that era in Germany. When finally we said good-by to each other with couple of exceptions I never saw these people again.

One month before the war uncle Ludwik anticipating that the worst was coming pretty soon sent a large part of his wealth, mostly household goods, and some valuable things, clothing,beding and other necessities to Zbaraz, hoping that this stuff will arrive there long before the hostilities will begin.

That was also the time when aunt Rose was recuperating from a long bout with phlebitis. She went through a very hard period of her life with many ups and downs. Quite few times there was a danger that she wouldn't survive. And finally when her recovery became obvious the German invasion began.

On the morning of September 1 I have awaken from deep sleep by loud and strange noises which remained me of noises I heard few years before when Cracow was then in a path of a terrible storm which knocked down many old buildings and pulled from the ground hundreds years old trees. I ran out to our balcony and noticed those planes flying only few feet away from me. I even saw couple of pilots and still didn't come to me that the war began and that German Air Force was bombing our beloved city. Standing there I thought that Polish planes excercised to be ready xx xxxxx to meet the enemy. Just in case of attack.

It didn't take me to much longer to recognise nazi emblems on those planes wings, and the thought so long subdued in my mind finally made me realise that the war with Germany became a reality.

Those Germans planes flew freely all over Cracow droping those bombs, without any opposition from Polish army or Air Force. There was no anti-air defense and those poor Polish soldiers kept firing at those planes with simple rifles. One would expect some movements on the part of Poles, signs of mobilizing, but nothing was there just few broken down tanks, lots of horses (obsolete against German panzers) and army instructors training recruits in open exposed places how to operate machineguns. In one sentence the defense system colapsed, even sirens didn't work.

Still on this September morning my father went to work and I went to uncle Ludwik's store in case something should be done there. Slow but sure my mother started to prepare for possible evacuation. And as she would know it few hours later she recived a notice from authorities to go east to Zbaraz.

In uncle Ludwik's store everybody was calm. For the last time I saw there and said good-by to my aunt Rose from Vienna and her son Ignatz (Nacek). I guess it was their decision to stay in Cracow and take their chances with Germans. A very bad decision.

On my way home early afternoon I still visited Planty hoping to see Zyga there but I couldn't find him. Instead I met there this girl with whom as a child I used to play on Planty. She was walking along with her German refugee boyfriend. We also said our goodby's and I told her that there was a possibility that our family will leave town soon. She even asked me to write her about Zbaraz in case her family will decide to leave Cracow.

Before this first day of war was over we moved out for the night from our apartment and went to spent the nights with Goldsteins in their apartment. Our Polish neighbours urged us to stay with them by saying that we should stay together and try to survive this mess together. Still nobody was ready for six years of war.

Chapter 43 (cont)

Blitzkrieg!

Later the evening of September 1 an uneasy calm settled over Cracow. The continious bombing finally ceased after darkness. The initial shock kind off subdued. I even saw people going to the movies and on brighter side authorities announced that sirens will be operational next day.

Also this evening our entire family gathered at uncle Ludwik's apartment to discuss the situation and all decided to leave Cracow and go to Zbaraz as soon as possible.

Next day September 2 bombing resumed and without any problems we recived permission to leave Cracow. We hired a doroshki and went to our apartment on Falat street to pack our belongings to take with us. Anticipating that our leave is going to be a brief one we completly ignored our winter clothing and winter beding which we missed so badly during our banishment in Siberia.

I spent part of that day on Falat street with my old friends. I didn't tell them that we will be leaving Cracow later at night. I even helped them for couple of hours to dig trenches to be used later as shelters from air raids.

My father was the last one who closed the offices of his company forever. The president of the company Dr. Halpern a capitain in Polish army already have left for places unknown. My father also had under his care all the company's money. He gave to uncle Gabriel who was a partner in the firm his share and the rest which amounted to many thousands of zlotys he delivered to Mrs. Halpern, leaving for himself just couple of thousands zlotys which in peacetime used to be lots of money but not enough to survive a war. That shows you how honest he was. He left himself with zero in a time when he could take lots of money and nobody would know about it. Out of those two thousand he kept until after the war two 500 zlotys bills to be told by Polish Bank that weren't worth even one groshen anymore.

Uncle Ludwik left the store with his brother in law Sigmund Zimetbaum and with his trusted employee who used to work for uncle Ludwik since he first went in Business by himself. Zimetbaum's son Heniek went with us to Zbaraz but his sister Nina was left behind with her parents. Besides the stuff uncle Ludwik sent a month before to Zbaraz him and aunt Rose still took with them a tremendous amount of things mostly suitcases with watches which could keep them well provided for many years to come. Heniek and I were responsible for watching all those suitcases and also for carrying most of them. And believe, they were very heavy.

So now in few short hours we will be leaving our beloved Cracow still kiding ourselves that we will return shortly.

For my uncles Gabriel and Ludwik and their families wasn't just to leave Cracow for their security and safety. To leave ment to leave their wealth behind and statue in the community. For us, my parents and me there was no wealth to be left behind. Our main and only worry was our apartment and all what was in it. Among other things I am quite sure that uncle Gabriel probably missed most his greatest hobby his violin cello, which he enjoyed to play very much as long as I could remember and many years before that.

It was obvious listening to all the reports from frontlines that after two short days the war was going very bad for Poland, even thou in some fierce battles in certain regions Polish forces managed not only some victories but also inflicted heavy losses to the enemy who was forced to withdraw and retreat. It was also a fact that two days after the fall of Cracow on September 7 arrived in the city a motorized regiment SS Germania and then went to battle at the region of Przemyśl where on September 15 it was completly destroyed by Second Carpathian Division of Polish infantry.

But all that didn't mean nothing. The Blitzkrieg with its tactics and shock, was a fresh approach to war, and the overwhelming success of its debut in the Polish campaign surprised not only the Poles but the Germans themselves. Never before a nation had been so annihiliated in so short time.

Chapter 44

Leaving Cracow!

On September 2 at 10pm our family gathered on Cracow's Main Station. On track one our train stood ready for the passengers to board. Really there was no hurry because passing by military transports had their priority.

As I still recall ready to leave were uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and her mother Mrs. Zimetbaum and their nephew Heniek Zimetbaum. For Heniek surely it must this been the most emotional moment of his life saying good-by to his parents and sister for the last time in his life even thou he didn't realised then that was happening. With aunt Mala was my cousin Saul and the best friend of uncle Gabriel Ferdinand Korngold and his mother. The rest of the group consisted of my mother and me, and of Esther Goldstein and her two children Mala and Bumek.

Still hoping that the war will end soon my father and Lipe Goldstein decided to stay behind. Besides them uncle Gabriel also decided to stay and his daughter Zosia who waited for news from her new husband Robert Abelcs who was drafted and sent away. From my fathers side uncle Adolf and his wife aunt Gusta remained and ofcourse their son Alexander was serving in the Cracow's panzer division and also sent to frontlines. Their niece Andzia was also with them. Paul and Stefa Balin, Esther's Goldstein brother and his wife planed to leave couple of days later. Also left behind was the entire family of aunt Mala.

It took about an hour before the train started to move slowly. Our destination was Lvov in eastern Poland an old large city with a population then of 400,000 people. Because of those military transports we didn't get to far. It took us two hours of slow moving to make the 2km from Cracow to Plaszów a nearby suburb which during the war became famous as a Nazi concentration camps where hundreds thousands of Jews perished.

Not until late morning we started to move again. We thought then that we were on our way. But not so. When we reached a small town of Bochnia German planes showed-up on the horison and begun to circle and buzz our train. The train stoped and a signal was given to abandon it. We heard some explosions and flashes of fire became visible all around the train but not direct hits. We jumped of the train trying also to carry aunt Rose and her mother. While we tried to find shelter in the tall grass those planes have droped few bombs and as we looked up they seemed to turn around flying away. The train was standing on high ground, and a new signal was given to board the train again. We saw few people lying in grass but our pre-occupation was with reachin the train as soon as possible. And again we had to carry aunt Rose and her mother and practicaly throw them to the compartment. God was with us. We were lucky. By that time train started moving much faster. Few more seconds and some of us would remain behind in this field. During that period my mother was all the time near me. Isn't something how families stick together. During that ordeal aunt Mala was all the time with Saul. After all his heart wasn't well enough. I don't think that Mrs. Korngold left the train at all and her son remained with her aboard, and ofcourse Esther protected her two children. But Heniek and I had to protect aunt Rose and her mother. In a way we were lucky that those cars used to be the oldfashioned ones with doors directly to compartments. It would be much harder to perform our work if those cars had only four entrances as the modern trains.There would be an enormous stampide at all those doors.

Slowly but sure the train was picking up its speed and with aunt and her mother inside we really had to scramble before we reached the safety of the inside. At least the bombing stoped and we didn't encounter anymore of it for the rest of the trip. But those German planes flew above us all the way until we arrived in Lvov.

Chapter 44(cont)

Leaving Cracow!

It was Sunday morning September 3. Third day of war in Poland and first day of war for Britain and France. From our train we saw peasants going to church to their Sunday mass. The countryside was still quiet like on any Sunday morning. In one of those villages when our train stoped a large wedding party boarded the train. The bride and groom took places in our compartment. It seemed weird to me that somebody wanted to get married with war going on. In my mind the bridegroom was a cinch to be drafted. On another hand he probably knew that in couple of days everything will be over in his village.

We traveled fairly fast not encountering any special problems. For me it was the second time in two weeks when we passed the half bombed out Tarnów's railroad station. After a brief stop there we were on our way again.

Close to Rzeszów authorities stoped the train again for the entire night to let through the military transport. For a moment a slight confusion developed there when the police noticed a man walking around with a lantern. They took him for a spy but then he was cleared by other railroad workers who explained to the police that he was one of them.

We arrived at the Rzeszów main station early in the morning September 4. Rumors and stories circulated all over the place telling us of a heroic resistance of Polish soldiers and of vicious bombing of Berlin by Polish Air Force. By not listening to radio news and without newspapers for time being we were inclained to believe those rumors. An open railroad platform with a tank and two soldiers was attached to a transport going west to face the Germans. We told those soldiers about the rumors we heard but they just shook their heads like saying "dont't believe all that balonEWA"

First thing in the morning aunt Mala was looking for candidates to go to town and buy some food. After preaching for a while that it was a responsibility of young people to take care of this matter but not getting any answers she went herself. It didn't take to long when she came back with fresh bread, ham, coffee and other things. We all had a good breakfest and shortly the train was on its way again.

Walking throughout the car my mother discovered in another compartment my math profesor Mr. Horowitz who with his family was also on the way to his old hometown of Stanisław.

The rest of the trip went without any hitches. We still kept encounter some military transport going west. We traveled like this all day September 4 and in wee hours of September 5 we reached first suburbs of Lvov. People who lived in those places still boarded the train to travel to work in Lvov not knowing what afternoon will bring.

Lvov as Cracow was a very old city but maybe 100 years younger. It's name Lvov came from Ukrainians. Germans used to call Lemberg and Poles renamed Lwów. Now Lvov is the largest city in Western Ukraine, second to Kiev which is the capital of Ukrainian SSR.

Lvov founded by an Ukrainian prince in 1256 was captured by Poles in 1340 became a city in 1352 and Roman Catholic Episcopal See in 1411-12 also became one of the great trading towns of medieval Europe. It was passed to Austria after first partition of Poland in 1772 and made the capital of Austrias province og Galicia.

In world war one Lvov was a center of two great battles between Czarist Russia and Germany. Later it was occupied by Ukrainians who briefly set-up there a West-Ukrainian Republic. Poles subdued Ukrainians in November 1918 and made Lvov the capital of Lvov province to loose it briefly to Bolshevik invasion in 1919.

Soviet Union took Lvov again from Poland September 1939 and them lost the city to German armies July 1941 and retook back near the end of world war two July 27, 1944.

We arrived in Lvov in the middle of bombig of which main object was the railroad station. We disembarked as soon as possible and took shelter in a tunel nearby.

Chapter 45

Fall of Cracow!

Through a small opening in the tunel we could see those German planes flying high above the station and making the bad situation even worst. The information couldn't tell us if a train for Tarnopol will ever leave.

On September 5 while we were waiting in Lvov, Cracow was under constant bombardment by the German air force. They flew over the city like they would own it already. It became obvious at that time that Cracow will fall soon.

In meantime on this day my father and Lipe Goldstein went to the station to find out what the chances were still to get out the beleaguered city. There was a mob at the station tried to get out, and at last station authoroties informed them that there still was a possibility for a last train going to Lvov at night.

Father and Lipe to take shelter from constant bombing went to the shoping area xxxxxx across the station and stood there in a little niche with hardly room enough for both of them. Couple of times two direct hits exploded near them. They hold on to each other and thought that this was their end.

After more then an hour of constant pounding the bombing ceased. Father and Lipe left immediatly and they both agreed after certain period of time to come back again and consider any possibility to leave Cracow.

Lipe went to his apartment and father went to our apartment on Fałat street. There he took with him only a small suitcase with few necesseties and closed our home forever. And so did Lipe Goldstein, closing not only the apartment but his carpet business also.

Back at the station late at night authorities finally put together the last train from Cracow to Lvov filled to capacity and more xx by fleeing people. Anyway this train was damned never to get to Lvov. As soon as daylight came uninterupted bombing kept it from moving. Everything became disorganised. People kept leaving their cars walking a little and later returning again. At the end father and Lipe decided to leave the train for good and started to walk going east. Highways were full of retreating Polish soldiers and thousands of refugees who blocked their retreat. German pilots didn't spare any of them, cutting down with machine guns not only soldiers but civilians as well. Father and Lipe left the main highway and went to side roads. With walking, sometimes catching rides on wagens and slowly moving local trains after seven days finally arrived in Lvov. Before leaving Cracow they didn't have any contacts with the rest of the family so they didn't know nothing what happened to them. After a day or so they caught a train from Lvov to Tarnopol and from there a local train to Zbaraz. They arrived in Zbaraz xxxxxxxxxx September 14.

As it turned out few xxxx hours later Father and Lipe left Cracow just in time.

September 6 1939 at 6am first batalions of German army entered Cracow. First arrived motorised patrols and took their positions at the entrances of major streets. About noon from the west started coming in closed columns of "Wehrmacht" the first units of the battle soldiers and armed patrols occupied one street after another. After the "Wehrmacht all other groups of the German war machine arrived in the city. SS, Gestapo, SB, regular police and other administrative groups taking over buildings picked up by the German "fifth column" long time before the invasion. In the afternoon first German announsments were pasted on the walls telling the people of Cracow what to do and how to behave. The police hours were from 6.30pm to 5am.

Shortly after taking Cracow bloody raids took place all over the city mostly directed at Jews during which first eleven persons perished.

The Hitlerite flag replaced the Polish Banner on Wawel castle, and the commandant of the German corps and his assistants put a wreath on the vault of Marshall Josef Pilsudski.

Chapter 46

Zbaraż!

We didn't know how long we will be waiting in Lvov. While sitting in this tunel I thought that maybe I would get a chance to go and visit my relatives from my father's side. Mostly I was interested in seeing my cousin Alexander son of my father's oldest brother. He was only one year older then I and I saw him couple of times before when he visited with us in Cracow. Last time we saw each other in winter 1939. I think even before that during the Christmas season. My other cousin Alexander the older one from Cracow who served in the army then, was for few days home on his holiday furlough, so the three of us had some good times together. The older Alexander knew so many places in Cracow which I never imagened that they exist.

Well my thoughts in Lvov didn't materialise. Uncle Ludwik fearing that we would get stuck there for the night contacted his good friend and business associate who immediatly made arrangements for us to get out from Lvov. He rented for us three cars. In one we loaded all our baggage except the suitcases with watches and then we divided our group between the other two cars. In few minutes we were on our way from Lvov traveling east. Despite the war and the quick approaching German army I couldn't help to notice the busy traffic and thousands of people on the streets all over the city.

On the way we passed the beautiful Polish eastern countryside. Nice sunny afternoon and empty highway gave us a feeling of peace and tranquility. It seemed that the war either was very far away or even that there was no war at all. We also had a flat tire in our car. So we got out from the inside, streched our legs and walked around. Soon some kids from the area showed up. It wasn't to often that a car loaded with strangers passed through their village. We asked them all kind of questions and if they saw any planes flying above but we didn't get any answers. They just stood there and wonder.

Later on our way we stoped on the market place of a small town of Złoczów. We asked people about an old friend of ours who lived there so some of them went to call him. He came out and was very happy to see us all. After a short conversation we were on our way again.

We passed quickly outskirts of Tarnopol only few miles away from Zbaraz. There our lead car loaded with our baggage made a mistake. Instead to turn left to the side highway going to Zbaraż it went east again straight ahead toward the then Polish-Soviet border. After an hour chase we finally caught up with this driver and turned back.

I believe that we arrived in Zbaraz at seven o'clock that evening September 5, 1939. We were the first refugees there. Soon many more kept arriving. We stoped in front of the old Nussbaum home. I was really excited about seeing for the first time in my life the place where my ancestors used to live and work. I imagened how my mother and uncle Ludwik felt seeing this place again after so many years of absence. A group of young people stood across the street watching us unloading our stuff. Those were the boys and girls who later became my friends for the next 10 months. Aunt Dora came out from the house greeting us warmly and very happy to see us.

After the initial excitment was over and our baggage unloaded uncle Ludwik and the rest of the company continued on the last leg of their journey to the other end of town where uncle Nysio and his family lived in a very nice and modern house.

Later the same evening some old friends of my mother's came by to greet her after all those years. Obviously the place wasn't ready for all of us so Bumek Goldstein and I spent our first night in Zbaraż in next door neighbours home. The bigest surprise of all was when an old Zbaraż town bum came in and started a conversation with my mother in a manner as she would be there all those years. Like she never left. The bum's name was Ludwik. He came to Zbaraż during Austrian times in early 1900s and he never left. Jewish people of Zbaraz took him in and supported him all these years. He always spoke German. Never learned how to speak Polish.

Chapter 46 (cont)

Zbaraź!

When our cars entered the outskirts of Zbaraź what I saw for the first time didn't differ to much from my imaginations and stories my mother used to tell me about this little town. Leaving the highway there was this old narrow road with hundreds years old trees on both sides. I could see some small and large homes standing behind those trees surrounded with nice yards and gardens. A river was flowing slowly in easterly direction propeling the large wheel of the town mill. A little bit farther there was this place on the river where young people used to swimm in summer and skate in winter. Winters were very cold in Zbaraz and the river remained frozen for a long time.Driving along we arrived at the point where both the road and the river turned north. This corner was the only place in town which changed since my mother last time saw Zbaraz. Still on the top of the hill the county building was standing, and another up-hill road was leading to the ruins of former castle of the the noble Wisniowiecki family whose members fought Cossaks many centuries ago and another member used to be one of the last Polish kings before the partition of 1772. Next to the ruins was standing a beautiful modern villa in a gorgeous garden the home of the last owners of Zbaraz who by the way were Jewish. The park on the top of the hill was a favored place for picnics and other celebrations mostly during national Polish holidays.

But the area which really changed was a piece of land at the foot of the hill. There new buildings shaped somewhat like today's shopping centers were constructed by one Mr. Sobel. As a Notary Public Mr. Sobel was a powerfull man in Zbaraź. Notary Public in those days in Poland was as important as a corporation lawyer today. Mr. Sobel knowing that most of the commerce in Zbaraż was in Jewish hands, rented the space in his small shopping area to Poles only so they could compete with Jewish business and eventually push them out of business.

From the Sobol place we turned to Henrik Sienkiewicz street a famous Polish writer who wrote so beautifuly about Zbaraż, the Cossak wars and the Wisniowiecki family in his trilogy under titles "With Sword and Fire" "The Flood" and "Mr. Wołodyjowski".

On the right side of Henrik Sienkiewicz street were mostly Jewish homes. Then a bridge ran over this river which name I no longer remember. On the left side of the street there was a monastery in which the Zbaraź gimnazium was located. Next to it was standing the Roman-Catholic church and then divided by a narrow street was the Greek-Orthodox church. Acroos the street on the right side on the corner of Henrik Sienkiewicz street and this narrow street was the old Nussbaum family home. In front of this home many years before Nussbaums operated their restaurant. The rest of the Henrik Sienkiewicz street was occupied by Jewish business, barber shop, two tailor shops and shoemaker, whose owners used to live behind their stores.

At the end of the street there was the square Zbaraz market place where twice a week peasants and local people sold their products on market days. Ofcourse the locals kept open every day of the week except Saturday and Sunday The market place was surrounded by living quarters some of them two story buildings and some more business and restaurants. In the olden days in one of those two story buildings my fathers parents used to operate a tavern and liqour store on first floor and lived in an apartment on second floor. In the other part of the market place there was a two story courthouse, one story city hall and police and two apothecaries.

Another narrow street from the market place going west led to the old Jewish district with a very old synagogue where my grandparents and I presume their forbearers used to pray. During my 10 months in Zbaraz I never been INSIDE this synagogue.

Going north from the market place on one street stood the Zbaraź elementary school and the residents of that area were mostly Polish and some Ukrainians. The other very long street from market place also going north included the Post Office and other residents.

As I re-call this was the longest street in Zbaraż. There was the beautiful home of my uncle Nysio and not to far the new building of Ukrainian National Home. Going further north on the left side there WERE homes occupied mostly by Ukrainians and couple of Jewish families. Almost where the street ended there was a sport stadium and then some fields and finally the railroad station.

On the right side of this street Jewish, Catholic and Greek-Orthodox cementaries were located, and behind them gentle hills called Vigony a fun area for picnics and play.

The eastside of Zbaraż was entirely Ukrainian. You still could see there old walls of Zbaraż where the Wiśniowieckis defended their town and castle against Cossak uprising. The river flowing there saw lots of blood spilled in her waters. In modern times near the walls and river stands an Electrical station powered by this historic river.

Writing about this I still see in front of me a small bridge, the station, and the river but no matter how much I think about it I can't recall the name of this river which was so famous in Polish history and so many times mentioned by my mother.

Many rich farmers used to live in Zbaraż county. Some of them were poor and don't be surprised, there were many Jewish farmers among them who owned large spreads of rich land. Very seldom Poles and Ukrainians lived in the same village. There were Polish and Ukrainian villages but there were not Jewish villages. Usually Jews lived among Poles or Ukrainians.

On Sunday mornings all that mass of villagers from around Zbaraż used to come to Sunday mass in their churches. They were all dressed up in their best. After the prayers they all promenaded along the Henrik Sienkiewicz street and then boarded their wagens heading back to their villages, leaving the town quiet until Monday morning when working week started all over again.

There were many doctors and lawyers in Zbaraż and most of them were Jewish, but Zbaraż didn't have it's own hospital until the Soviets after they took the town converted to hospital the modern villa of the Jewish owners of Zbaraż

I guess all those doctors and lawyers were plenty busy not only because of the town folk but most of their business came from the farmers.

Saturdays in Zbaraż used to be also quiet. Most of the Jews ran early in tht morning to their west bottom synagogue and prayed there until noon. Most of the stores remained closed only young people filled up the streets. But on warm summer Saturday afternoons all Jewish Zbaraż was outside, either walking or sitting on benches in front of their homes, until time came to go again to synagogue for evening prayers.

As we all know Ukrainians always hated Jews but this hate didn't stop them from having their favored Jews and on the other hand many Jews used to have their favored Ukrainians. A similar situation worked as well with Poles. Jews spoke perfect Polish and Ukrainian and many Poles and Ukrainians spoke very good Yiddish.

Ukrainians also hated Russians because they denied them their independent Ukraine which was always divided between Poland and Russia. So when the war broke out they were preparing to greet Germans with open arms because Hitler promised them an independent Ukraine. That why they were so devoted to Germany serving in their armed forces and as guards in prisons and concentration camps helping to murder Jews. Hitler didn't keep his promise to Ukrainians.

When Soviet forces marched into Western Ukraine I guess Ukrainians were as much surprised as anybody else. Yes the Ukrainian language became the official language but that was all. So the big exodus by Ukrainians to the German side begun.

Chapter 47

Fall of Poland!

The night after Britain and France declared war on Germany at 9pm a German submarine U-30 torpedoed and sank the British liner Athenia. 112 passengers lost their lives including 28 Americans. World war two begun in all it's seriousness.

Brave and valiant and fulhardy though they were, Poles actually at some points counterattacked Nazi tanks with horse cavalry. The Poles were simply overwhelmed by the German onslaught. The first blitzkrieg in the world's history surprised even Germans themselves. The sudden surprise attack, the fighter planes and bombers roaring overhead spreading flames and terror. The stukas screaming as they dived, the tanks whole divisions of them breaking through and thrusting forward thirty or forty miles in a day. The incredible speed of even the infantry of the whole vast army of 1.5 milion men, whether marching or riding, coordinated through a maze of electronic communications. All this was a mechanized genius such as the earth has never seen.

Within forty eight hours the Polish Air Force was destroyed and in one week the Polish was vanquished, most of its thirty five divisions either shattered or caught in a webb movement that close around Warsaw. By September 17 all Polish forces except a handful on the Soviet border were surrounded. All was over except the dying in the ranks of Polish units which still with incredible fortitude held out.

German armies kept moving east. Przemysl was captured and Lvov overrun. On September 18 German forces reached outskirts of Warsaw. But the inhabitants put up a vigorous defence. It was not until September 27 that they surrendered with their city in ruins. Soon after the victorious German armies reached the river Bug and confrontation with Soviet Union.

The conditions of Polish retreat were extrimly difficult. The troops were spread along 300 mile front and the roads crowded with supply columns and fleeing civilians were often bombarded by the Luftwaffe making the organisation of food and ammunition supplies almost impossible.

The Polish High Command was mainly concerned with the Romanian bridgehead, but because of lack of communications the soldiers were still marching toward Lvov and the contact with the bridgehead was not established until September 17. Polish leaders still didn't worry. On September 17 they expected the great offensive of the Western Allies and although the offensive was postponed a little , nobody worried. After all few days would not matter: soon the Germans would be forced to withdraw from Poland , at least the majority of the Luftwaffe and the panzer divisions and then... we shall see.

In meantime Germans issued the order to cut off the Poles from Romania but the troop movements involved were not carried out because the units were either fighting or lacked sufficient fuel.

Just before dawn on September 17 the Red Army crossed the border into Poland along its whole length of 800 miles. The Polish government and High Command and indeed the German high Command were taken completely by surprise.

The Soviet's two army groups task was to cut off Poles from Romania and Hungary. The Polish-Soviet frontier was guarded solely by 18 battalions of Border Corps and it was not surprising that during the first two days Soviet spearheads penetrated some 60 miles into Poland. The Red Army's attitude to Polish troops was ambiguous. At first it seemed that Soviet troops avoided fighting and was even rumored that they came to help Poles, but the situation soon became clear when Polish units were disarmed and taken prisoners.

The Polish High Command, what was left of it issued orders to all troops to retreat towards the Romanian and Hungarian borders, to resist the Germans but not to fight the Russians unless they attacked or disarm them.

At first the Romanian Government took a sympatetic stand and decided to let the Polish government and the President to cross into Romania. However the next day September 18 they were all interned and transported to inner Romania as the Romanian government gave in way to German pressure.

With the entry of Soviet troops into Poland the fight became hopeless although resistance still continued. The aim for Poles was then only to get as many troops as possible out of the country to continue to fight on the side of the Allies.

German and Soviet troops concentrated on cutting off the Polish retreat to Romania and Hungary, and only those Polish troops near The Romanian bridgehead managed to get across the border. In all 30,000 Polish troops and airmen reached Romania and 60,000 crossed into Hungary.

In the north Red Army pushed about 15,000 Polish soldiers to the Lithuanian and Latvian borders. Coming of center Germans did not succeed in securing Lvov and the vital Polish oilfields in exchange for Lithuania. Still after many skiemishes and sometimes bloody encounters even thou the border between Germany and Soviets was already established Polish troops were trying to fight through to the Hungarian frontier, but their endeavours were foiled and they were forced to surrender to some German and some Soviet troops.

On September 25 Germans began their decisive assault on Warsaw. With a strong artillery support they attacked on all sectors and both sides of the Vistula River. The attacks were mainly repulsed but with food and ammunition running out, Warsaw was forced to capitulate.

Fighting on the Baltic and Polish shores ended October 1. The fighting on the land was particulary bloody, with an extremly gallant Polish resistance. Of the Polish navy two submarines managed after many adventures to escape to Britain.

To sum up the end of the campaign everybody concerned should acknowledge that Germans had all the usual advantages of the aggressor; choice of moment and points of action, time for preparations and the psychological superiority of the side which had the initiative. They possessed a well organised fifth column and ofcourse had the assurance of Soviet cooperation, and even the fine weather.

For the Western Allies the September campaign's results were twofolds. They gave a true picture of the new countenance of war, and left eight months of valuable time to prepare proper defensive measures in the new circumstances As is now known the West took no advantage of these experiences, except for Great Britain whose air defence during those eight months was expanded before the start of the Battle of Britain.

On September 22 1939 a combined Russo-German parade was staged at Brest Litovsk on the new border. The German General Guderian and Soviet General Kriwoschein at the banquet proposed a toast. Being very happy the Soviet General declared in his part of the toast; "To the eternal enmity of our two countries". Ofcourse he had inadvertenly made a symbolic mistake by confussing the words "Freundschaft" (amity) and "Feindschaft" (enmity) which sounds familiar to Russian ears.

As we all know almost two years later in June 1941 the amity between those two countries became enmity and the short Freundschaft ended with a bloody Feindschaft.

In those days hardly a shot was fired on Western front. It was the beginning of so-called "Sitzkrieg" (sit-down war) or the phony war. Hitler fought and won the war in Poland but the winner was Stalin whose troops scarcely fired a shot. The Soviet Union got nearly half of Poland and a stranglehold on Baltic states. It blocked Germany from two main long term objectives; Ukrainian wheat, and Romanian and Eastern Poland's oil.

Chapter 48

Life Goes On!

The first full day in Zbaraż September 6 1939 was warm and sunny. After a good night sleep at the neighbour's house, good home made bath and breakfest my mother gave me some direction and I was on my way to uncle Nysio's house. I didn't have no problem to find it and the house was as nice as I imagened. At this hour of the morning ~~when~~ streets and market place were rather busy. Stores were full of shoppers and looking around this little town there was no indication that few hundreds kilometers away a savage war was ragging.

When I arrived in the house I was warmly greeted by aunt Adela uncle Nysio's wife whom I never met before. I also met for the first time in my life my younger cousin Milka (Emily). My older cousin Nusia I met two years before in Cracow when she came to Zosia's and Roman's Kahane wedding.

Uncle Nysio was away drafted by Polish army. He was a veterinary doctor with a rank of capitain. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose were just getting settled. Aunt Adela gave to them one of her up-stairs rooms completly furnished for their convinience. Ofcourse there were four of them with aunt Rose's mother and her nephew Heniek Zimetbaum.

In meantime aunt Mala and Saul found an apartment for themselves in the home of the Hindes family. There used to be many Hindeses in Zbaraż even not related to each other. This particular Hindeses had a beautiful 18 years old daughter Susia who at that time was on a rebound from a heartbreak she got from a Jewish soldier who with Polish army was on manouvers nearby and later left without a word when the manouvers were over. I guess that it was in Susia's nature because she ~~re~~ergat her soldier quickly after she saw Saul for the first time. Her and Saul went out together few times if there really was such a thing in Zbaraż like going out. There in Susia's house I met her very good friend Zosia Goldaper. Zosia and I had a friendly relation most of the time during our stay in Zbaraż. First of all nobody knew what next day will bring so there was no time for serious relations. In wintertime and it was very cold winter of 1939-1940 it was to cold to walk on streets. Mostly on Saturdays we used to meet in friends homes. Sometimes we went sledging from the hills around Zbaraz. Sometimes we saw the same movie four or five times in a row. We used to go dancing on special holidays organized by Soviet authorities. In spring when it was beautiful we walked. There was this park around the old Wisniowiecki castle where people used to go but not respected Jewish girl would go there alone with a boy. Not to long before deportation Zosia told me that her parents urged Her to stop seeing me but I knew then that this was her own idea not her parents. She just didn't want to hurt my feelings.

Ferdinand Korngold uncle Gabriel's friend and his mother also found an apartment nearby.

Little by little other members of our family kept arriving in Zbaraż. First came the Balins Paul and Stefa. As I said before he always liked to associate with high class and so it was in Zbaraż. Anyway all those doctors and lawyers there knew him since his childhood. As far as I can remember Stefa and Paul got their apartment at Dr's Halpern house and I don't think he even didn't charge them for living there. Dr. Halpern was a lawyer. Stefa and Paul also ate their dinners everyday in our house at no charge.

Uncle Gabriel and his daughter Zosia Abeles came later. Zosia's husband Robert arrived in town much later.. He snicked in dressed in torn civilian closing after his Polish unit was destroyed so he wouldn't get caught by the Soviets. My father's brother uncle Adolf also stayed in our house and ate with us. Later he left for Lvov. His son Alexander after leaving his panzer division settled in Lvov.

The only ones missing in Zbaraż was our family from Tarnobrzeg. Profesor Josef Nussbaum, his wife Janette my mother'sister and their children Sigmund, their retarded son Misko, daughter Zosia and her husband Roman. Well as we found out later before Nussbaums left Tarnobrzeg they recived some guests from Cracow.

Chapter 48 (cont)

Life Goes On!

The unexpected guests of our family in Tarnobrzeg were the Reisbergs our friends from Cracow. I don't know what their reason was to go to Tarnobrzeg. After all they also had relatives in Eastern Poland. Well anyway they left Cracow I assume September 4 maybe by train or by other means. They also did lots of walking and few days later they wound-up in Tarnobrzeg. Totaly exhausted they arrived ~~wuzbe~~ few days later in profesor's Nussbaum's home. My aunt Janette took them in, gave them a room, fed them and so the Reisbergs stood there couple of weeks until German troops took Tarnobrzeg. After that there was no more reason for them to stay in Tarnobrzeg any longer. They packed their stuff and headed back to Cracow. My cousin Sigmund told me later that at the same time his Polish friends used to come to the house quite often, as they said to him not to confort him and the family just to look around so they would know later when the Germans come where everything in the house was so they could come in and take it.

We didn't worry to much about our family in Gliniany. ~~Ekeh~~ thou we didn't hear from them we thought that for time being they were as safe as us.

People of Zbaraz were good to us. They helped us a lot with anything they coould. Like with beding, dishes, and other things necessary for every day living.

On the train from Cracow to Lvov in our compartment there was this Jewish photographer from Zakopane in Tatra mountains. He told us a story that on September 1 he went out as any other day to make pictures on the streets of Zakopane not knowing at all that Germans were already in town. Well German patrols seeing a man on empty streets walking around with a camera arrested him immediatly. Continuing with his story he told us that by some miracle he was able to escape and somehow made his way to Cracow. Uncle Ludwik with his good heart befriended him and when we parted in Lvov he even gave him some money and also invited him to visit us in Zbaraz. It was obvious that this man didn't have nobody in Lvov and that he was flat broke. So! Halleluya! Few days later surprise; This man shows-up at uncle Nysio's house, and to aunt Rose's disgust uncle Ludwik puts him up in a small available room, and makes sure that he was well provided.

This man spent couple of weeks in Zbaraz. At that time I didn't have any friends yet so I used to go around town with him. we met some people, boys and girls on the streets. They all were nice and friendly but not to my liking. These people were from different crowd and didn't have nothing to do with the group I met later. To make bad situation worst this man got ill and uncle Ludwik even called a doctor to come and examine him. Finally ~~after~~ he got well. It was nothing serious, uncle Ludwik again gave him money and this was the last time we saw him and a relief for aunt Rose.

Most of the Jewish young people in Zbaraz kept company with each other. There were only two gentile boys who kept very friendly relations with this Jewish group. I assume that the main reason of this friendship were those two Jewish girls those Polish boys used to like very much. One of those girls was a daughter of a local physician Dr. Landau. I seems to me that in any small town or for this matter large city in Poland there was a doctor Landau, either a medical doctor or a lawyer. I don't know why, but this fact was like a tradition that a title such as doctor was always connected with the name Landau.

Well! Anyway this Landau girl was seeing this Polish young man. Very good looking and from a high class Polish family. The girl was high class too but she was not only plain but not good looking at all. What kept them together? I don't know, but when they danced they looked very much in love.

Nina was the name of the other girl. This I remember. She was much better looking and her Polish boyfriend was OK too, but from my conversations with him I gathered that he was an anty-Semite and tried to find out from me if I know a way for him to cross to German side.

Chapter 48 (cont)

Life Goes On!

My new friends in Zbaraz used to be children of friends of my mother's and father's. Anytime I was coming to their homes those parents kept telling me stories about those days in Zbaraz when they knew my parents. Ofcourse in Zbaraz everybody knew everybody. Most of Zbaraz's Jews were business people. They owned all kinds of retail stores, mills, grain storages and one family even owned small steelworks. There was a very interesting story behind this family. They raised in their home since infancy an Ukrainian peasant boy after he lost both of his parents. They treated him like he would be their own. During his life with these people he went to school, then he worked in the steelworks and he spoke Yiddish like an old Jew. When Soviets took over Zbaraz they took away the steelworks from this Jewish family. They made this young man director of this establishment. Later they sent him as a delegate to the Ukrainian National Assembly in Kiew.

Another group of Jewish people in Zbaraz were so-called public servants. It wasn't unusual in small Polish towns where Jews used to work in responsible positions in post office, for the railroad, or on another white collar jobs in courthouse, city hall and county govrnment. When Russians came in they left them all working at their previous positions at least for time being, providing that they didn't have a capitalist background or never before engaged in anti-Soviet activities.

One of those men was a childhood friend of my father. After all those years he was very happy to see my father. All his adult life he worked for the city hall. He made a very good living in Zbaraz. Lots better then my father in Cracow. He had a son Filek, my age. Him and I became good friends during our short stay there.

Most of those former friends of my father became rich throughout the years. They made plenty of money stored away after Russians forced them out of their businesses. In those days they had plenty of time on their hands. You should see them during those very cold winter days walking around town dressed in those heavy expensive overcoats lined with an expensive first quality furs.

For profesional people like tailors and shoemakers with the arrival of the Red Army fortunes turned around in their favor. During Polish times they hardly could make enough money to provide for their families. Many times there wasn't enough to make shabat. The Russian officers and local dignitaries sent to Zbaraz from Soviet Union changed all that.

There were those brothers Mengels, childhood friends of my father's hardly making a living in their small tailor shop on the main street. My father when he wasn't away in Lvov trying to make some money liked very much to sit there and observe the traffic of those Russians in and out of this shop.

But even the Soviet invasion didn't change the luck and living conditions of the westside of Zbaraz around the synagogue in the slums of this little town. Poor people remained poor and still depended on charity from the more fortunates.

People of Zbaraz loved their little town. They called it "Little Paris". A far cry from real Paris. Zbaraz was a "shtetl". The same kind of shtetl as described in an old Jewish song "Shtetele Belz". It says in this song: "Shtetele Belz my shtetele Belz, my little town where my only love and my home was."

Many people in Zbaraz used to be known by their nicknames only. O yes, they had their real names but everybody called them by their nicknames. For example there was this man who was born in Lvov and later became a big wheel with the communists. So the people there called him "Moyshe da Lemberger". Than there was this tall woman. Her name was Royze, so they called her "Royze da Lange". Another Royze always had a pain in her side so they wrote a song in her honor. "Royze Paff of da pogody ot a pifke in the zat". Translated to English it means; "Rose Paff because of the bad weather had a pain in her side.

HER.

Chapter 48 (cont)

Life Goes On!

Another one of my new friends was Jacob Weinsaft. My mother used to tell me that his mother wanted very much to marry my father, but he wouldn't marry her. His friends called Jacob "Velve" I don't know why. Maybe this was just some Jewish nickname. At the time we were in Zbaraz Mrs. Weinsaft was already a widow. Anyway Jacob was crazy about "schnitzels" (hamburgers) so his mother used to cook them for him all the time. On one occasion it came to it that he chocked on one of those schnitzels. So his close friends composed a poem or song about his ordeal. Roughly it went as follows;

They said he was almost dead!
All his family was around him,
Atchyk (name) shouted,
Peter (uncle) roared,
Yankiel (grandpa) pushed syphon.
And Suddenly death came to our Velve's home!
For half an hour - for half and hour!

All those kids in Zbaraz used to be very well educated and as soon as Soviet authorities opened schools again they continued with their education. Russian closed the gimnazium in the old monastery and established their ten years system in the elementary school building. Some students were required to pass some tests and all of them graduated in spring of 1940. I remember I used to hang aroud this school with my friends just for the fun of it, happy that I didn't have to get through this process again. Heniek Zimetbaum also enrolled but it wasn't easy for him because all the studies were in Ukrainian.

The Lvov University and Politechnic also reopened and thousands of students from the entire Western Ukraine were taking advantage of the new opportunities. Especially for Jews and Ukrainians was very difficult to be admit to the Lvov Politechnic, [illegible] In Polish times. My cousin Nusia with other students from Zbaraz who already atteneded the Lvov University before also went back.

I met most of the young people in Zbaraz. They took me in into their circle and I was happy with their company. They all had a very good sence of humor. They knew everything about the world's affairs and most of all they liked to be Jewish and dreamed about going to Palestine one day in the future. I hope that some of them made it. They liked sports and some boys also played soccer. They used to be artistic'ly inclined, played all kind of instruments and played in their own orchestra.

Prior to the Red Army's arrival in Zbaraz we witnessed thousands of Polish refugees mostly soldiers from the disorganised Polish army coming through town in army trucks and trying to cross into Romania. Many of those Polish soldiers later wound-up in Palestine much earlier then Jews. But their primary destination was Britain so they could join there the new Polish army being formed by General Wladislaw Sikorski who thirteen years before was exiled from Poland by his arch enemy Marshall Josef Pilsudski.

To my surprise I saw two of mine former profesors from Sobieski gimnazium passing Zbaraz with this Polish crowd. Also my former two friends from Lyceum Mietek Spiegel and Heniek Haber came through Zbaraz.

Stefa's Balin brother in law George joined her in Zbaraz also. This man even didn't know how to speak Polish. His only language was German.

Except our family few other people from Cracow came to Zbaraz. They were Dr. Abend with his wife and son, A Polish family Kanas. Mr. Kanas was a native from Zbaraz and actually came home. He was a successful watchmaker and performed lots of repair work for uncle Ludwik. Also there was this young woman Zosia Molik and couple of Ukrainian families, who used to live in Cracow.

Chapter 48 (cont)

Life Goes On!

All us Cracovians were mildly surprised when the rich Jewish family Kanarek from Cracow arrived in Zbaraz in their car. Yet after the Russians came the car became obsolete. There was no gas available for private persons, so the Kanareks didn't have no other choice but to abandon their magnificent vehicle and travel to Lvov by train. Sooner or later Russians would confiscate it anyway.

Besides our family and people I already mentioned there were other families who found temporary peace in Zbaraz. At least for time being. Couple of families came from Yaroslaw to stay with their relatives in Zbaraz. Then there was this Stiefel family from Jaslo with their son Nusiek. Your grandma Anna knew them back home. They were the only family who avoided deportation by simply leaving Zbaraz the day before. Seeking also refuge in Zbaraz were two families from Bielsko. Mr.&Mrs. Loria who spoke German only and family Schlesinger, mother and sister of Hugo Schlesinger who used to be my class president in Lyceum.

Another Polish families were the Komorowski sisters whose father General Bor-Komorowski was the leader of the Warsaw uprising against the Germans in 1944. One of the sisters was Frieda; single. The other was Mrs. Malinowski with two children whose husband as far as she knew never came back from war. The third one was Mrs. Lachowicz who was there with her colonel husband. Colonel Lachowicz was not a well man. A bizarre story was circulating about him later in Siberia about his role in the arrest by ~~XXXX~~ Soviets of some prominent Poles and Jews from among our people.

Two other Polish families were very poor. Women alone with their children who couldn't support themselves and needed lots of help from the local population to survive. One of those families was from Cracow. And oldest son Tadeusz Kaminski was a student at Sobieski gimnazium before the war.

Closing the list were two more families from Warsaw; a chauffeur Ash with his wife and little girl, One Mrs. Yakubowicz with a small son and an old lady from an aristocratic Polish family and a tailor Hammer from Tarnow.

Well all this ~~xxxxx~~ brought all of us to another fatefull date in our lives. On the morning of September 17 1939 we noticed some planes flying high above Zbaraz. Our first impresion was to take cover because everybody thought that we were just about to be bombarded by the German "Luftwaffe". Soon ~~xx~~ again to everybody's surprise and relief ofcourse we discovered the shining red stars on the wings of those planes. The news that a large Soviet force was just about to enter Zbaraz spreaded quickly all over town. I don't suppouse that anybody in Zbaraz well and able to walk that day was staying inside. Eyes of all the people turned to the east. to the hills of Wigony. The Red Army in tanks and trucks slowly but sure was entering Zbaraz. Well our new liberators have arrived. And not to soon. Little did we realised that on this September 17 the German army was only 3oo km away from Zbaraz and that many people started to consider to seek refuge in Soviet Union.

Stalin surprised by German advances decided that there was time for him to make his move. He forced Hitler to sign a joint communique telling Poles that Soviet Union entered Poland to restore order in the defeated nation. He also told Ukrainians and White Russians that he is liberating them from Polish opression.

One of the first acts of Soviet authorities was to nominate an obscure Ukrainian teacher who in Polish times couldn't get respect from nobody ~~xx~~ even from his Ukrainian brothers to be a deputate from Zbaraz to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow.

The Soviet Army was very poor looking, and very poor equiped. Their tanks kept falling apart on the streets and the noises and sounds coming out of them made people believe that they were being shot at causing large panics on the crowded streets. The same problems caused their tractors pulling army's heavy equipment. Shortage of leather belts forced the foot soldiers to carry their rifles on their shoulders tied with ropes.

Chapter 48 (cont)

Life Goes On!

Few Polish soldiers and their colonel who remained in Zbaraz were taken prisoners by Red Army. They also disarmed and arrested the local police.

Many young people immediatly offered their services to the communists, hoping that in the future they will be first in line for the first choice jobs after they will become available. The first one to report was Moyshe da Lemberger and a young woman whose parents used to own a kind of delicatessen shop and whose husband was one of those struggling young lawyers during Polish times. Later the Russians awarded him a job when they opened their own office of so-called advocates stuffing it with three young lawyers only. None of the old lawyers who practiced in pre-war times were included. All those young volunteers were issued red armbands as a sign of their authority and assigned to their new posts.

But the happiest man in Zbaraz was Ludwik the bum. He got all dressed up with a red tie, red band around his hat and a red handkerchief in his jacket pocket. He stoped in our house short of breath from running and declaring to my mother: "Rosl! Eine rote Fahne hang auf dem magistrat!" (Rose! A red flag is hanging on the City Hall).

The economic situation in those days was still very good. Stores were open and their owners were trying to sell their merchandis as soon as possible. There was plenty of food and Polish zlotys and Russian rubles could buy anything and everything. I remember uncle Ludwik going to his friend's shoe store and buying many pairs of shoes for the entire family. None of those shoes had the right fit but in those days didn't matter. We all needed them for the approaching winter. Never mind my frostbite toes later because of the bad fit.

Bakeries still delivered fresh bread, rolls and buns fresh baked early in the morning and butcher shops had plenty of kosher meats and poultry. Peasants still came to town on market days with their produce so we had plenty of fruits and vegetables. Peasants expected that Soviet authorities soon will turn their properties into collective farms. But their guess was wrong. This was the only area that Russians didn't touch, expecting some unrest among farmers. As I said before tailors also had their hey-days. Not only Russian officials made their new wardrobes. People with money also made new wardrobes for themselves. Even my father had a new suit make for himself by his Mengel brothers tailors.

Shortly after Russians took over we celebrated our Rosh-Hashanah and Yom-Kipur Holidays. Everybody went to pray in the old Zbaraz synagogue. Ofcourse conditions were different but we all were gratefull to God for being alive and together, and as in the past the elders of the synagogue prayed for the welfare of our new rulers.

In meantime my uncle Mysio the veterinarian returned home one night to avoid apprehension by Soviet authorities. After few days of rest he got his job back as the head veterinarian of the Zbaraz county.

The Nussbaums of Tarnobrzeg spent few weeks there under German occupation. They lived through a period of rampage of Jewish quarter and of Jewish homes outside of the Jewish district. One day in early October Germans ordered all remaining Jews to gather on the market place. After a whole day of harassment and killing few more Jews, among them my retarded cousin Misko they roughed up my uncle profesor Nussbaum and made him the leader of the whole Jewish pack. They allowed them to take just few necessery things and told them to leave town. So finally an opportunity presented itself for some Polish friends of my cousin Sigmund who then could go over to Nussbaum's home and take those things they always wanted to have before Germans would take over the property.

The whole group wandered few days until they reached the River San the borderline with Soviet Union. They rented few boats and crossed into the Soviet territory. When they came to Lvov by train their daughter Zosia and her husband Roman Kahane decided to settle in Lvov. The rest of the family went to Tarnopol where they rented a small apartment. The profesor got a job there teaching math in Soviet school system and Sigmund went back to school.

Chapter 49
Living and Learning under Communism!

In Tarnopol also Nussbaums took out Soviet passports, a decision that later probably cost them their lives. Without those passports they would be deported to Siberia with us and again probably would survive. Their daughter Zosia and her husband Roman were also deported from Lvov.

Sigmund graduated in spring 1940 again with honors as before in Poland. But by then he was a changed young man. In those days there was no point anymore to be interested in Polish literature. Mybe later he would find some other interest but all that was interupted by German invasion of Soviet Union followed by the murder of the entire family behind the railroad station in Zbaraz.

As stipulated on the passport Nussbaums weren't allow to live in a large city as Tarnopol so after Sigmund's graduation they came to live in Zbaraz. They took a small apartment next to our house from an old woman whose husband when he was alive was a barber. A young man still was operating that barber shop for this woman when we were there. She had two daughters. The older Fryma had two children but for some reason her husband left her. The younger one was a good looking young woman. I met her once in Cracow few years before the war when she came there to pass a beautition's exam and to get an operator's licence. She was staying then in Esther Goldstein's house.

None of us expected that in our lifetime we will be forced to live under communism. It wasn't a pleasure, but on another hand it was a blessing. First of all we survived the war (some of us didn't). Secondly it wasn't easy but at least our lives and existance wasn't threaten by death as the existance of our brothers under Hitler's rule.

From their first day in Western Ukraine Soviet authorities didn't waste any time and with no delays started to impose their way of life on the local population with propaganda, town meetings, movies and long speeches about the glorious life under communism.

Their bureaucrats led by party leaders and other functionaries arrived in town looking like a bunch of beggars. Men didn't wear hats or ties, just uniform styled suits and boots. Women wore dresses and coats poorly fitted. They took over Zbaraz county and town government with the help of local communists. Only party men from inside Soviet Union took over the supervisory positions. But the most important was NKVD(National Committee for Internal Security, today's KGB). In their hands was the chore to clean Zbaraz and the area from undesirable elements, and other enemies of the working class. Along with the chief of police they arrested the mayor and the Polish head of the county. The Jewish owner of Zbaraz also was one of the first to go and leave his beautiful mansion behind. So went the famous notary public Mr. Sobol owner of the Sobolowka shopping center and many others who probably perished in Taygas of Siberia.

In order to maintain law and order local militia was established. These people also came from inside Soviet Union and took hold of Zbaraz with help of couple of local people.

Many Polish communists who spent many years serving time in Polish concentration camp for communists in Bereza Kartuska after they got liberated swarmed over Soviet authorities with applications for priority jobs. Many of them came from the German side telling the Soviets how much former Polish govrnment prosecuted them. These people didn't like the answers they got from the Russians. They told all those former prisoners that there is nothing to fight for in Soviet Union anymore, that the communism in Soviet Russia was already firmly established. All of them were told to go to Germany and fight for communism there.

Some lucky Jewish young people became members of prosecutor's office. Amomg them Yeta Frenkiel friend of Zosia Goldaper. She became the secretary of the court. They used to be the ones required to do the dirty jobs against their old friends. Only a handfull of the former volunteers with their red armbands remained with permanent jobs.

Chapter 49 (cont)

Living and Learning under Communism!

Soon personal appearences of all those Soviet dignitaries changed. Like other poor people they wouldn't deny themselves some of those capitalistic luxiuries. Ofcorse they had plenty of money but they couldn't buy to much in their own country. So they all went on a buying and many times on confiscating sprees. Every day they looked more like business executives and their ladies not far behind kept buying as well. Some of those men who came without their families took over some most elegant homes and hired their former owners (women) as maids. Many close relations developed from those arrangements and some unpleasanties when the wife and children arrived later. It was a different story when an entire family from Soviet Union came together. Like for example one such family took over the whole first floor of my uncle Mysio's house even thou they already had there with them uncle Ludwik and family.

Speaking of well dressed Soviet women some of them showed up at the local ball honoring the 22nd anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution all dressed up in long nightgowns because they thought they were buying long party dresses.

Because Zbaraz was only 20 km away from the former Polish-Soviet frontier, more and more troops kept arriving in town every day. They rested for couple of days and then moved on. We used to stop those soldiers on the street and have long conversations with them about the life in Soviet Union. But mostly what they wanted to do ~~most~~ was to sing Russian songs. Ofcourse according to them their lives were very happy in Soviet Union and everything there was available including "Spitchki" (matches). They always mentioned them saying "U nas spitchki mnogo" meaning "We have plenty of matches". Once we met a very good dressed capitain of the Red Army. He was Jewish and whatever we asked him he always shook his head. He didn't have to much to say except that in Soviet Union in order to have a good life, the best way was to keep the mouth shot, and listen.

I guess there was only one family in Zbaraz who wasn't afraid of loosing their jobs or you may even call their business with all those political and economic changes. This was the family of the local waterman. They used to be far removed relatives of Marian Patatoff the brother in law of aunt Mala. This family was in water business in Zbaraz for many generations. They owned a horse pulled wagen with a large barrel mounted on the top. Every day in the morning they used to go this town's water hole, filled up the barrel and then delivered water to the citiziens od Zbaraz. I don't think that there was a person in Zbaraz who envyed them especially in winter when those icecles were hanging all over them.

To go on with their propaganda authorities established in town couple of newstands loaded with books about history of Russia, communism and communist party and Karl Marx and ofcourse most of all about Lenin, Engels and Stalin. They wanted everybody to buy those books and they sold them In Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and Yiddish. Pravda, Izviestia, the local town paper along with other Soviet magazines and periodicals became the most important ones.

Radio became the tool of the Soviet propaganda and as far good music was concerned the only one to find was on foreign stations from countries where an un-easy peace still existed.

Cold and hard winter was coming real fast. Days were getting shorter but we in our house didn't have problems at all to secure enough wood and coal. In order to make a living my father spent most of the time in Lvov traveling back and forth taking with him merchandise from Zbaraz to sell there. He had a place to stay in his sister's Sala apartment.

In meantime aunt Mala decided to leave Zbaraz and move to Lvov. It was painfull for us that in this situation when families should stick together uncle Gabriel, aunt Mala and Saul will leave us. Zosia and her husband Robert left already for Lvov. Their friend Ferdinand Korngold and his mother joined them in the move.

The nature of aunt Mala never allowed her to stay still especially when she thought that opportunity knoks on her door. Disregarding all the danger ahead she decided to travel to Cracow hoping to save some things from their furniture, clothing and other valuables they left behing and also to make some extra money on the way.

She crossed the Soviet-German border without any problems. She made it to Cracow and I assume that she was able to accomplish what she planed before leaving Lvov. Later she even told us that she checked out our apartment on Falat street and found it at that time intact.

It was a different story on her return to Lvov. She got caught by German border guards. As far as I was told she went through some terrible beating and search but eventually she was released and let go to the Soviet side. She was really lucky coming out alive from this ordeal. She probably made some money because on her return she insisted that uncle Gabriel make another trip to probably finish some business she started. Well! After some hesitation and with some reservations he agreed to go. Needless to say uncle Gabriel didn't get to far. Soviets guards arrested him on their side of the border and charged him with espionage. For a time being he disapeared completly and we didn't have any idea if he was dead or alive. Not until our release from the labor camps we found out that he was alive but very ill. He died in Esther Goldstein's arms in her home in Samarkand. Another example of some peoples irresponsibility and grid and disregard of human life which in other circumstances would be not wasted.

As always uncle Ludwik was ready to help any way he could. Once a man in Zbaraz needed money so uncle Ludwik bought a bicycle from him. He gave me this bicycle to keep in our house. I could ride it anytime I wanted to. For the first time in my life I had at least for awhile a bicycle on my own. But few weeks later a Russian soldier saw me riding and he liked this bicycle very much. Uncle Ludwik sold it to him the bicycle for 400 Rubles and gave me 100 Rubles commission. So at least I made some money. I also sold to Russian soldiers some of uncle's watches getting from him 10% of each sale. I would like you to know that during this period I was wearing a ski jacket and sewed in it all wraped in cotton were many of uncle's watches. I don't know how, but many of my friends knew that I was carrying those watches on me and even made jockes about. Somebody from the family must to told their parents about it.

Anyway uncle Ludwik became a little panicy and against aunt Rose's wishes decided to sell most of them or maybe everything. All I remember my mother was beging him not to do it but nothing could stop him. His mind was made up.

He choose Paul Balin to go to Lvov and make the deal. Ofcourse they knew the source there. For Paul Balin it was a dangerous trip, because if some militiaman would decide to search those heavy suitcases it would be the end for Paul Balin and the watches.

Well it happened anyway. Not because of search by the militia, but because of Paul's stupidity. The people who bought the watches paid Balin an enormous amount of money in Polish Zlotys, which Soviet authorities declared next day invalid and out of circulation, and I am quite sure that those buyers knew about this situation in advance. Ofcourse this was a tremendous loss for uncle Ludwik and you can imagene aunt Rose's reaction. This was their second big loss within short period of time. The first one were all those expensive household goods shipped by uncle Ludwik to Zbaraz before the war.

With taking out Polish currency, more and more Soviet authorities tightened their grip on the anexed territories, and forced their idols Vladimir Lenin and his successor Joseph Stalin on the population of Western Ukraine and White Russia to cherrish and admire. And out of boredom people used to go to those propaganda meetings, yawning or sleeping just to jump up in time to yell "Long Live to our Communist revolution and our beloved leader Joseph Stalin".

Chapter 49 (cOnt)

Living and learning Under Communism!

Joseph Stalin ruled Russia with an iron hand. His real name was Joseph Dzhugashvili. He was a son of a poor shoemaker and before joining Lenin and his revolution he studied to be a priest. He used to kill everybody around him, whom he suspected to be his enemy in the name of revolution. He starved and murdered millions of Ukrainian peasants who refused to join his collectivisation of agriculture. Despite all those crimes against humanity the Soviet press and propaganda used to describe him as a brave, generous and lovable man who adored children. No wonderx that Soviet population considered him as the greatest hero of the country., even thou his decisions not always served in best interests of the country which were in evidence during world war two. His first wife was Jewish sister of his fellow comrade on the central commettee Lazar Kaganovich. Stories circulated around the country that she was forced to taste Stalin's food before he ate it, and that finally she died from poisoning.

In the middle of November 1939 Soviets staged their style of elections with single candidates on the ballots placed there by the communist party in all the newly anexed territories. They also staged a referendum for peoples approval of the anexation. Ofcourse according to the final communiques the elections and referendum have been a tremendous victory of 99.9% for the communist party and the Soviet nation. Even us refugees were herded together and forced to take part in this farce.

There was real dull in those days in Zbaraz. The good old days in Cracow, the fun, movies, theather, dances, nightclubs and soccer became just a blur.

There were no restaurants to go, and no other places to get together. On some Saturdays Zosia Goldaper used to invite us to her house where she served us her mother's famous "Napoleons". You see Mrs. Goldaper was an excellent pastry baker and her specialty used to be Napoleons. In Soviet times she catered to party dignitaries and the only Soviet style restaurant in town not attended by most of the plain folks.

Sometimes to have some fun the boys from the orchestra donated their time and instruments and for 5 Rubles we used to rent from people an empty room, and there were plenty of them available in Zbaraz so we could have a little dance party.

As everything in Soviet Union even a so,so movie a love story had a touch of propaganda. In those days the most famous movie was "Circus" and ofcourse loaded with propaganda. Because of boredom we saw this movie maybe 50 times. There was this other famous movie with some international flavor. It was a first Soviet movie exported to the West. They called this picture "Vesolye Rebiata" (Happy Boys). I saw this picture in Cracow couple of years before the war. It very hard even then to understand the humor and the plot. But music and songs were very nice.

As far as the movie "Circus" was concerned it began with a circus leaving America and going on a Soviet tour. Nearby the station a white woman with a black baby was trying to escape the white mob. The white manager of the circus saved her from the mob and takes her with her baby on the train. While in Moscow this woman tried to get a job with this circus but the manager wouldn't hire her because she refused to be his lover. Well! Then came the clincher. A tall, strong, blond Soviet hero appears, sweeps the poor woman off her feet and marries her with her black baby. The circus manager was thrown out from Moscow. And after a fabulous circus parade everybody was very happy because of the beauty and freedom of Soviet Union.

Twice in Zbaraz I tried very hard to get a job. First I submited an application for a position at the county. I was intervied by a young man who when I saw him first time looked like a beggar. When I saw him again in the office he was a changed person. Well he bought himself all that Western clothing (I don't mean old west) just western European.. Looking at him he remained me more of a gigolo then a county official of a small town. Anyway I never was informed of the status of my application. Evidently they wouldn't hire outsiders.

Second time I decided to try my luck with the NKVD. I was still young and naive and I didn't realise the exact meaning and what this organization was all about. Also one of my older friends already had a receptionist's job there and urged me to apply. So when I came there it was like walking into lion's den. By the way; My receptionist friend was a man and he directed me to the right person. This guy was just sitting there with an open mouth, probably thinking! What this fool is doing here? And again like the man in the county without saying a word took my application and as from the county I never heard from him again. Which ofcourse after realising that this was a very bad move on my part I was glad that it turned out this way. While leaving the building it stroke me how come so many people men and women have sit there inside and outside on the floor or ground. It finally came to me many months later that this was NKVD's way to invite people just to talk to them, but after such talk hardly anybody was able to go home. For some reason or another they found themselves detained.

November 6 1939 Communists and Soviet people celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the bolshevik revolution. There was a parade and a town meeting on the market place. The party brass was standing on a specialy erected podium all decorated in red with an large portrait of their beloved leader Joseph Stalin above. An again we got the dose of the propaganda speeches telling the crowd how lucky they were being liberated from the Polish capitalist oppression. The liberated Ukrainians and other people cheered wildly even thou they didn't really approve..They would be much happier seeing German dignitaries on this podium.

At night there was a big show staged and directed by my uncle Mysio Speiser followed by a dance party in the Ukrainian National Home. I was there with other young people. It was very hard to get a ticket for this affair but thanks to my uncle I managed to get in. Well anyway the motto of the time was "Enjoy it as long as you can".

Other holidays celebrated in Soviet Union were: Day of Stalin's Constitution December 5. New Year's Eve and New Year's day which was the day of Soviet Tree called "Yalinka" to compesate for the Christmas tree and Santa Claus was represented by Comrade Frost. The tree ofcourse was decorated all with red ribbons. March 8 Soviets celebrated International Women's Day and May 1 was their Labor Day celebrated all over the country with meetings, parades and dancing.

There was a big parade in Zbaraz as on November 6. They forced all families of workers to particpate and march. My aunt Adela was very much upset about the whole thing but there was nothing she could do about it. Then the celebration switched to the garden in the front of the old Wisniowiecki castle. All departments heads many Zbaraz's residents among them expressed in their speeches how gratefull they were for the new life under Joseph Stalin and the Communist Party. Only Dr. Landau the head of the local health center didn't comit himself at all. He just steped out in front and declared: Long Life to the Great Soviet Union and Her Leaders. He was smart. After all we lived in times when nobody knew what tommorrow will bring.

Cold weather and lots of snow of 1939-1940 contributed to the many miseries of time. I wouldn't say that we suffer a lot at that time. We had plenty of food, warm home. Only our clothing was not warm enough for Zbaraz's cold climate. When the first snow fell late in November it didn't start melting until late March.

My friendships with all those boys and girls I met since we arrived in Zbaraz eased up some. During the winter I spent lots of time with Zosia Goldaper and her friends Yeta Frenkiel and another girl who I only remember as Buzia. Her parents also were the ones who knew my parents in their youth in Zbaraz. Also with us at that time was a young man Benio Kaminker, Benio and his mother used to be rich landowners near Zbaraz. They settled in Zbaraz after Russians took over their land and gave it to Ukrainians temporary.

The Kaminkers rented an apartment from Buzia's parents. Her father was a grain buyer and I guess in those days there wasn't to much grain to buy.

I assume that Benio Kaminker and his mother still had plenty of money hiden somewhere. The Soviets issued to them a restricted passport with a mark "Kulak" which ment a rich landowner and according to Soviet views had Siberia written all over. But as long as I was in Zbaraz they didn't touch them.

We spent many of those wintry Saturday afternoons in Buzia's house playing "Bingo". Boy! what a way to spent an afternoon for young people. But as I said, it was to cold to go out and there wasn't a movie which we already didn't see before. Many hills of Zbaraz made a perfect sleding places and on couple of nice Saturdays we just did that.

Zosia's father also new my mother in their youth and he also was one of those former Polish public servants who was held over by Soviet authorities on his postmaster's job. Zosia's brother was a very good musician who played many instruments. He was a director of the school orchestra but for some reason at the end of the years Soviet school authorities refused to pay him.

Two families living almost next door to us were brother and sister also very good friends of my mother's since their childhood. The brother Mr. Halpern and his wife had a son Benio. She was famous in Zbaraz for making delicious "Kreplech". Benio their son was a male nurse. Poles drafted him when the war started and after Russians took over the town he was another one of those who came back home at night because of his Polish uniform. Later when the Soviets opened the new hospital at the castle they made Benio a head nurse. While working there a Polish nurse fell in love with him but he wouldn't marry her because his parents were very religious.

The sister of Mr. Halpern was already a widow. Henio her son was all she had and he was a very good son to her. During Soviet times he became a sport director of the county.

During the relative quiet on the Western front Soviet Union added three other countries to their empire by anexing Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. From Romania they took away part of Bessarabia making it The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On November 30 1939 Russians also attacked Finland by bombing their capital Helsinki. Finns gave plenty problems to Soviet forces and fought valliantly but how could they stop a giant like Soviet Union. After three months of fighting Soviets forced them to give up a piece of their land from which Russian created "Karelo-Fin" Republic their sixteenth. On March 12 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow between Soviet Union which drew Finland in Soviet sphere of influence..

First signs of Soviet ruthlessness and brutality surfaced on very cold January 1940. We witnessed then the first deportations of rich farmers to Siberia. It was a terrible sight when on one cold and snowy day hundred of more sledges loaded with people and just some of their belongings passed the town on their way to the railroad station to be loaded later on unheated box cars to be transported to Siberia. As we found out later many of those farmers died on the way from cold and hunger not being able to withstand the harsh Russian winter.

On a little brighter side Soviet authorities invited all refugees to settle in parts of Soviet Ukraine. Among others many Jewish families took up their offer and went east to start a new life there. But after arrival what a misery awaited them in their new land. They all were assigned to dirty jobs in forests and highways and very poor living quarters. Most of the so-called newcomers never performed this kind of dirty work. And besides everything there was not enough food to go around. To accommodate the newcomers authorities told the local population to let them in to steres without standing in long lines because they never saw sugar and other foods in their lives. Well! What a big lie that was.

When first letters arrived from these people written to their friends and relatives they contained nothing but praise for ~~for~~ Soviet authorities from the region of Zhmerinka one of the most industrial cities in Soviet Ukraine and for the wonderful reception accosted to them from the local population. But to make sure for the truth to come out most of those letters were signed "Moyshe Verkert" which translated from Yiddish to English means "Moyshe Opposite". After couple of months of happy so-called happy lives inside Soviet Union many people recived permissions and returned to places where they lived in the first place.

Another big lie came to light when local leaders in Zbaraz called another propaganda town meeting and declared that Finland ceased to exist as an independent country. And ofcourse the locals cheered knowing very well ~~that~~ that only a small piece of Finland was anexed by Soviet Union.

Despite the communist propaganda against religion masses of peasants from all around Zbaraz kept coming to church every Sunday and on Holidays and the local Jews kept going to Synagogue every day twice and on Saturdays as they did for generations.

One one very cold Sunday morning the former boyfriend of my cousin Nusia whom aunt Adela hated so much stoped me on the street and invited me to have lunch with him. Ofcourse I wasn't about to refuse a good lunch in a restaurant mostly attended by Soviet hierarhy in Zbaraz. First of all he apologized to me for the incovenience he caused for me while attacking me on the street when I was walking with Nusia just few days after we arrived in Zbaraz. He said that he thought that I was one of those runing Poles passing through Zbaraz. He wanted me to convey his regrets to the Speiser family for all the harrasment he caused them after he joined the Soviet administration by raiding their house and conducting unauthorised searches. Then he said that with the new communist regime finally his time arrived and that him and his family have everything they needed so he was ready to share his good fortune with Nusia and her family. I repeated this conversation to aunt Adela and as I expected she wasn't interested at all.

Also that winter we had two visitors from Cracow. First came Janka Patatoff aunt Mala's niece who was living in Lvov. In Zbaraz she visited her aunt Mrs. Fischer who was her father's sister and ofcourse she visited with us. She told all kind of news from Cracow. People who stayed behind stiil walked around the city ignoring German Chicanery and risks of being arrested or even killed. The opening of Cracow's Ghetto was still one year away. She also told us that Germans arrested her father because his mustache and style of his haircut was similar to Hitler's. After shaving off half of his head and half of the mustache they released him with a warning to keep this appearence all the time or they will kill him. On the way back to Lvov Janka stoped in Tarnopol to visit her father's brother and his family who was a lawyer there. Eventually Janka and her parents perished in holocaust. Their names are listed on my fathers's monument in Cracow.

The other visitor was Lulek (Ludwik) Dembitzer former good friend of my cousin Saul. In 1930 they both graduated from gimnazium. Lulek then went for one year to an officer school and as such was one of the first called in to fight the Germans. After finishing the officer school he became later a textile engineer. After Poland's defeat he couldn't go to Cracow where his family went into hiding and survived on Arian papers. He came to Zbaraz to stay with Dr. Abend's family. Mrs. Abend was Lulek's mother's sister. Dr. Abend was a well known phisician in Cracow. They had one son.

Chapter 49 (cont)

Living and Learning Under Communism!

Slow but sure the hard winter of 1939-1940 was coming to and end. the days got longer and little warmer and the snow accumulated throughout winter months started to melt leaving lots of dirt and horses manure all over the place.

With warmer weather arriving Hitler's war machine was on the move again. And so the few months long "Sitzkrieg" again became "Blizkrieg". On April 9, 1940 Germans invaded Denmark and Norway. Denmark offered no resistance. But Norwegians fought hard especially around the important port city of Narvik. Loosing many of their soldiers Germans finally prevailed. Then on May 10 again Germans smahed into Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg AND practically opened for themselves the roads to France. On the same day Winston Churchill became British Prime Minister after the resignation of Neville Chamberlain. Between May 26 and June 4 the Belgian and Netherlands armies capitulated and some 340,000 British, French and other Allied troops were dramatically evacuated across the English Chanel through the Dunkirk beachhead.

Starting with June 10 Italy declared war on Britain and France and on June 14 Hitler's forces entered undefended Paris. By June 22 Marshall Henri Petain became President of France and France and Germany signed an armistice on terms dictated by the Nazi conquerors. Month of July marked first large scale German bombing attack on the United Kingdom and the battle of Britain began.

Even with the war going on full scale on the Western front we in Zbaraz hundreds of miles away from the hostilities still enjoyed kind of uneasy peace. So with spring around time for playing soccer arrived again. Believe or Not Russians interst in sports and soccer in particular was great even thou in that era they never played in an international competition because of isolation from the Western world. I told Henio the head of county's sport department that soccer was my game since early childhood so he gave me a tryout and soon I became a member of Zbaraz's City Team. I played in few games. We won some and lost some. The stadium was on outskirts of town. I never forget the first game played there under Soviet occupation. There was a rather large crowd on hand with many Soviet dignitaries. Even a small town like Zbaraz had public transportation owned by two brothers Moyne and Naftule. Each one of them worked for himself and both of them fought for each customer not like brothers but like two greatest enemies. Their horses pulled boggies took people around town, out of town as far as Tarnopol. And ofcourse in Soviet times their main customers were Soviet dignitaries. And so it was during the first important game under Soviet auspices. These people used to walk around that stadium like it would be their own. Well! Really they made it their own. One of those high class Soviet women even overheard me talking to a man and calling him "Pan" (Mister). She got really mad at me and gave me a lecture that there was no "Pan's" in Soviet Union. For Soviets a meaning of "Pan" was connected with big business and rich landowners and even nobility. She finished her lecture by telling me that in Soviet Union everybody was a "Comrade".

Once we played a game in Lanovce an even smaller town then Zbaraz on the former Polish-Soviet border about 15 km. away from Zbaraz. Our team took a small train and after a short ride arrived in Lanovce. We also had on our team couple of Polish boys. Anyway for some reason after our arrival in Lanovce somebody started a rumor that at the same time all Poles from Zbaraz are being deported to Siberia. Not being sure what was going on in Zbaraz those boys didn't have any other choice but to go home on the same train. Later it came out that it was just a rumor.

Lanovce was a town with many Jews and Ukrainians and few Poles. The whole town remained me on an old wild western town with a long main street and some more homes behind. Many Jewish people used to live on this main street.

Chapter 49 (cont)

Living and Learning Under Communism!

Lanovce wasn't nice but a friendly place, with lots of dust all over town. On Saturday afternoon all those women were sitting down on chairs or benches in front of their homes and gossiping trying to start conversation with us like they would like to know what was going on around the rest of the world. Our team checked into the local hotel and all the boys spent couple of nights in a large dormitory.

But Henio our leader took me with him to the house of his aunt (his mother's sister). As Henio's mother her sister was also a very good friend of my mother and she was very happy to see me asking all kind of questions. Then I found out that she knew me since long ago when once she visited with us in Cracow when I was a little boy. So I spent two nights in a nice home on a real bed instead in a dormitory full of other people.

We also went to a wedding there when a young man from Zbaraz was transfered to Lanovce to work in the prosecutors office, married a local girl. The wedding took place in the girls home and was kept secret because the groom was afraid that his boss would find out that he got married in religious ceremony. But this didn't stop him from inviting to the wedding An Ukrainian militiaman who was a friend of Jews since Polish times. While talking with him I found out that he served in Cracow before the war with the same panzer division, and knew my cousin Alexander Mondschein. Well it shows you again how small the world is.

As far the soccer game was concerned; We lost. The Lanovce team was much better then ours because of some good and strong Russian players.

This Sunday evening after the game we gathered together with young people from Lanovce in some old shack who must remembered better days. Anyway they were a nice group of people. Mostly Jewish with couple Poles and ofcourse the Ukrainian militiaman. One of those Polish young men had his own accordeon and played for us the most beautiful melodies from the past and the new Russian-Soviet songs, as well. Many of those songs made me forget for awhile where I was and brought to my mind some good times from just one year before with my friends in Cracow.

Speaking of soccer I would like to mention here that in spring of 1940 a soccer game took place in Lvov between champions of Soviet Union Moscow "Dynamo" and a team put together from players who like other refugees at that time happened to be in Lvov. Many of those players used to be members of the Polish National team before the war and for this particular game performed under the name of Lvov "Dynamo". Those players some of them probably didn't play for quite a while I guess were driven by their pride. They showed those Soviet players how to play good soccer and won to a thunderous ovation from the loyal fans. O yes! They won. After all those defeats on battle fields it was to them a matter of national pride to win this one game.

Still continuing with soccer, in one of those games I injured my right foot, so my mother went with me to her old friend an Ukrainian Dr. Bilinsky. He was working then in the Health Center and pretended that he didn't know my mother. His icy stare made us feel bad. Obviously his hatred for Jews was evident. It didn't surprised us to find out later that he escaped to the German side.

Let us now come back to the daily reality. Deportations of local people and farmers continued with an regular efficiency. They all went to Siberia. At least the weather got warmer and less people died. To replace those deported farmers authorities brought settlers from inside of Soviet Union. But still they didn't dare to start to turn those farms into collective farms.

As far all of us refugees were concerned, nobody knew what to expect. Deep down people sensed that soon something will develop which will change our lives forever but none of us wanted to believe, that we also might get deported.

As I wrote before about your grandma Anna's life under Soviets in Gliniany, we went through the same procedure in Zbaraz. We registered three times at the county seat answering one important question. "Do you want to stay in Zbataz and become Soviet Citizien, or do you like to return to your home on German side?" Ofcourse overhelming majority choose to return to their homes still not realising completly the consequences of their choice. The word deportation still didn't cross our minds. We expected the Soviets to follow their rules, treat us as refugees from a foreign country and issue to us their second class passports with six months expiration date and with xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx restricted movements.

In meantime the county's agriculture department announced the vaccination of all the horses registerd in Zbaraz county. As a head veterinarian of the county it was the resposibility of my uncle Nysio Speiser to supervise and vaccinate xx those horses. My uncle took care of villages in the eastern part of the county and his assistant vaccinated the western part. They needed a registrar to list all those horses, to whom they belonged, their description and so on. I got the job to travel with my uncle. By that time I already learned some Ukrainian and to write in their Cyrilic alphabet. It was quite a job because besides register those horses every few days the Russian head of the agriculture department demanded a detailed report. So for over a month we traveled to all those villages. On some days Moyne took us to our destination but most of the time a farmer from the village used to pick-us up at uncle's house. The rules of vaccination were strickt and stated that every horse should be vaccinated three times on this particular day. In the morning, noon, and late in the afternoon. The trouble was that those horses should have rested on this day but those farmers ignored the instructions and worked them anyway. Once when we vaccinated those horses on the outskirts of Zbaraz the head of the department not seeing any horses during a surprise inspection threatened my uncle with voiding the vaccination and prosecuting him. But as things stood in those days in Soviet Union this headman was also afraid about his own fate so he kept quiet.

We always had very friendly receptions in all those villages. After all those farmers knew my uncle for many years and they remembered him how he always took good care on their animals. Some villages were mostly Polish, some Ukrainian and in many of them we still found some Jewish farmers. We always been invited to those farmers homes and ate with them. Once we came to a village where they had a large celebration. I never saw so much delicious food prepared at one time. In another village a Jewish family invited us to have a dinner with them. This couple had a beautiful daughter whom I met before in Zbaraz. It was very hard to imagene that such a good looking young lady would spent most of her young life in a backward village without any friends her own age. I assume that she attended school in Zbaraz. This Jewish family still owned land there and insisted that they will stay eventhou all the odds seemed to be against them.

Little by little people started to realise what the Soviet Union was all about and how little they had to offer except tirany and persecution. Jokes and nasty remarks about the system kept poping up all over the place. Many Jews in Poland before the war thought that some day Soviet Union will be the Mesiah for whom they waited for so many centuries but after seeing what they saw most of them abandoned the notion.

Once my uncle Nysio presented a Yiddish play.. In the course of the show some people on the stage dressed up in red were sitting around something resembling a Turkish bazaar. It wasn't in the script but one of the actors took upon himself to call the bunch on the stage "Royte Kaptzunym" which ment "Red Beggars". People in the audience understood the meaning of those words and took quite a while for laughing to stop. On another occasion a local man stood-up during the town meeting and Thanked comrade Stalin for all the bad and good he liberated us from. Laud and long applause indicated the app-

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The statement from the man at the town meeting didn't disturb the politicians on the stage, maybe they didn't take it seriously and just ignored it.

Still from private initiative some new eating places opened in Zbaraz. Maybe because of warm weather and more people on the streets they kept selling as before Mrs. Goldaper's Napoleons and believe or not to everybodys surprise even ice-cream in glasses 100 grams per person.
My uncle Mysio again presented some new plays Ukrainians and a Jewish revue. The Ukrainian play was about a Soviet hero who in his place of work discovered a spy plot against the Soviet state. Ofcourse the hero wasplayed by an Ukrainian leader from Zbaraz and the spy was one of the new leaders from Soviet Union.

The Jewish revue was simply beautiful. With music and old Yiddish songs, especially one act played, sang and danced by a young woman which by judgement of many people would also be a great success in important theater anyplace. The song presented was "Ich bin Avreymale da emese melicher". writen by a poor carpenter with three daughters in Cracow before the war. His name was Mordhe Gebirtig and he wrote many such beautiful songs during his lifetime but not really recognised until after the war. He was killed by the Germans during the liquidation of Cracow's ghetto in 1943.

Time was passing by real fast. While I was working I didn't have time for play. Everyday we used to return home late in the evening. My only day off was Sunday so on few occasions I sent my father instead of me.

On June 15 1940 as usual I went to work early in the morning. On schedule was a stop in the second largest village of the county. Lublanka had mostly Polish population with many rich farmers. Also in Lublanka was living one Jewish refugee family from Nisko a small town in Southern Poland. Their name was Scheinman and they lived there because Mrs. Scheinman's family was living there for generations. The Scheinmans were the parents of very handsome three sons.

Even before we arrived in Lublanka our driver told us that at night NKVD arrested and took away all single people who registered to return to German side.

Uncle Mysio and I worked this particular day under a tremendous tension. Even uncle Mysio being always very careful around horses made a wrong move and got kicked by a horse on his side. The powerfull kick carried him quite few feet away. Luckily he didn't break any bones but he felt the pain for few weeks.

To find out what was going on in town I borrowed a bicycle from a peasant and went home to see that everybody was tense and subdued. Ofcourse what will happen next was on everybody's mind.

I went back to Lublanka and we finished our work as fast as possible. We even turned down an invitation for a good country dinner. Since that day fearing that we will be next to go to Siberia my cousin Sigmund started to go with us everyday so we could teach him about this job in case I would be deported. After this June 15 our lives weren't the same anymore. we were under constant preasure thinking about the unavoidable. The only question remained: When?

So many young people from Zbaraz and vicinity went. I think before Soviets sent them away, they kept them awhile for interrogation and then loaded them in box cars for a long and hard journey. Among them was George, Stefa's Salin brother in law. A very delicate, polished, inteligent man who spoke German only. I don't think that he could survive a Soviet labor camp. I honestly hope he did.

Still on a more pleasant side, again I was chosen to play soccer on the Zbaraz team against the town of Podwoloczysk also on the former Polish-Soviet border. Well as it turned out I never traveled to Podwoloczysk. On this particular Sunday I was already locked tight in a box car awaiting our deportation.

Chapter 50

Gulag Archipelago!

Scattered from the Bering Strait almost to the Bosporus are thousands of Islands of the Archipelago. They are invisible but they exist. And the invisible slaves of the Archipelago, who have the substance, weight and volume have to be transported from island to island just invisibly and uninterruptedly.

Great so-called ports exist for this purpose-transit prisons; and smaller ports-camp transit points. Sealed railroad cars named "zak cars"(prisoners cars). And out someplace at the starting points they are met by similarly sealed,,versatile "Black Marias" (prisoners vans). The prisoners cars move along on regular schedules. And whenever necessary, whole caravans-trains of red cattle cars-are sent from point to point along the routes of the Archipelago.

All this is a thoroughly developed system! It was created over dozens of years-not hastily. Well fed, uniformed people, unhurried people created it. For example: The "Kineshma" convoy waits at the Moscow Northern Station at 1700 hours on odd-numbered days to accept prisoners vans from the Butyrki and other prisons. The "Ivanovo" convoy has to arrive at the station at 0600 hours on even-numbered days to recive and hold in custody prisoners for other destinations.

All this is happening right next to you. You can almost touch it, but it's invisible (and you can shut your eyes to it too). At the big stations the loading and unloading of the dirty faces takes place far,far from the passenger platform and is seen only by switchmen and roadbed inspectors. At smaller stations a blind alleyway between two warehouses is preferred, into which the prisoner vans can back so that their steps are flush with the steps of prisoners car. The convict doesn't have time to look at the station to see you, or to look up or down the train. He gets to look only at the steps. And sometimes the lower step is waisthigh and he hasn't the strength to climb up on it. And the convoy guards, who have blocked off the narrow crossing from the prisoners van to the prisoners car growl and snarl: "Quick, quick! Come on, come on!" And even brandish their bayonets.

And you hurrying along the platform with your children, your suitcases and your string bags, are to busy to look closely; Why is that second baggage car hitched onto the train? There is nox indetification on it, and it is very much like a baggage car-and the gratings have diagonal bars, and there is darkness behind them. But then why soldiers , defenders of the Fatherland riding in it, and why, when the train stops, do two of them march whistling along on either side and peer down under the car?

The train starts-and hundred crowded prisoner destinies, tormented hearts are borne along the same snaky rails, behind the same smoke, past the same fields, posts and haystacks as you, and even few seconds sooner then you. But outside your window even less trace of the grief which has flashed past is left in the air than fingers leave in water. And in the familiar life of the train, which is always exactly the same-with its slit-openable package of bed linen, and tea served in glasses with metal holders-could you possibly grasp what a dark and suppressed horror has been borne through the same sector of space just three seconds ahead of you? You are dissatisfied because there are four of you in your compartment and it is crowded. And could you possibly believe-that in the same size compartment as yours but up ahead in that prisoners car, there are fourteen people? And maybe there are twenty-five? And maybe thirty?

The "zak car or prisoners car" was meant to indicate that this was railroad car for prisoners-(for zaklyuchennye). But nowhere except in prison documents has this term caught and stuck. The prisoners got used to calling it"Stolypin" after the man who designed and bilt it way back in 1800s long before the Bolshevik revolution.

And here is the story of the involuntary way, the way thousands our men and women (single) endured on their way to gulag.

It was a journey somewhere between 5000 to 15,000 miles, mostly approximatly over 60 days in trains, prisons into the dark reaches of suffering. Crammed like cattle in to the cubicles of special railroad cars, the prisoners were 25 to a space meant for 4. Each compartment had been fitted with two extra bunks making two ranks of triple deckers. But it made no difference, there was no room to lie down during the days taken by each leg of the trip. The single window in each cubicle was barred and shattered. The door out to the corridor was locked, opened only once a day in the morning, so the men could be taken, one by one to the toilet at the end of the car. Each man was given half a loaf of sour black bread and a coup of water a day; each one was also offered one or two tiny pieces of salted herring, spoiled. Most prisoners were afraid to eat the herring, knowing that ~~that~~ they would recive no more water and would be driven to wild thirst. After reaching Siberia, every few days the train disgorged the weakened men into crowded vans, and the vans trucked them to camps and prisons where 100 of them were jammed into rooms built for twenty. Lice and other insects thrived in the dampness. There the convicts would spent few days until herded onto next train that made its slow way along the rails of Trans-Siberia. Finally as the exiles reached ~~reached~~ the remote wilderness to be skattered out among the isolated camps of Siberia and Far East, they were taken in smaller and smaller groups from the railroad junctions by bus or truck but mostly by walking to regional centers then singly to small clusters of log cabins or dingy dormitories at the state farms, mines, taygas that were to be their homes for next year, or many years to come, or forever.

The journey into exile is known by the innocent word "etap" which means "transport" or "stage". Etap was a frightening thing, completly inhuman. People lost their strengh, and became completly helpless. Tough criminals used to prey on the young and the weak, stealing whatever warm clothes they wore and carried in bags. Some contracted dysentery, but could not inform their guards, because their cellmates warned them, that they would kill them unless they kept their ailment secret, for their cases would quarantined them all for weeks and prolonged their misery. Etap is even worse then prison. And when is over the condemned is left in the vastness of fear, cold and the tranquillity of solitude. He has nothing but his prison clothes, rarely enough to face the winter temperatures of 60 to 70 below. he has virtually no money for meal or a overcoat. he has been striped of all scrapes of paper, so he must carry in his head all vital addresses of friends and family, who are not told by the authorities which village has been chosen as the place of his exile. Even the condemned himself is almost never told his destination. Since 1800s waves of Russians condemned for common or political crimes were sent east into Siberian vastness. Until today the journey into exile remains as through Russian history one of the most difficult phases of the prisoners experience. Until Trans-Siberian railroad was built around the turn of the century by slave labor digging those tunels in stone mountains long stretches of the trip were often made on foot, sometimes in chains.

In many cases to reach those destinations those prisoners had to be transported by ships, especially to camps in Archangelsk area. They fed them with fish and salted water, because sweet water wasn't available. Dysentery was so common that after leaving the ship's toilet, the prisoner used to go right back to the end of the line to make sure he could go to the toilet again. On many other occasions they were also transported on river boats because this was the only way they could reach the far away areas.

Lots of rivers were treacherous and those poor prisoners had to leave their boats and claim the high stony bank and walk on even more dangerous paths where one wrong move would cause them to fall into the depths of this deadly river.

Chapter 51

Deportation! (Continued from Part 1)

Well! Our journey wasn't as bad and dangerous as the one described in previous chapter. We were still on mercy of Soviet authorities but we belonged to a different category of exiles. In our cases they didn't split the families and we were transported under code called "Spec-Peresedlenci" (special settlers).

Under an umbrella of resettlement Soviets moved thousands of families to those far Siberian regions in order to force them hard slave labor, which ordinary people wouldn't perform without some assurances from government for better living conditions, food and salaries all spelled out in a contract for certain period of years.

On the surface it looked everybody was free, but acctually nobody could move or leave the region without NKVD's permission, which in practice was not possible at all. All exiles with some few exceptions didn't live in separate rooms but together in collective dormitories so NKVD could keep their eyes on them.

Saturday June 29 1940, as on any normal Shabat streets were quiet in the morning. Only early worshipers were in evidence hurrying for early service in the synagogue. Again I should have this morning to travel with uncle Nysio to some village to vaccinate horses, but Friday evening I decided to stay home and my cousin Sigmund went instead.

Later about 11am as always on Saturdays Jewish maidens went out for their regular Shabat morning walk around the Market Place. In the afternoon after the Shabat dinner older folks came out to enjoy a lovely summer day.

This Saturday was also the last school day, first under the Soviet system which required all students to go to school for ten years before proceeding with their high education. Heniek Zimetbaum, uncle Ludwik's nephew after 9 years of Hebrew Academy in Cracow got his first report card from a Soviet school. Some change from learning Polish and Hebrew to cyrilic alphabet and strange Russian and Ukrainian languages. Bumek and Mala Goldstein also got their report cards with good grades but it was easier for them because while living in Zbaraz in their childhood they learned to speak Ukrainian. So it seemed like everybody was happy. I was just hanging around talking to my friends and enjoying my day off.

Late in the afternoon I went out with Zosia not realising yet that this was our last time together. With evening approaching I noticed that streets emptied early, something unusual for Saturday, but I still didn't pay any attention to it. We parted about 10pm and I also noticed that Zosia was not herself kind of subdued. Many weeks later I finally realised that lots of people in Zbaraz knew what was just going to happen to all the refugees and Zosia was among them.

When I came home father of my friend Benio Halpern was there talking to my parents. It turned out that his nephew Henio the sportman from the county knew what will happen in the next few hours so he sent his uncle to warn us and consider an option to go into hiding.

Not by his choice but on orders from the authorities Henio was one of the local men designated to one of the groups to go and arrest the refugees.

For a reason still unknown to me until today we decided against hiding and take our chances. The decision not to hide was probably the most important in our lives and probably helped us to survive. I said probably because many of us didn't survive. The hardships of Siberia and Uzbekistan killed thousands of people our family included. Hard work, bad living conditions, hunger and disease, bitter cold and to much heat took their toll on many people but on another hand saved us from Hitler's murderous tirany.

It was almost midnight when we went to bed. After a short sleep loud voices coming from outside and knocking on the door woke us up. I looked at my watch and it showed 2am, but acctually it was 12 midnight. After taking Zbaraz and the whole Eastern Poland Soviets moved all the clocks two hours ahead to coordinate them with the Moscow time.

Chapter 51 (cont)

Deportation! (Continued from Part 1)

Four men came in to the house. There was one militiaman, one local communist and two NKVD officers. They told us to get our things together because we are going home to Cracow. They also told us that all the refugees are being returned to their previous homes according to their wishes. They snooped around for a while trying to find valuables and something incriminating, maybe some anti-communist literature. Luckily we didn't have nothing to accomodate them. Acctually on a table in front of them there were some books written in ~~RUSSK~~ Polish on history of the communist party, Russia and book about Lenin and revolution. But this wasn't what they were looking for. They thought about something more substantial to fill-up their pockets.

Really, we didn't have to much to pack. We stuffed ~~everything~~ in few bags, leaving behind all the things which people let us have when we first came to Zbaraz. Well! It was a big mistake. We should have take them with us. Mostly the bedding. These people wouldn't mind at all if we did. We also took small supply of food; Mostly bread and butter. We didn't have any money at all, only 300 Rubles left.

Aunt Dora became histerical crying and carrying on because her daughter Esther was leaving without her husband Lipe, only with her children. ~~KK~~ He was someplace out of town looking for ways to make some money, and we really didn't know about his whereabout. It would be real hard on her without him in Siberia.

Aunt Janette was also crying and trying to get out of her house next door to tell us good-by, but the guards wouldn't let her and pushed her back inside. You see aunt Janette and her family registered to stay. Later when a new school year started profesor Nussbaum after teaching all those years before in Vienna, Lvov and Tarnobrzeg was assigned by Soviet authorities to teach math in an obscure Ukrainian village of Striyevka few miles away from Zbaraz.

We loaded our bags (real bags, not suitcases) on the horse pulled wagen, and surrounded by those four men we started to walk to the railroad station. They let mother and Esther sit on the wagen. I don't remember how long we did walk, but when we arrived at the station many other families were already locked in the cars. Everything was going fast and quiet. All we could hear were the NKVD soldiers (defenders of the Fatherlan) whispering "Davay ve Vagon" (Get in the car). After this first night this sentence became very familiar to all of us. Even later in the camp children used to play a new get into the car game the same way as children all over the world played cops and robbers or Indians and cowboys.

Then the heavy gate of the car got shot tight and opened only for the new arrivals to load.

I will not describe to you those box-cars again, because I did so before when telling you about Anna"s depotation. The fact was that we were waiting at the station until Sunday afternoon. Some people from town came to say their last good-by's. Uncle Nysio, Sigmund, Milka also came, as well Zosia and Yeta Frenkiel. I was surprised to see all these people. I couldn't understand the fact that our guards wouldn't chase them away. I guess they thought that there was nothing to hide at a small station like Zbaraz. Many other people have ~~looked~~ STOOD THERE and having a very nice chat with the NKVD commandant of Zbaraz.

Anyway before we left finally Lipe Goldstein showed-up making Esther and the kids very happy. Believe it took quite a while to convince the commandant that he had his family already inside. The discussion with NKVD took some time and we thought that Lipe will be left behind. That particular Sunday morning Lipe returned from Lvov. He had an idea what was going on. At home he packed some of his stuff, said good-by to aunt Dora and than reported to the transport.

Chapter 52

The Transport!

The rest of our family shared with our fate in different parts of Ukraine the same time, the same night. Aunt Mala her son Saul and their friends the Korngolds have traveled on a transport from Lvov to Mariyskaya ASSR someplace in Ural Mountains. Her daughter Zosia and husband Robert managed to stay in Lvov. Ofcourse not to their advantage. Germans killed them later in Lvov. Zosia and Roman Kahane also traveled to Mariyskaya ASSR but on different transport.. My cousin Alexander left Lvov with the singles the same night as the singles from Zbaraz. Until today I am not sure about my uncle Adolf. I don't know if he was deported by the Soviets or maybe he went back to Cracow. All I remember reciving a letter from him in Siberia telling us about whereabouts of his son Alexander. What I don't remember if the letter came from Lvov or from some labor camp in Soviet Union.

Now going back to our transport, before we left uncle Nysio gave me a piece of paper which said that I recived all the money due to me for my work with him. I signed this paper but I never recived any money. I thought that uncle Nysio will pay me from his own pocket and than will collect from the county. Well! Not such luck, even thou we needed money badly. At that time we also discovered that one of our bags with warm clothing was missing. Evidently the driver of the wagen who brought us to the station stole it. Later uncle Nysio gave us couple of jackets which makes me believe that my money covered the payment for the jackets.

Finally the time arrived to say good-by to Zbaraz forever. I was really glad for the opportunity to be there and for the opportunity as well to see the place of their parents birth, childhood and youth. I felt good about seeing the little town where my roots were and where it all began. I am only sorry that it ended so quick and that I didn't take my time and go to the cementary as my mother asked me to see the resting places of my ancestors and to read all the explanations on their monuments. Despite the war raging all over Europe I had good times in Zbaraz and I enjoyed my new friends very much. And to all of you wherever you are, I will never forget you. You made my life easier in the time of misery.

The transport left Zbaraz on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, with many residents looking on and waving. The soccer team was there also. They never left for their game in Podvoloczysk because some of the players were involved with deporting people the previous night.

We thought first that we will travel to Tarnopol because of important rail crossing there but all this changed when we realised that Soviets didn't like deport people from Large stations. The transport stoped on a small station between Zbaraz and Tarnopol which was designated as an assembly point for all the deporties from around the region. Soon our small transport became a huge transport. There were many boxcars including a car for the comandant and his soldiers.

Before we left on our long journey the commandant and his guards started to seek out single people on the transport. In our car we had three of them. An older aristocratic Polish lady. The other was our friend Lulek Dembitzer who was Mrs. Abend's nephew, but she told the guards that he was her brother. The last one was Hammer a tailor from Tarnow. Another Polish family claimed that the old lady was their sister. Anyway the soldiers took them all away and we thought that we will never see them again. It took maybe half an hour when the gates opened again and to our cheers all three of them returned. The moment of truth came at last. With all the gates shot tight, just with the small windows open for air with the guards in special booths above the cars with their guns in a ready position the transport moved slowly but sure to the new and unknown destination.

So! Very soon we entered the real Soviet territory by passing the former frontier on River Zbrucz and the town of Podvoloczysk where the same Sunday I was scheduled to play in a soccer match, but instead I was locked up in a boxcar on my way to Siberia.

The Transport!

During one short stop when gates opened for short while we finally got to talk to uncle Ludwik who with aunt Rose and Heniek was in a car way in the front of the transport. They were one of the first who arrived at the Zbaraz station. We also found out that aunt Rose's mother Mrs. Zimetbaum was spared the long journey and was left in uncle Nysio's custody. From Zbaraz she was able to help uncle Ludwik and his family by sending money and food packages to Siberia. She was still alive when in June 1941 Germany declared war on Soviet Union.

With uncle Ludwik in his car was the Kanas family from Cracow, a young woman from a small town near Cracow Zofia Molik, the German speaking Mr.& Mrs. Loria, a Jewish-German tailor from Germany who found with his family home in Zbaraz after Germans threw him out in 1938 and some other Polish and Ukrainian families which I understand were very nice to aunt Rose.

Two cars in front of our car were riding families deported from Gliniany region and among them the Leniower clan. Ofcourse I didn't know them at that time. But I believe that even then someplace was writen that in some distant future we would be one family. Throughout the long journey I didn't see your grandma Anna at all. She still was in a state of a shock and probably thinking about her boyfriend whom she left behind in Gliniany. Frieda and Ela used to be more visible. On longer stops they walked together along the long transport.

With Leniowers in their car was the small Jaslan group who for ten months also found heaven in Gliniany. There were the Marmurs best friends of Leniowers with their little boy Belek who now a day is a Rabbi at the Holly Blossom Temple in Toronto, Canada. Mr. Max Marmur was an executive with a glass manufacturing company in Jaslo. Also there was the Suedwertz family. Son Srulek and his mother. He used to own a small store in Jaslo. Srulek's sister survived the war in hiding with her future husband Mr. Raab who before the war was a bank director in Jaslo and Frieda's boss. And then there was this Fenichel family. An older couple with three daughters. Bronia who was a math profesor, Mania who was already divorced and Janette still single who was a photographer in Jaslo. With them in the car was a young man whom Anna remembers as Hesiek and that Janette claimed him for herself. Anyway this guy was arrested by mistake. Authorities in Gliniany didn't believe that he was a British subject. He used to live in then Paletine and got caught in Lvov by the Soviets and wasn't able to go back to Palestine. He had many conversations with the transport commandant and convinced him to wire Moscow to check out his status. I really don't know what Moscow's answer was, but one day already deep in Soviet Union somewhere in Ural Mountains they took him off the transport. We assumed then that he went back to Palestine. But who knows? Knowing the communist mentality they could pined a spy label on him and instead to Palestine sent him to one of the many labor camps in the Urals.

Others in the car were families Menase and Anisfeld, relatives of Dr. Zucker, Leniowers family doctor. Also there was this Jewish young couple Mr.&Mrs. Lubelski and brother and sister from Oswiemcin (Auschwitz). His name was Chaim. I don't remember her's name. Anyway they used to have a fortune waiting for them in America. But for time being they were poor and hungry. Yet! Chaim tried very hard to convince your grandma Anna to marry him by promising her all this good life in America after the end of the war.

There was at last a very interesting story behind this Polish family from Posen in Western Poland. Mrs. Byczkowski and her daughter Jadzia like others found themselves in Gliniany. To avoid deportation to Siberia Jadzia married a local man Mr. Wilman even thou she didn't love him. To make a long story short it didn't help them a bit. Instead to leave Jadzia and her mother in Gliniany they took Mr. Wilman with them to Siberia. Another example of Soviet brutal ways and disregard of human rights, as seen circa 1940 and many more years beyond.

Chapter 52 (cont)

The Transport!

I would say that there was about 1500 people in 35 or 40 cattle cars. There were many other transports like ours from all parts of Ukraine and White Russia heading east. On the way we encoutered couple of transports from Lvov going in the same direction. Soldiers who guarded us were firm but not brutal. They have done their duty for their Fatherland as outlined to them by their political leader. Called in Russian "Politruk" the political leader was the most important personality in all aspects of Soviet life, at work and at home. They even ~~xxranked~~ outranked generals in the armed forces and directors and other leaders in factories, offices, collective farms and business. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ No significant incidents took place between the guards and our people. In the matter of facts at the end of the journey all of them politely said their good-bys.

All together we had about 37 people in our car. I mentioned their names before when I wrote about the refugee situation in Zbaraz. Couple of Polish families without their husbands and fathers were poor and hungry all the time. They depended only on soup and bread recived from the Russians. Many people in the car tried to help them as much as they could. THe other Polish family was the on of colonel Lachowicz who in Poland was an aide to General Anders who later became the Chief of Staff of the Polish Army in Soviet Union. With colonel Lachowucz was his wife and her two sisters; Frieda Komorowski, and Mrs. Malinowski and her two children. Also with them was this aristocratic Polish lady whom Russians tried to pull of the transport even before the journey began. The rest of the deporties in our car were Jewish; From Warsaw Mrs. Jakubowicz and her small boy, a chaffeur Mr. Ash with wife and small child, a single tailor Hammer from Tarnow, the Schlesinger family from Bielsko and from Cracow Dr. Abend, his wife and son, Lulek Dembitzer, and ofcourse our family the Balins, Goldsteins and us.

Never throughout the journey we had a hint where were we going. But all kind of rumors circulated all over the transport. The most mentioned was the city of Khabarovsk because we traveled on the Trans-Siberian railroad and because somebody told a story that his grandfather spent there many years in czarist times also as a deportee. Other people have been more optimistic. In matter of facts they suggested that our transport ~~xxx~~ was heading for Vladivostok, where we will be loaded on ships and taken to United ~~XX~~ States as a part of an agreemwnt between the two countries.

The ~~jxxxxxx~~ journey was long and tiresome. It took us almost six weeks to reach the final destination. We guessed that during this period we traveled close to 12,000 km. The deeper we got into the Soviet Union the restrictions eased off somewhat and we could keep the gates open all the time. Our guards trusted us. During cold days and at nights we kept them closed anyway.

On our way we passed many villages, towns and important cities. After crossing into the real Soviet territory we had our first glimpses of Soviet way of life. We noticed that in all those small town was standing a statue of Lenin always in a small garden. There was hardly anybody on the streets. I guess the whole town was at work or in jail. We also saw wherever we came that the railroad station was like a "corso" a ~~xxxxx~~ social meeting place for all the local citiziens. They used to stroll back and forth all dressed up mostly on Sundays and the young boys and girls flirting with each other.

The countryside someplaces look beautiful and other places terrible. Large fields operated by collective farms were in evidence. There was wheat, rye, corn, vegetable fields, oats hay and others. There were also many grazing fields with very poor looking horses and thin cattle. Living conditions of those farmers were real bad. They mostly used to live in underground huts (Zemlanki) with only roofs made of straw sticking up above the ground.

We spoke with many Russian people along the way. They didn't have to much to say, except shaking their heads, like leting us know that they understand what's all about. We saw many fields untouched, an example of poor management. Most farming in those days in the Ukraine was stiil done by plough and horse. Lots of mechanical equipment was lying rusted along the tracks not fit to use.

Going deeper into Soviet Union we saw less fields and but more forests indutrial centers, coal and iron mines. Complexes of heavy industry have been located mostly on outskirts of large cities. Most of those cities, had a sorry complection. You could see very old buildings all over and no signs of new housing projects. From our perspective city services for residents were no place to find.

We tried to keep our cars spotless clean. We swept the floors all the time, and twice a week we even washed them. Most of our journey days were warm with occasional rains. Nights were always cold. The round hole in the floor with the thick pipe (our restroom area) was also kept clean and divided from the rest of the car with sheets donated by some people.

We kept busy almost all the time. Men used to get involved in heated political discusions. They played pocker on suitcases every afternoon. I do not recall if the game was for money or otherwise. Ladies also clatched among themselves besides keeping busy with preparing food or with repairs.

Our daily ration of food was soup, bread and hot water, sometimes real tea. Hot water was the only item we could get on every station without an effort. Because of drinking lots of tea hot water was very important for an average traveling Russian. According to an old Russian custom every railroad station had a hot water set-up, called in Russian "Kipyatok". Boiled water.

When the transport arrived at the station designated to issue food for us, no matter if it was day or night we used to grab our buckets and bags for bread and followed our guards to the kitchen to get our allotment. In every car there were men designated for this job. I was one of those men in our car. It gave me an opportunity to look around and see what was going on. My mother was also chosen to divide all this food because people in our car trusted her most with this particular chore.

On large stations the walk to the kitchen was rather long. NKVD didn't want to show us off to the local population so the transport was parked far away from the main terminal. Sometimes it took us an hour or maybe two to get back to our train. Once in a large Siberian city of Omsk while we were getting our soup a large group of local people gathered around us trying to pick-up a conversation. They wanted to know from where we came, and why we were deported. By coinsidence we met there a family of Polish Jews who on invitation from Soviet authorities in Ukraine in 1939 settled there. What could anybody say with NKVD officers around. They seemed to be happy with their life in faraway Omsk.

Many people with money; As you probably know there are always people with money around, tried to help themselves by making contact with local population, during long stops by buying things from them. Mostly food, or if they had plenty of clothing by trading it for bread or potatos. Salt was the only product in Soviet Union, besides matches available to everybody without any effort. But still was good to carry plenty of salt. There used to be places without a drop of salt and people there traded flour, rice or sometimes even sugar for salt.

Once already deep in Soviet territory during a long stop when our people enjoyed some sunshine and warm weather outside our cars I spoted few yards away two familiar figures. In different circumstances I probably would be surprised to see these people there, but at that time nothing surprised me anymore. Those two young men were the Haber brothers from Cracow Tadek and Staszek. The middle one Rudek was still in Cracow with his parents.

As I wrote before we knew each other since our childhood. Our meeting was rather sad but warm. Since then we have been together until our camp disbanded.

Despite our predicament, there was no real harmony among people on the transport. Most of everybody was on the edge, ready to explode on any occasion. Inteligent people tried hard to keep calm and restrain and urged the others to do the same. Sorry to say that majority saw our situation in different perspective. Those were the workers, some poor people who still saw the inteligentia as their enemies. Even thou they were the same prisoners as the others they still felt that their time was coming under the Soviet rule and to keep their tongues in check was the last thing on their minds. Only a amall sparkle have been needed to blow up things out of proportions and to start a large argument.

All kind of people have tried to stuck their heads in our cars and start conversations, mostly being chased away by the guards. Once in city in Ural Mountains a man came in trying to sell a pair of brand new boots. Nobody wanted to buy them, so he left shortly. But soon the guards started to chase after him and asked questions if somebody saw him. Being young and still not aware of Soviet tactics I opened my big mouth and told them that I saw the man. Immediatly they took me away to the NKVD commandant of this station. I just gave him a short statement and arrived in our cars still in time for the departure. As I found out later my mother became histerical thinking that she saw the last of me. Only my cousin Paul Balin was calm and collect. Others worried too and felt a great deal of relief seeing me back.

After crossing the border from former Polish territory we traveled for some time through the real Soviet Ukraine. The first long stop was at the very important rail center in Zhmerinka. The city where the first Jewish settlers settled on the invitation of Soviet authorities, but soon decided to go back to Western Ukraine as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

From Zhmerinka the transport headed for Kiev the capital of Soviet Ukraine. A beautiful historic city which for many centuries used to be under Polish jurisdiction. We couldn't see to much from Kiev, because they kept us far away from the center on side tracks. In Kiew we got our first meal.

The transport continued on its way to another large and industrial Ukrainian city Kharkow. But before we got there we stoped in smaller but beautiful city of Poltava. Whoever had money and could snick out from the transport could buy there potatoes. During the transition times in 1917 when the Bolshevik revolution was taking over the Ukraine, Poltava was the center of the Ukrainian bandit Semion Petlura who with his army of so-called "Haydamaks" terrorised, robed, burned and killed thousands innocent people mostly Jews.

During Soviet reign the city got famous because of a play called "Natavka Poltavka". A story similar to all Soviet plays and movies. Natalie from Poltava according to the play was a beautiful but poor peasant girl who turned down marriage to an older rich man in order to marry a young communist hero whom she so dearly loved.

After leaving Ukraine we crossed into the Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic, the largest from all the Soviet Republics but populated by many other ethnic groups besides the Russians. That why the Russian Federal Republic is divided in many smaller autonomic republics according to peoples nationalities. At least on the paper the nation of Maryians had their Mariyskaya Autonomic Soviet Republic. Tatars had Tatarskaya Autonomic Republic, And Yakuts had their Yakutskaya Autonomic Republic. And many more others.

Traveling on Russian territory we quickly passed Voronesh and Kuybyshy, a city where Soviet government evacuated from Moscow during the German siege in 1941-42. Next was Ufa on the southern edge of Ural Mountains where Europe ends and Asia begins. The part of the world called "Eurasia". And that was the famous spot where the notorious Siberia began. The land of forests, tundras, taygas, and many imporatnt minerals.

Chapter 53

Short History of Siberia!

Siberia does not have definite boundaries. It occupies no place in the governmental and administrative divisions. There is no republic, district or city named Siberia. Russians speak of it as a vast region beginning approximately at the Ural Mountains, running eastward through thousands of miles of deep forest, steppe, tundra and ending in an indefirminate area somewhere short of the Pacific coast. They call the final stretch to the sea the Far East, however it is all Siberia all the way to the Bering and Okhotsk seas, covering an area one and one third that of the forty eight contiguous United States. It is a place of exile, a place of dread and adventure a sweep of misery and believe it or not romance.

Since 1581 when Yermak the Cossak invaded the Siberian land of Tatars and after Muscovy annexed Western Siberia, Russian pioneers have gone east. Trappers, explorers, prospectors built their log cabins and fought the elements much as American did as they moved westward across their continent. By the 1630s the Russians had made their way to the Siberian Pacific xxxxxx coast and a long search for the riches of the wilderness had begun.

Salmon,cod, herring,sable,ermine, fox, wolf, bear, mink,timber, coal, gold, diamonds, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc, lead, platnium, asbestos, arsenic, salt, gas, and oil have been brought out of the frozen vastness in great hardship,, cost and satisfaction. All this has been done in a mixture of compulsion and voluntarisn, but mostly by convicts labor who worked the mines, hauls the lumber, builds the railroads and performs many hard chores.

Yet it would be wrong to think that Siberia runs on forced labor only. Throughout the years the state has gone to some lengths to construct a system of elaborate bonuses, cars, free travel and extra vacations to lure the skilled and unskilled into this hard land. The incentives for the entire region include 40% salary increases immediatly after arrival, followed by an additional 10% after six months, then up to 80% within the first five years. After five years the pay can jump to a maximum of about 1000 rubles a month, exorbitant by Soviet standarts. Usually the farther north, the larger the pay.

It is a cruel country. A great wasteland in the long winter months. A misleading mosaic of swamps and lakes and swarms of mosquitoes in the brief summer. Man is an alien there. the winter daylight comes late and lingers only for few hours. In the town of Aldan where we used to live nearby the temperature was 46 below zero at the time when winter had begun and reached 76 below zero by the end of January. Our settlement was few hundred miles away from the coldest spot on earth where the temperatures reached 92 degrees below zero.

Owners of private cars (If they were any) put them away for winter, and trucks for lumbering and other heavy work are kept running constantly through the six months of winter. During the three months of real summer there are almost no nights except of a half hour of transition period.

This coldest spot on earth is between Tangana and Verchoyansk, few miles east from Lena River.

Siberia is so remote and deeply isolated from urban existance that its simple villages and detention camps are still considered fitting punishments for common criminals and political dissidents. But their gold mines and oil fields xx also exert a magic pull on the frontier spirit profoundly embeded in Russian history.

But whichever way you take it, basically there are two ways to get to Siberia. Voluntary, a seldom way. The other the more popular is by "Etap" (Transport) The "Zaklutchonye" the backbone of Soviet forced labor.

Chapter 54

Back On the Transport!

In meantime our journey continued deeper and deeper into Siberia on the way to our final but unknown destination. And again we passed other transports probably heading for the same destination as ours. Couple of times we made longer stops in order to bath. All those things have been pre-aranged because those bath facilities were extra large to accommodate large groups of people. Many people on the transport tried to avoid this opportunity to to get cleaned up, but the guards somehow convinced them to go probably with some extra not so nice talk. Lipe Goldstein was one of those men who tried to avoid bathing. He put a scarf over his mouth like he would have a toothache. Guards pushed him to the bathhouse anyway and since then called him "Pereviazany", which ment bandaged. Women used to operate baths for men, and for some reason men for women. It felt awkward to stay naked in front of those women.

We passed those old Siberian cities, towns and settlements, known to us by name from Polish history lessons, about the times when czarist authorities used to send there Polish patriots who fought against them for Poland's independence. Those cities like Chelyabinsk, Petropavlovsk, xxxxOmsk, and Novosibirsk became very important rail and industrial centers during Soviet rule, especially after the Trans-Siberian railroad was finally completed. Novosibirsk in most recent years also became an important fashion center of Siberia with designs of clothing for men and women fitted to the needs of Siberian winter.

Traveling farther east on Trans-Siberian railroad not to far from Novosibirsk there is an old city of Tomsk, with many labor camps and collective settlements in it's area. Many years later a friend of mine in Displaced Persons camp in Austria who was a settler in a camp near Tomsk told me a story about a mass escape from the camp by a large group of Jewish people. They decided that what's enough was enough. The terrible and un-human conditions and hard work contributed to their rebelion. Even without enough food on hand on one wintery, crisp night they took whatever they could carry, men, women and children, young and old walked out of the camp. They didn't care anymore. They headed south knowing that the city of Tomsk is xxxxx somewhere there. At first nobody paid any attention to their walkout. Usually there haven't been any guards in special settlements, just few NKVD officers. Finally they realised what was happening so they notified the NKVD headquarters in Tomsk. Deep at night in Siberian wilderness none of those Jews did have a smallest notion that they will get away with this uprising, so it didn't surprise them when they reached a point where NKVD soldiers with guns and rifles were waiting for them. With no place to go anymore they turned around and faced the stiff consequences. The guilty have been punished and the living conditions never improved.

Krasnoyarsk was the next long stop. Slowly but sure the transport kept moving south approaching the famous Lake Baikal. A little farther to the north the old and famous River Lena spout as a small stream and then changed to mighty river flowing east and north and finally reaching East Siberian Sea and Arctic Ocean. We continued into southern ~~peak~~ tip of the Lake Baikal stoping in a place called Zima (Winter) a small city where in July temperatures were way below freezing and streets white from frost made an impression like they would be covered with a deep snow. An early July morning found the same situation in an old Siberian city of Irkutsk. We rounded the southern tip of Baikal very near to Mongolian border, then we passed by the Armur the border river between Mongolia and Soviet Union and then Manchuria a Japanese pupet state (now a part of China).

Baikal is a large fresh water lake about 400 miles long and from 10 to 50 miles wide, All together 14,000 square miles. It is located among great mountain peaks where many innocent people lost their lives while building the Trans-Siberian railroad and diging in stone the 32 tunels for the railroad to go through. The lake is navigable in summer and in winter could be crossed on ice.

Chapter 54 (cont)

Back On the Transport!

After leaving the southern tip of Baikal, slowly but sure the transport began curving to the north. We passed cities Ulan-Ude and Chita with a strong Mongolian character. And no wonder. The territory of Outer Mongolia was visible on the other side of Mount Sokhondo, and many Mongolian people who resided in Soviet Union.

Continuing north-east still on Trans-Siberian railroad the transport came to an abrupt halt in a city of Urusha. The most northern peak of China (then Manchuria) was just in front of us. To our surprise we spent long hours in Urusha a station without bread but lots of caviar. We got even more surprised when railroad workers started manouver the transport in all directions. Something important was going on. I guess people had ideas, but nobody dare to put those ideas in words. Soon without saying anything we realised that the engine has been changed to a smaller one, and that the transport was heading north leaving the Trans-Siberian railroad behind.

The last point of so-called civilization as far we were concerned was a small settlement Skorovodino. We have thought that one large gate closed on us and that we never will see civilization as we knew it.

The mood in our car and I presume in other cars changed from an un-easy hope to dispair. As long we have traveled on Trans-Siberian for some silly reason we had hope. Listening to all the rumors who always were bright and cheery and to our advantage we thought that we will arrive in some town or city, settle there and will live our lives as before. But all those thoughts were just an illusion. It finally came into our minds that right there on this side railroad going north our former way of life ceased to exist. We didn't know what lies ahead of us. And to tell the truth at that particular moment we didn't care.

A quiet gloom spreaded over cars after we got our first glimpses of few labor camps along the way, and seeing prisoners diging out moss and loading it on waiting rail flats. We couldn't see their faces, but they all moved like in a dream.

We still didn't have a slightest idea where we were going, but after twenty four hours ride we switched again to another side, and the transport finally stoped in the front of a large camp, enclosed from all sides with barbed wire and with high guard towers all around.

Another transport stood there already, probably one of those transports from Lvov we met few times along the way. While this transport was unloading we were told to stay inside and keep the cars gates closed.

The commandant of the transport informed us that the name of this place was Tindiyski. People there called "Tinda, a wooden city spreaded on small hills seen all over. The population there was mostly NKVD officials, or people who settled there after serving out their terms. Others were volumteers on contracts with government, and people released from camps but without permission to leave the area.

As we expected Tinda wasn't our final destination. this was only an etap, a stage before farther travel. After some days of rest, baths, heads shaving and more registrations we were scheduled to go much further north by trucks to camps near or around Aldan another wooden city In the Yakutsk Autonomous Soviet Republic within the bounduaries of The Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic in northern Siberia with the capital in Yakutsk on the Lena River.

Yakutsk have been founded by the Cossaks in 1632. The Republic borders on the Arctic in the north. A severe climate and lack of railroads have hampered the development of Yakutia whose chief river is Lena and whose industries are gold, lumber, and traping. The population consists of Yakuts, Evenkis and mostly Russians and numbers about 500,000. Nowaday the industry is much more developed and many Russians settling there thanks to a vigorous government's initiative.

Yakuts are people of Turkic linguistic family of Ural-Altaic stock, who occupy a large area of northern Siberia. They raise cattle and reindeers and live in small villages in Siberian tayga. Russians live in towns and cities.

Chapter 55

Tinda!

While people on our transport spent the night in cars, the Lvov transport got un-loaded and the deportees have been placed inside the camp. But before all that happened the guards allowed us to open our cars gates and mingle with the other people inside the camp. I found there few people I knew from Cracow, among them my good friend Maryla Muszynski, who was there with her parents and sister. We talked for a while reminiscing about old times and old friends left behind.

Few days later people from that transport left on trucks going north and were resettled in camps around the city of Aldan on the banks of Aldan River.

A month or more went by since we left Zbaraz, and since Leniowers left Gliniany. Next morning after our arrival, we vacated our transport and have been put in another camp, about half a mile away from the railroad. Our guards said their good-by's and handed us over to the local camp authorities. Our camp was build as the one I previously described. Inside there were barracks and tents. Our group first choose A TENT not anticipating that we will sleep on bare ground, but nights were very cold, so we found ourselves an empty barrack and moved in promptly. Yet after one night there we ran back to our tent, because this barrack was full of roaches and other insects. Some people got bitten and besides that uncle Ludwik's nephew who slept next to me let his weak bladder go all the way and I was awaken in a small lake of his urine. We remained in our tent until the end, even during the time when we endured couple of nights of heavy rainfall, and leaking through the unsecured roof.

Leniowers and their friends took over a barrack nearby. Your future grandma Anna was still invisible. As much as I understand she was still crying since the day they were picked-up in Gliniany. Even one of those arresting officers there told her to cool it and be like her sister Frieda if she wants to survive this ordeal. I noticed Frieda and Ela on many occasions always walking together but I still didn't get a chance to meet them.

Still with all that misery all around us a lazy mountain river was slowly floating next to the camp. And this was a good and pleasant thing. The weather was still nice and warm in daytime, and you can imagene how much fun we had because of that river. We could swimm there, and bath, and also do some washing for the first time in a month. This Zeya River was like an insperation to us young people. Some of us pretended sitting on the banks of some familiar river back in Poland on long afternoons singing our old Polish songs, talking over old times or learning Russian words, which remained us of the reality. Sometimes using our known to us Polish melodies we tried to compose songs about our predicament and what the future will bring for us. In the evening after supper we kept strolling around the camp again talking and singing. It even didn't cross our minds that those were the last days with so much free time on our hands with practicaly nothing to do.

We had a small group of friends in those days, all taken from Zbaraz. There was Lulek Dembitzer and Frieda Komorowski the daughter of the famous Polish General Bor-Komorowski who commanded the last Polish uprising in Warsaw against the Germans in 1944. I think at that time Lulek Dembitzer was very much in love with her. Besides myself there was Janka Kanas and her sister Irene good friends of uncle Ludwik from Cracow and Zosia Molik, the oldest from all of us.

Our daily eating habits didn't change to much. Every day we went after our food to the other camp. And again I was the one as on the train with continued with this chore. I didn't know Russian that much in those days, so I spoke Ukrainian, but those Russians in the kitchen didn't understand me. But somehow I managed. Still we recived the moist black bread, soup maybe little better tasting than on train. On one occasion we even recived some "kisiel" a Russian version of a soft fruit drink. As all over Russia we never were short of hot water. And again, as before some brave people with money used to sneak out from the camp to go to town to buy some extra food.

Chapter 56

Trip to Final Destination!

Before leaving Tinda we all went through so called "Sanitarnaya Obrabotka", which was a complete hygienic work including baths, shaving men's heads and boiling in hot water certain pieces of our belongings, mostly blankets. Many men gave the chasers plenty problems trying to preserve their precious hairdoes. Among them Lulek Dembitzer who still was cultivating his stylish haircut.

Finally one day when Lulek and I walked along the river bank, we started a polite conversation with Frieda and Ela who happened to walk there also. We spent some time together talking and joking and finding out a little about each other. It was then the first step to our future friendship which eventually ended in close relationship.

On another occasion when I was getting tea for our group I met in the kitchen Nela Kaczkowski, the daughter of the blind profesor Kaczkowski in whose school Anna learned commerce and bookkeeping. They also got deported from Gliniany and also traveled in the same car with Leniowers, also a well known Rosenfeld family from Jaslo, who later on the arrival at final destination were victims of a terrible tragedy.

While in Tinda I spent some time together with Nela Kaczkowski. Also in Tinda my mother didn't feel to well. She even spent couple of days in camp's dispencery in bed. And this was the main reason that mother, father and I left Tinda with the last group of people. Our relatives and friends left long before us and so did Leniowers with their group.

The duty of guarding our people on the way north, was taken over by members of "Komsomol" (Young Communists). Those young men dressed in civilian clothing but armed with guns have had a very low opinion about our people. Evidently they have been taught, that we were enemies of Soviet Union, capitalists, whose only aim was to destroy their socialist system. They listened but didn't believe a word about what we told them about our past and way of life. They were the ones who told us that we will travel north to the Aldan district and that we will spend rest of our lives in Yakutia.

It was already August 1940 when we left Tinda. The last few families got loaded on trucks only with few necessary items. The rest of our bags were put on trucks for baggage only. Also among the last to leave was the blind profesor Kaczkowski and his family. The local militia members had a short conversation with us before we left. One of them noticed my mother's gold engagement ring and admired it thinking probably how rich we were. The other one recalled way back when he served in Poland in Russian czarist army that Poles used to call them "Moscals", which was true, because long time ago the name of the entire country was "Moscva".

One after one trucks all loaded started to leave the Tinda camp, with the Komsomol guard sitting next to the driver. Most of the time the highway was winding up going north and was carved out through heavy forest, made of mixture of stones and clay. I believe this highway was 2000 miles long and ended in Yakutsk, the capital of the territory.

The journey to Aldan took three days and two nights. One of those two nights we slept in a very old church converted to a social hall on hard wooden benches. In the same village we tried to get some food in the local diner but because of our status we have been refused. The locals there look at us as at someone from another planet.

We shared our space on the truck with a Dranch family from Bielsko. Like many other people from Bielsko they mostly spoke German. In a matter of facts Mrs. Dranch could hardly speak Polish. They had two children and with them traveled Mrs. Dranch's two brothers Heinz and Ernst Meisel with his girlfriend Regina Rubinstein whom Ernst Meisel picked-up someplace along the way. Mr. Branch was a pharmacist. Mrs. Dranch tought that she was on a joy ride and suggested that we hang out a sign with Bielsko on it, which I am sure the guard would never allow.

The second family traveling with us was also from Bielsko. At least they spoke Polish. They were Mastbaum-Litwak family and their business was textiles.

Mrs. Litwak was with her daughter Anna and her two Mastbaum sisters and brother Marcel Mastbaum. Also with them was their old mother. Most of the way the old Mrs. Mastbaum was very ill. She couldn't hold her food and something else too. Throwing it up and out both ways. The stink on the truck was terrible and there was no way to take her off the truck to get her clean-up a little.

The only beautiful thing about this journey was the marvelous polar sunset. We tried to have some conversations with people during some rest periods. Some wanted to be sympatetic, so they just shook their heads, but most of them mostly the young ones had "good for you attitude toward us". As the guards they didn't believe a word of what we were telling them.

Finally on the third afternoon few miles away from Aldan we turned west to a small sideroad but still passable for trucks. After couple of miles of driving we arrived in a small village with a gold mine tower and few houses. We didn't stop there but we also passed a rather small hard labor camp closed around with barbed wire and with four tall guard towers.

We continued going in north-western direction and after an hour of more driving we arrived in a large place, which remained me of those towns in western movies. We drove through the other end of this town and finally stoped at an large location with many tents.

We unloaded on a large square piece of land, with many large stones sticking out above the ground. They must to sit there since pre-historic ages. Those tents were standing there on the edge of that small mining community. They called this place Priysk Otkritiy. The word priysk had something to do with gold mining, and Otkritiy ment "Open".

Otkritiy had one wide street like in western movies. All houses there were from wood. On both sides of the streets stood stores, offices, stables and other buildings needed to maintain this community. In the back of those buildings stood living quarters for the population with small potato fields. The only tall building in town was a two story government building , constructed during our stay there with our peoples help.

At the place of our arrival three NKVD officers greeted us with speeches and some harsh words. Our new commandant Okrakov didn't say to much, but the others whose names I no longer remember were rather outspoken. One of them even was so blunt that he didn't hesitate to tell the blind profesor Kaczkowski, that he will die there. Needless to say his prediction materialised some time later. Profesor Kaczkowski never left Siberia.

Another remark from the third officer was directed to all of us. In a loud and firm voice he declared! "Nikakda, nikuda od siudava nye uyedyesh". Which ment: "Don't kid yourself, you will never get out from this place". Well this guy was mistaten. With God's help not all of us, but most of us was able to leave this God forsaken place.

We didn't get any food this particular night, and there was no place in tents to sleep for young people. So we bilt several fires and all of us young ones spent that night sitting around those fires, trying to keep hard awake and not to burn ourselves.

Early in the morning we noticed a long lines of small four wheeler WAGONS pulled by horses, waiting for us to load our stuff for the last leg of our journey. All of us had to walk behind the wagens except profesor Kaczkowski and some real old people. We proceeded on a not so wide road full of large stones and at that time not accesable to trucks. There was a heavy forest on both sides of this road and many different noises could be heard coming out from within. After two or three miles of walking the forest thined considersbly and soon we entered a very large square camp with many barracks and other buildings all around and an empty middle. Most of those wooden buildings later became our living quarters. Just behind them on the outside of the camp there was another gold mine with another tall tower. There were no guards towers in sight. But later we noticed that there were six of them but farther away from camp and never used during our stay there.

This camp was a large labor facility but not rigorous. Two more barracks were under construction to ease overcrowding. Families used to live in those long rooms in spaces according to number of people in one family. Few lucky ones probably for payoffs have been able to obtain small rooms for themselves, and our uncle Ludwik among them.

Inside the camp there was commandant's office and his quarters, administration's offices and quarters for commandant's deputies.. There was also camp's diner and food store, stables, offices of lumber and mining companies and dormitories for volunteers binded by contracts with government.

You can say that all people there were subdued and really mean most of the time. Arguments among them kept breaking out for no reasons at all. For example, as the last arrivals in the camp I was trying to find a small place to unload our few bags. We didn't have much because the baggage truck from Tinda still didn't arrive. Anyway I asked one Mr. Scheinman who with his family also came from Zbaraz if I can camp next to him. I don't wish on nobody to get the hell, he gave it to me, just for asking one lousy question. Just simple "no" would do. I didn't have no intention to take his place away from him.

The name of this place was "Nierendja". I don't have no idea from where this name came and what was the meaning of it. Really it didn't matter. All I know this settlement was deep in Siberian Tayga, and as the things stood then this was the end of the line. As we saw it,, no significant changes will occur in near future, so we should start getting used to the situation and build our new life accordingly.

Those first few days weren't easy at all. I even don't remember if we ate at all or if we recived bread or other food. All I know we were trying to find a place to live. Well! First of all the trucks with our small belongings finally arrived. To our dismay some of our things, mainly a pair of slacks from my graduation brown doublebreasted suit were stolen again. The thief really knew whom to rob. In the same packege we carried aunt Rose's beautiful silver fox stole, which the thief didn't touch. We filed a report but that was all. Who would worry about my last good pair of pants.

Later the same day we finally got a barrack assigned to us. With the assignment came hammer, saw, boards and nails and not so polite request to build our cots (beds). What the three of us (father, mother and I) produced even didn't resemble a bed and could hardly stand up to our weight. Luckily a man showed up who for few Rubles made couple of beds for us large enough to accomodate the three of us.

For some reason we got paired again with our co-riders from Tinda to Nierendja the Dranch family. They also had problems with puting their beds together and we had few misunderstandings with them, mostly with Ernst Meisel who was rude to my mother. At the end Dr. Abend intervened and told Ernst in few chosen words to cut it out and explained to him that my mother wasn't a well person. Mr. Meisel apologized and since then our relations improved to a point that we became next space neighbours in our barrack.

We slept well that particular night. We all were exhausted. Our new wooden beds served us well. After all, some knew tests were due to begin the next day.

Registration, a very important statue in the vast communist governmental machine didn't escape us even in Siberia. Next morning all newcomers were advised to line-up at an open window of one of the barracks in order to register again. We answered several personal questions, and each of us recived a pink colored book called "Raschetnaya knyshka". This book was like a earnings statement book. According with Soviet law all our earnings should have been registered in this book. But none of the official after couple of paydays never paid any attention to this rule. They probably ccvered their own skins for stealing our money. Who would dare to report them.

At the window I met a young man from Lvov. Lerman was his name. For quite a while he tried to convince those Russians that he was an avid communist and former member of communist cells, IN POLAND.

Chapter 57

Nierendja!

Lerman told those Soviet officials all kind of stories hoping that he would get away with an easy job. What he was doing just holding up the line. Those people there with their cool eyes and expresionless faces just seemed to say to Lerman to get off their backs. Later when I learned to know him better I really believed that he was one of them.

This was the last day of freedom from work. Before that time I never really worked. I was walking around the camp trying to get acquainted with some people. I met Nela Kaczkowski again and she told me that because of her knowledge of Russian she was hired to work in accounting office. I guess she learned from her father who also spoke fluent Russian.

I saw Frieda and Ela walking around the camp and I told them the story about us loosing some of our things from the baggage truck. I also noticed for the first time Anna hurrying someplace, probably runing some errands for the family. I noticed then she was much more concerned with the situation then her sisters.

Also on this day a rumor started circulating around the camp, which as turned out later was no rumor at all. The authorities began to round up men for work in an area some miles away. Ofcourse panic struck everybody. People suspected that families would be split forever.

Really it wasn't as bad. It was true as first group of young men left Nierendja to clear up a part of tayga only five or six miles away, nearby Otkritiy. Their first assignment was to build a small camp for more workers to be send there.

In meantime in Nierendja I went out to check on the local food store. The place was stocked up well with all kind of cans and other food items. I think that this was the first day when some people got already their food rations cards. The store was full of people pushing and shoving each other. They didn't know yet about so-called queques the long food lines to stay there until their turn will come. The newcomer approaches the line and ask a question "Khto posledni?" (Who is the last). The last person in line answers "Ya". (Me). Then the newcomer says: "Ya za vami". (I will be behind you). And so it went with each new customer arriving.

So the arguments among our people went on, fighting and calling each others names. To make things even worse the miners who worked on government contracts have been allowed to enter the store without staying in line and purchase whatever they wanted. Later we found out that the whole situation was a put on. The camp administration gave money to those miners to buy food just to show our people how well they live. Later the same miners were obliged to return all that food they bought back to the store. Ofcorse money wasn't their anyway.

My first day at work wasn't hard at all. I performed some chores around the goldmine and went to my barrack after eight hours. I guess all our housing problems developed because of our late arrival and all the better places were already taken (if there was such a thing called better). Our relatives, Balins, Goldsteins and uncle Ludwik have been settled already, and so were Leniowers and their friends.

There was no work for me and my father the next day. Instead with some other men we were chosen to follow the first group who couple of days before went for the special assignment in tayga. I don't remember who went with us. My mother gave us some food, mostly bread, change of clothing and blanket. We said good-by to her not knowing when we will be back and also not knowing what to expect.

Anyway we have been on the march again. We walked on the same road this time back to Otkritiy, and from there we turned left and after walking another couple of miles we came to a place like in the middle of nowhere. The people who came before us cleaned up the area from tall trees and bilt two barracks, one from wood and the second was partialy a tent. It was already late in the evening. There was no time to look around because of the darkness. We were tired anyway. We took over the tent and felt asleep immediatly.

Chapter 58

Special Settlement ~~No~~ No 2!

We were like pioneers from olden days whose assignment was to prepare the place for more arrivals. The first group prepared the place for us. Our job was to build for more arrivals.

This new area was designated as "Spec. Poselok No 2 (Special Settlement). We were the ones to live and work there hoping that in near future we would be reunited with our families left behind in Nierendja.

A narrow road led to this place in tayga. Somewhere in the middle this road split going to the left and right. In first couple of weeks many times we kept choosing the right road walking quite deep into tayga before realising that we walked on the wrong path. The way to our settlement was the path going to the left. But with time this came to pass.

The first pioneers spent their first night under the blue sky. It was very cold but luckily ~~ix~~ it didn't rain. Just imagene a man who first time in his life was forced to cut down a tall tree without seeing it's peak.

So with two so-called buildings and small stream flowing slowly by we started on construction of two more buildings or rather barracks. On my first day at work there I felt sick, weak and lazy. I started to complain in my broken Russian to my Soviet supervisor who even was willing to send me to a doctor in Otkritiy, but I refused and told him that I just needed some rest, and to my surprise he agreed and let me to lay down for ~~hxf~~ half an hour in my tent. So I went inside filling sorry for myself and dreaming about ~~hx~~ the good old days in Cracow. Really I should have been ashamed of myself just looking at my father who kept working without complains.

And so the work went on for another few days until a new group of workers arrived at the settlement. Among them was Lulek Dembitzer, Ernst Meisel and his brother in law the pharmacist Dranch, and also your grandpa Abraham Leniower whom then I didn't know at all. With him came some his friends like Mr. Marmur and Srul Suedwertz, and the lover boy Chaim Brenner with his sister who wanted to marry Anna, and ofcourse to my big surprise uncle Ludwik's nephew Heniek Zimetbaum. I guess they couldn't save him from this predicament.

Little by little and with much pushing forward by our bosses the place ~~xtxart~~ started to look like a small village. Among the tall bushes we bilt a small latrine, and a man who spoke Russian was ~~xxxixxxx~~ assigned a small boggy with ahorse to bring food for us from Otkritiy. Ofcourse we placed our orders and paid for them with our own money even thou we still haven't been paid for our work.

All workers assigned to this Special Settlement No 2 worked for Lumber Transport company. This company had its offices and stables in Otkriyiy, with all kind of small and large wagens (two and four wheelers). On many occasion they used trucks to transport lumber ~~xxx~~ needed in gold mines.

The director of this company was one comrade Doberstein. A German by nationality who claimed the knowledge of German Language. As his life story went on he was many times in trouble with Soviet authorities and spent many years at hard labor camps. As far as we could judge he wasn't allowed to move freely except for Aldan region. His deputy was comrade Zamiatin. A habitual drunk who few months later replaced Doberstein as director who suddenly disappeared. There were other Russian supervisors watching over us but they changed periodicaly.

Our immediate supervisors were the men of the Weintraub family. Before the war in Poland they used to be in lumber business. In the early day of Soviet occupation in Western Ukraine in 1939-40 they went to Soviet Russia but didn't like there and returned to the west. They spoke perfectly Russian which was an asset for them to get the supervisory jobs. Grisha (Hersh) and his father used to be our field supervisors. The other Weintraub an older one and limping was a field supervisor in Nierendja. They also had a mother ofcourse, a younger sister Etka who was a friend of Anna, Frieda and Ela, and an older sister Hanna who married with small children but had almost no relations with her husband who stayed with the family anyway.

Special Settlement No.2!

I always thought of Hanna Weintraub (or whatever her name was) as a dangerous person. I never liked her shifty eyes. I am quite sure that she was some kind of a spy or informer, and I saw her many times in company of NKVD officers.

My father and I shared our tent with Heniek Zimetbaum, Lulek Dembitzer, Those two poor Polish boys from Cracow also taken from Zbaraz and Lerman the young communist, who wanted so much to be one of them. I am quite sure that others lived in this tent. Possibly the two Haber brothers from Cracow.

Overall there were many others. Grandpa Abraham Leniower shared another tent with his friends.

I guess there was already late August or early September. Days in Siberia have been getting shorter and colder. Nigths were real cold. Inside of the tents or barracks we slept on boards fastened to the walls so-called "prichas". Those prichas were also our tables and stools. In the middle of the barrak was standing an iron wood stove. In smaller tents the stove stood near the entrance with the chimney sticking out above the door which really wasn't a door, just an opening boarded at night with boards or old torn blankets. On cold nights each person was obliged to keep an hour watch to keep the fire in stove going.

In front of the barracks large cans filed-up with water were hanging on special wooden racks for our morning comforts to wash up. We used to wash up every day long into below freezing temperatures. As I wrote before a hole in bushes served as a latrine. For a while there was a Russian man who was the construction of the barracks on behalf of the Lumber Company.

Our first task was to cut down half burned short trees in a field about half a mile from the settlement.

There was not a big deal to cut those branches for a persons like Weintraubs. But it was a hard work for me and my father and many more like us. Our tools for that job were a saw and an ax. Our job was to cut those branches to half meter pieces and store them later in a square cubic meter pile. The price for one cubic meter was 10 Rubles. My father an I tried hard to make at least two cubic meters to make the 10 Rubles each. But no matter how much we tried we only produced one cubic meter giving us only 10 Rubles for both of us.

Our supervisor on this job was the old man Weintraub and he didn't help us either with his constant advise and carrying on Yiddish conversation with my father which kept us even more distracted. Weintraub bragged about their successful lumber business in Poland, but the truth was they were struggling all their lives.

At the end of each working day horses pulled wagens picked up our day's work taking them to Otkritiy where they used the wood for heating offices and business in winter.

All this work was going on for few weeks. Many people adjusted to their working conditions, while remembering NKVD's warning about staying there forever.

There was also another category of people who have been poor all their lives. They liked communism and hopes of better life In Soviet Union kept them going.

Our gloom didn't stop the Soviets ~~to~~ FROM sending more men to our settlement. But our situation improved largely when couple of days later a group of young women arrived very late in the evening and settled in a barrack bilt just for them. Suddenly everything around started to look much brighter. I am quite sure that the excitement of the evening kept many of us wide awake late into the night.

Even before settling for good NKVD told us that practicaly we don't have any rights at all. we even couldn't leave the Otkritiy area withput special permission.. We were not allowed to address Soviet citiziens as comrades, and vise-versa. We were instructed to use the word "citizien" while conversing with local people.

As far the high command was concerned we have been instructed to call them by their ranks. For example camp commandant was "Grashdanin Nachalnik" (citizien commandant). Russian word for comrade was "Tovarisch". But we weren't "Tovarisches" of theirs.

Arrival of girls in settlement was a real treat. Finally after a day of hard work we had a place to go in the evening and let all our troubles disapear at least for a while.

The man who was responsible for bringing our food from Otkritiy got caught cheating, working more for himself then our welfare. Thanks to most of the people and with Weintraub's help your grandpa Abraham got the job. They couldn't choose a better man. As days and months went by he proved himself as being devouted to all of us. No matter how cold it was and how far our working places were from the camp he never disappointed us. His sleigh even in a deepest snow pulled by a horse always found us with the hot soup, bread, tea or sometimes even meat. Around noon we always saw his tall canister shining in the sun from faraway. His second round was in the evening after work when he used to bring supper to the settlement. His workday always finished late at night after taking his sleigh and horse back to the stables in Otkritiy.

Many people didn't have money to pay for those meals, but grandpa Abraham paid for them with his own money even thou many of them never paid him back.

This was also the first time when I met Anna in person. All three sisters were very nice young ladies. Very well brought-up., with tender loving care. They were friendly, outgoing, and fun to be around them. No wonder that everybody wanted be friendly with them.

In the beginning I was kind of flirting with Frieda. I even took a small gold ring with a stone from her and lost it later in the waters of the nearby stream. I felt terrible about this predicament and even offered to give Frieda my mothers gold engagement ring but she wouldn't accept. I guess I could call myself a ring killer. I suppose you remember my other ring story which happened to me while I was a student in Lyceum.

Well! Frieda forgave me, and anyway Frieda had her eyes on a very good looking young man who as it seemed at that time liked her too.

While our lives were going down the drain in this Siberian end of the world the war in Western Europe didn't stop. There wasn't to much fighting going on for a moment, but from sketchy news in Soviet press we found out a little about Hitler's and his brutal SS crimes against humanity, mostly on Jews in Poland and elsewhere.

At the times when we were settling down in our new surroundings on September 7 1940 London suffered its first air blitz, and on September 27 Japan joined the Berlin-Rome Axis in the tripartite pact for mutual defense. Anyway Italians didn't have to much success fighting the British, who on December 15 1940 drove them out from Egypt.

After I finally met Anna I was trying hard to create situations so we could be together. First we just set there and talk, nothing special. But the more we talked the more I was falling for her. I knew already then that she was the girl for me. In the beginning I didn't say to much. Anna stroke me as a very sensetive girl and at that point I still couldn't do nothing about her anguish about the happenings of the last few months. Most of the time she kept to herself just trying to be polite. I used to watch her either sitting or lying down on her bunk and curling her hairs around her finger. She still does this when there are problems in the family. My only thought was to stay close and hope that I won't have any competition.

Besides the people I already mentioned it would be very hard for me to remember the many others. With Leniower girls some other women arrived. Among them a relative of the famous Mr. Wistreich who helped Leniowers to get through Lvov while Poles fought the Germans. She was Boba Anisfeld a lawyer by profesion. There were those Fenichel sisters Janette and Mania also from Jaslo. About Mania they used to tell a story how during the cold nights on the transport she kept Chaim Brenner warm under her blanket.

One barrack in the settlement was large and rather long. Many young people used to live there. At first in this barrack was the Yakubovich family. An old father who was an orthodox Jew with long beard and earlocks and who still wore his orthodox clothing. He had three sons. The youngest one was Simon who later became my friend. The other was Moniek and the oldest one was Shmuel who was religious as his father, with a short beard and earlocks and "Tzitzes". Later others came like; Schnalls, Goldbergs, Haars, Harpers, Leon Julie and his father Simon, Izio Messing a good looking young man from Berlin the one on whom Frieda had her eyes. Another good looking boy was a Pole from Poznan (Posen) Leszek Wojciechowski. Rounding up the group was Mr. Wilman, and Mietek Lubelski and another young boy from someplace in Eastern Poland. His name was Gibala. His father used to be a Police chief in this little town. He was the first one arrested when the Red Army arrived. Who knows, maybe they even killed him. Gibala also wasn't aware what happened to his mother. For some reason unknown to nobody he found himself on our transport.

All this moving from Nierendja to settlement took only few days. Finally at the end few more young women arrived. Among them the Kanas sisters Yanka and Irene, Zosia Molik, All from Cracow. The last were Anna Niedziolek with her sister and her ittle daughter, Masne sisters, and Nawalaniec mother and daughter, and also one young Polish woman who in Poland used to be a maid to the Binder family and found herself deported together with them.

There probably were many more people and the mighty Grisha Weintraub presided over all of us. He was the king and the settlement was his castle. He barked orders in his not so good Polish language. If somebody complained he always had some kind of an answer which sounded like: "If you don't like it you can shove it". Mostly he used to show of in presense of girls. It was obvious that he was a Soviet puppet and he enjoyed his role tremendously.

The arrogance of Grisha Weintraub was clearly expressed in the way he was treating those two brothers. Both of them bankers from Germany whom Germans after taking over their bank deported in 1938 to Poland. These people inteligent with high education had in their little fingers more knowledge then 100s of Weintraubs put together. Yet he was pushing them around because they couldn't chop wood. Most of the time they even didn't understand what Weintraub was talking about because they hardly spoke Polish. One of the brothers intervened on their own behalf with Doberstein the head of Lumber-Transport Company who claimed to understand German. I don't know if it was true. All I saw was this German banker talking to him and Doberstein was noding his head not saying a word. I assume that those brothers still had money with them. Really there was no work for them at the settlement so at last they transfered them back to Nierendja.

Mr. Doberstein paid us many visits at the settlement. He spent lots of time there visiting and talking with the older sister of Anna Niedziolek, who with her small daughter left her husband behind in Poland. Nobody knew where. With Doberstein many times came Mr. Karnakow, the chief of Communist party in Otkritiy. Mr. Karnakow was Jewish and in 1936 Stalin's purges was convicted to many years of hard labor in Siberia but later pardoned and released. He was a nice and caring man still with a Jewish soul in him.

Both Doberstein and Karnakow were nice to us. They talked to us a lot, urging everyone of us to accept our new way of life, not to let ourselves down. They told us to keep our minds and bodies clean, not to let a mental depression to take over and keep our living quarters clean.

After first ten days at the settlement we recived permission to go for the weekend to Nierendja and visit with our relatives. Later those weekly visits became an regular occurence until that time came when two new houses were bilt there and our families joined us at the settlement.

We left Saturday afternoon after work and after two hours of marching we arrived in Nierendja.

It was nice to know that our early fears about being separated from our families, didn't materliazed. Only on the surface it looked like we were free moving around in this small area between Nierendja, Otkritiy and the settlement. Well; There was no other choice.

It seemed like forever since we last time saw mother. Father and I were very happy that at least for couple of days were with mother in our so-called new home. And mother was really excited to see us.

While we were away, mother neatly re-aranged our small corner in the barrack. It was nice and clean. She had somebody make shelves on the wall and made for us new strong wooden beds. The authorities also gave us blankets paid later from our earnings. Mother finally recived food ration cards for our family and purchased in the store our share of food. We spent together a pleasant evening, talking all kinds of things over.

I assume that uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose greeted their darling Heniek with open arms, and ofcourse grandma Frances whom I didn't know then yet was very happy to see grandpa Abraham and Frieda, Anna, and Ela.

On Sunday after good night sleep I went to see uncle Ludwik, Goldsteins and Balins. The time was short because in the afternoon we should have started on our way back to the settlement. I met with Lulek Dembitzer, Yanka Kanas and Frieda Komorowski and we walked around Nierendja. I was trying to convince Lulek and Yanka to stay overnight and leave for settlement early in the morning. (Frieda Komorowski never left Nierendja). Anyway they didn't agree and later a large group of people left. Only father and I stayed until Monday morning. I didn't regret because I wanted to be with mother little longer.

We marched with a good speed, but we almost didn't make in time for work. We got lost when we took the right road to the settlement instead of the left. We could hear the voices coming from settlement but we were moving away from them getting deeper into tayga. Finally we realised our mistake and turned back, arriving in camp just in time to go to work. This was the first and the last time we have done this.

In meantime the life at the settlement got more normal with each passing day. All of us got split into many different brigades and assigned to different jobs. For a while we continued to cut those dry-out trees but I couldn't do well there. Really I didn't try to be lazy as some of people thought including Weintraub but I just couldn't get hold of that kind of work. I tried to pair-up with different people leaving father working with somebody else, but to no avail. Once I even paired-up with Ela. She was a very good worker, but this try didn't work either. I only slowed her down.

Besides Weintraub didn't allow me to work with Ela anymore. I hated him because he used to spread bad news about me and my work habits. On another hand he was in love with Ela (not that Ela was in love with him) and wouldn't allow any man to be to close to her, even to work with her. As far as Ela was concerned he was just a much needed necessity of the times. He used his authority as forman to keep people in check, especially me even in matters not conected with work at all. In those early days in settlement he tried very hard to keep me away from Leniower girls.

His first opportunity came when the local lumber yard needed couple of workers. Weintraub sent me there with an older Jewish man, Mr. Hartman with a long beard and short earlocks behind his ears. The man used to drive me nuts with his stories while he was serving with Pilsudski's Legions in world war one.

Anyway the head man in the lumber yard, an old communist gave us a small two wheel wagen and an old skinny horse. Do I look like a man who could handle horses? Ofcourse not. Our job was to supply with the help of this horse the machine there with long lumber logs which in turn cut them into boards. Our old communist boss kept on our backs all day long. Urging us to work faster and more faster, declaring at the end that we are lazy capitalists who don't want to work., and ending our carrier in his lumber yard.

Most of the young women have been assigned to work at the forest as lumberjacks along the men including me. There was this all girls brigade; Anna, Ela, Zosia Molik and Anna Niedziolek cutting those old tall trees down like old experienced lumberjacks. After cutting a tree down each of them have been thoroughly cleaned from all the branches and knotts, and then divided into three meters long pieces, so later they could fit the measurements of walls and cellings in gold mines in order to support them and prevent them from collapsing. As winter approached and heavy snowfall began in order to keep all roads open the lumber company transfered all those girls into the new created road brigade. And again there was your grandma Anna, Ela, Zosia Molik and Anna Niedziolek as the main force of this unit. Ofcourse some other girls joined them, like the layer Boba Anisfeld, but the others just taged along. They used to do maybe half of the work..They were never able to fullfil the quotas the way your grandma Anna and others did. Two men who I know for sure were also members of this brigade were my father and Israel Suedwertz. Those two considering their age also had pretty good record in their effort.

The big wigs used to call our girls "Stahanovchi". The title was awarded to every Soviet worker who excelled in getting over the quotas assigned to him. First to do so was one Russian man Stahanov who accomplished such a feast, and so did our girls. The second category used to be so-called "Udarniki". Acctualy udarnik was a very good student in school, and they also applied this grading system to very good workers.

You could see Stahanov on many posters all over Soviet Union. His name was also included in many slogans concerning work and production which was laging behind since the 1917 communist revolution. The main motto was; "Nada truditsa dla slavy socializma i Sovietskoho Soyuza, dla Stalina i komunistichеskoy party bolshevikovs". (We should work hard for the glory of socialism, Soviet Union, comrade Stalin and Communist Party of Bolsheviks).

Other slogans glorified all the members of the Central Committee and the heroic Red Army.

So we all tried but not as much as our hard working girls. Ofcourse not all of them. Someone not familiar with Soviet politics could think that those girls made lots of money for their effort. Yes; They probably did, but not a lot, just little more then the others, but not enough to make real good living. The same formula applied to native Soviet citiziens.

Being still young many times bad situations, didn't look to bad to us. We kept working, tried to be nice and polite to other people, mostly to our Soviet superiors. But not always could stay this way. Sometimes during those long winter nights months the nightmarish existance seemed unbearable, and made for many people almost impossible to cope.

Besides Weintraub family there were other people at the settlement who wound-up with better jobs. The first one was Mr. Loria from Bielsko, who spoke better German then Polish, but he landed the good job because he knew Russian language since he spent couple of years in Russian POW camp during world war one. His job was keeping tab of working people. There weren't any time clocks in those days in Siberia. But we had two boards hanging on the wall. The "out" board and the "in" board. Mr. Loria's title was "Tabelshtchyk" (a man who keeps tab of people). Each morning people going out to work took from the "in" board a metal "dog tag" with a number and hang it on the "out" board. This process was reversed when we came home from work in the evening. Sick people were required to see a doctor in Otkritiy and bring to Mr. Loria the doctor's work release. But many people stayed behind without seeing the doctor, and with time Mr. Loria lost his control of the situation. To cover his mistakes he started to write his own doctor's releases excusing those people from work, giving all kinds of silly reasons for them being absent. Finally he got fired from this job and sent to work in forest. He was lucky that NKVD didn't prosecute him and later put in jail.

Because of her leg injury suffered few years earlier Frieda wasn't able to perform all that hard work as the others. At the Otkritiy clinic, she presented to the doctors the documents and history of her illness, and after a thorough examination they all agreed that she should be required to do easy or office jobs only.

Such an opportunity presented itself pretty soon. That was the time when Mr. Loria lost his job and without any hesitation the Lumber company gave it to Frieda, ofcourse with the approval of NKVD.

But the satisfaction and good feeling about this new job didn't last to long. Couple of weeks later because of some manipulations and who knows what else was involved, Frieda was relieved from her position and one Anna Litwak the youngest one from the Mastbaum family who came with us to Nierendja on the same truck, and whose grandmother was poluting the air throughout most of the journey replaced her. There was no explanation for this move neither from authorities and even the Mastbaum family, who to us seemed to be such nice people. For time being Frieda was without a job, but later a new brigade for older women was organized to perform some jobs at home, and Frieda became their supervisor.

Another inside job went to Mr. Rzepka, a railroadman from Poland. He was there with his wife who also was a member of the road brigade. When Russians deported them to Siberia, fore some reason they allowed them to leave their children behind.

Mr. Rzepka's job was to sharpen all axes and saws and keep other tools in working condition. It wasn't an easy job but at least he was inside during the long and cold winter. As time went on Mr. Rzepka let himself go down, claiming that he was ill. He spent most of his time in bed, but he never quit working performing all his duties right there on his bed. What can I tell you. It was a mess. He was sleeping there, eating, working and always dressed-up in his old Polish railroad uniform. The quality of his work was getting worse and worse, and we the workers were the sufferers, because of our inferior instruments. Yet all of us Jews had "rahmunes" (pitty) on him and never reported him to supervisors. Even Weintraub kept quiet.

Russians used to have lots of fun with interpretation of the "Rzepka" name. In Russian language Polish word Rzepa means "ass". In English "Rzepa" means "Turnip", so "Rzepka" would be small "Turnip" but for the Russians it ment "small ass". When officers of NKVD used to inspect the camp they never failed to remain Mr. Rzepka that he is "Tcheloviek haroshiy, tolko yego familia nye haroshaya". (This man is all right, just his name is not so nice).

Other man with a good job was the barber Mr. Schlaferman. There was no real barber in Otkritiy so the Russians set him up as their official barber for the population of Otkritiy. Him and his family also enjoyed comfortable living and quarters there.

There were more barbers among the deporties in Nierendja and at the settlement as well. An old religious Jew and his older son, the Harpers used to cut our hair. The old Mr. Harper was also an excelent story teller. His specialty were stories in which good and delicious food was involved. Listening to him people around couldn't help to think about the good old days. Harper's sons also had to work outside like all of us. They also had with them and played some musical instruments. They used to be "klezmers" in their old home town, and from time to time they provided entertainment for us in camp.

But the best jobs available were in the local dinner. They had only two openings. Izio Messing (Frieda's boyfriend) and Gibala the Polish boy without the family used to work there. Couple of times I was sent there to chop wood. The reward: A pretty good diner for nothing.

We had few medical doctors in our special settlers community. Most of them worked in Nierendja. Dr. Abend, uncle of Lulek Dembitzer was the only one we knew. Our settlement had two doctors who really wasn't fond of each other at all

The first one was Dr. Ettinger from Cracow. The other was Dr. Binder. Before they passed Soviet tests they worked in forest like anybody else. As for Dr. Ettinger he tried his best. But Binder was an original "klotz". First of all he was very heavy, and could hardly move around.

Dr. Ettinger's first job after the test was in the Otkritiy clinic. Dr. Binder got the job as our settlement doctor. I don't think that he was a good physician at all, and most of all he didn't care. He never tried and never learned to speak Russian. Even to the authorities he spoke all the time in Polish. A grown man treated by his parents like a little boy who in return responded by calling them "mommy and daddy". Dr. Binder couldn't write his own prescription, leaving this to his father who could write and read Russian. The releases from work because of illness were written by his father as well.

The Binders were the only family who had a maid with them. A luxury in Soviet Union only the high communist eshelon was allowed. Later the maid liberated herself by marrying a Russian and remained in Soviet Union forever.

Dr. Binder made his rounds twice a day. Always holding long speeches,, about who will get a release from work and who will not. He used to have his favored patients whom he obliged regardless how sick they were. He didn't like me, but your grandma Anna was one of his favored people. Another one was the single Polish boy Gibala, who could obtain a release from Binder anytime.

I was once sick with flu, with fever but Binder wouldn't believe me and sent me to the clinic in Otkritiy, where I got a three days release after an examination. For this Binder recived some old-fashioned hell with few chosen words from my father.

To make a long story short, Binder finally was removed from the settlement and sent to work in children's nursery. I think childrens medicine used to be Binder's specialty. But his main specialty was good eating. People walking by the nursery could see him sitting there by the window and eating all the time. For a short time after Binder's transfer a so-called nurse Zofia Fusinski minded the store. And again for a while as in Loria's time everybody could get a release.

Zofia Fusinski because of her charm never had to work hard like other young women. Anyway things changed after Dr. Ettinger arrived. In the one of the two buildings later constructed Dr. Ettinger had his office and apartment. He didn't make any rounds and speeches. Sick people used to see him in his office. In emergencies he visited them in barracks.

Ettinger was a flamboyant man with more compassion then Binder. He realised himself that hard working people like us need little rest from time to time. His parents lived in Nierendja. But his relation with his wife were rather strained. In other words they didn't agree on many subjects. No wonder that he had an love affair with Anna Litwak, much younger then him. Yes the same Anna Litwak who stole the job from Frieda. Well; Anna Litwak thought that a time might come that some day Dr. Ettinger will marry her. But he dumped her after the war in Poland.

There was rumor circulating among our people that Mrs. Ettinger also had a lover on her own. Few of our people used to live in a small barrack in Otkritiy as members of the building brigade. Best paid brigade in the whole area. One Josef Goldstein who was part of this brigade was the man in question. He as he called himself was an artist in international theaters which put bluntly In English and any other language was an artist in Yiddish theater in Warsaw. After the war he emigrated to America and used to write some funny stories to the "Jewish Forward".

The real winter was getting closer and closer. Before the first snow arrived lots of rain fell on our barracks.On days like that we stayed home because there was impossible to work outside. On those rainy days we gathered in girls barrack, talking, singing and remembering good old times.

Girls used to be good to us, especially Leniower girls. Young ladies with heart. anytime they decided to cook some food they shared with us hungry young men. Once they prepared a real treat "Yiddish krepšech" filled with blueberries. this stuff was delicious even thou didn't contain sugar. You see there were lots blueberries and cranberries growing there, right in the middle of the forest. They used to be our main vitamins. People of Otkritiy used to pick them in summer and take them to the local food store. There the store people emptied peoples cans into tremendous large barrels and kept adding sugar to it all summer long. During the long winter they sold the stuff as jam or preserves to the population.

Those rainy days when we didn't work gave me the opportunity to get closer to Anna. But still our relation was on the cooler side. One weekend on the way to settlement from Nierendja I manuvered myself closer to Anna so we could walk together. I think that this walk was my first icebreaker.

With much colder days it was becoming obvious that we won't be able to stay to much longer in our tents or barracks. When it was raining we had as much water inside the tents as outside. In the mornings we had to get dressed before we could wash-up still outside. There was a public bathhouse in Otkritiy but most of the people weren't aware of it. So it was a glorious day when finally one day the building brigade arrived and started to build couple of real houses for us.

While all this was going on,,an ~~xxx~~ escape took place in one of the labor camps in the area. The inmates at those camps were long term prisoners convicted for crimes against the state. One night few of those guys escaped and tried to hide out in our area. We saw them one morning walking around our settlement, but we didn't pay any attention to them. So later at night they paid a visit to one of the men's barracks and stole their warm clothing, some food they found lying around leaving them just covered with skimpy blankets.

Few of us armed with axes in the middle of night went to Otkritiy to report this crime to authorities. There was no way those prisoners could escape from the area. They wandered for few days hungry and sleeping in the forest. The local militia finally tracked them down, even finding the stolen clothing in the woods. There was a testimony from our people and the judge added some more years to their previous sentences.

At last the first building was finished and even thou the rooms inside weren't painted we recived the permission to move in. It took little longer to finish the second building. In ~~xxxx~~ there in a one large room all single working girls were scheduled to live after the completion, the rest of the building were quarters and office for Dr. Ettinger.

We were very happy to get out of the rain and cold, even if the conditions were overcrowded.

My father and I occupied a room together with Heniek Zimetbaum, Lulek Dembitzer, Ernst Meisel and his brother in law Dranch, Isreal Suedwertz and another man from Jaslo Rosenfeld, and some other single men. Also there was the former postmaster from some Polish city Mr. Borowicz and his son and son in law Latawiec. Temporary womens quarters were in the adjoining room. Grandpa Abraham and his friend Marmur and other former Jaslans stayed in another room. All this temporary conditions existed until later time when our families joined us from Nierendja.

This was also the time for the winter clothing being distributed to all working people. Everybody recived a winter jacket lined with cotton called "Fufayka" and pair of warm pants also lined with cotton. We also recived snow boots called "Valanki" made out of stiff pressed wool, a pair of ~~xx~~ gray heavy flanel square rags to roll them around our feet before puting on the "valanki". Next items were heavy hats with flaps to cover our ears and not so warm and strong working gloves.

Because of Weintraub's decision I was the only one who didn't recive the warm snowsuit. His stories about my so-called bad attitude contributed for me not reciving my warm clothing, and the first boots and working clothing after our arrival.

Even my father recived all kind of clothing. As I said before I was the only one excluded. Also some people who managed to skip work most of the time got their warm clothing. And mind you all this wasn't for nothing. Each worker was obliged to pay for all that suff. Not only for clothing but also for the lousy tents and barracks. The treatment I got from Weintraub sending me out to work without proper clothing was illegal even in Soviet Union. The only thing about it was, that I didn't know about this law, and I don't think that Weintraub knew it either. So I wasn't smart enough to protest and open my shy mouth.

Finally on one very cold day, probably the coldest of this early winter we went out to work in the forest, and I dressed up only in my thin rags. But that time it was no possible for me to work and endure, so I informed Weintraub that I was going home. He didn't protest. By then he knew that I was right, because he was cold himself. He was just standing there keeping warm by the fire. Later this day I finally recived my winter clothing. He couldn't refuse it anymore. Somebody else in my place would report him to authorities long time before.

In another of his moves to keep me away from Anna and Leniowers, when opportunity presented itself, Weintraub recomended me, the young communist Lerman and Leon Julie another young man who hang around Frieda and Ela for hard work in new reopened gold mine in Otkritiy. The work hours at that mine were from 2pm to 10pm and the night shift from 10pm to 6am. This way Weintraub was assured that we wouldn't be around in the evenings, when the girls came home from work.

It was a dirty trick to sent us to work there. We couldn't understand why one Jew would do it to another Jew. But soon enough we found out that there were plenty of them like Weintraub in Soviet Union and in Hitler's occupied Europe likewise.

The work in this mine was hard and brutal. The Lerman boy who wanted to show off went to work in the shaft where water was flooding the place all the time. Leon Julie and I were told to get hold of heavy crowbars and clean the tower boards from hard frozen mud.

Well! The three of us didn't last to long there. Maybe couple of weeks. Julie was first to quit. They didn't want him there anyway. I was the second to go. Only Lerman lasted little longer. Even his believes about communism couldn't keep him there longer. Each of us recived 100 Rubles and was told to return to our old jobs. Ofcourse Weintraub wasn't to happy to see us. Leon Julie never overworked himself ~~there~~ anyway. Most of the time he didn't work at all. But his father worked plenty hard for himself and his son.

At last on one of my visits in Nierendja I had the pleasure to meet Mrs. Leniower. (Grandma Frances). This particular weekend the girls and grandpa Abraham couldn't come home. When I saw her first time grandma Frances was still beautiful lady. We had a short conversation and she gave me a small package to take to her family.

One week later I got sick in Nierendja and spent whole week with mother. At that time she lived in much larger new barrack, with much more space for all of us.

Back at the settlement both houses were almost finished, painted and insulated from cold with large patches of moss. Few days later they even instaled electricity with conecting wires from Otkritiy.

We have been paid twice a month. With an advance on fifteenth of the month and balance on the first. Our pay was terribly low even for good workers as Anna and Ela. Hardly to live on. Every working person had a food card. We gave our cards to mother who bought our food in Nierendja.

Most of the time I made 280 Rubles per month before deductions for taxes, clothing and lodging, and finally shortly before Germany attacked Soviet Union we were required to sign up for so-called "Zayom" (Bonds) to prevent as we were told the disaster which happened in Poland. Few days Later Russians faced their own disaster, which cost me 280 Rubles per year.

During a snowy weekend when father and I visited mother in Nierendja, our Soviet benefactors ordered horses pulled sleighs in front of our barracks, where families of workers from Special Settlement No.2 used to live and told us to pack our belongings and move to the just finished buildings there.

People who went this particular weekend weren't informed about this move. So when sleighs arrived in front of our barrack we were kind off surprised. On another hand NKVD was full of surprises anytime. Grandpa Abraham and girls stayed behind in settlement, but came after grandma Frances with transportation provided by stables in Otkritiy. On few minutes notice we packed and loaded our stuff on sleighs and took mother to our place in the forest. Acctually it was a very good day for all of us. Finally the separation of families involved ended.

At that point my relation with Anna was much closer. I loved her more ~~every~~ EACH day, and I felt that we never shall part. All I could do then was to hope for a better life for us in the future. We kept seeing each other every evening, and Weintraub tried very hard to plug any hole possible with me and other young men around Anna, Frieda and Ela. He even went as far as telling grandpa Abraham that if Ela wouldn't talk to him,, he will make sure that grandpa will Loose his job as food provider for the workers of settlement.

Weintraub's favored function was to show-up in girls dormitory in the evenings and with his arrogance to declare that he needs me to go someplace to work the rest of the night unload trucks full of lumber.He kept humiliate me like this many times and I kept hoping that one day I will be able to pay him back. An opportunity presented itself shortly. Really it wasn't what I did to him. It was what he have done to himself. I just helped out a little.

Our lives became somewhat more normal after our families settled in our new homes. Mother, father and I took one wall of the room for ourselves. Ofcourse mother wasn't satisfied, so later we moved to a different wall in the same room, but with cold weather getting worse the nearby window made things even more unberable.In the future when the lumber company transfered many single workers back to Nierendja we finally found an appropriate place on another wall. In those early days we still had in our room Heniek Zimetbaum, Lulek Dembitzer, Ernest Meisel with his girlfriend Rega Rubinstein, Israel Suedwertz with his mother, The Rosenfeld family from Jaslo who just about then lived through a terrible tragedy. There was also this Polish family Borowicz, Izio Messing from Germany, Gibala the favored boy of Dr. Binder, and late arrival Mr. Boczulski from Cracow with his wife an artist who got permission from authorities to teach art in school IN OTKRITIY.

In September-October 1940 as thousands of years before the most holliest Holidays of all Jewish Holidays arrived again, but in much different circumstances. Second year in a row High Holidays spent away from our original homes. Lives torn apart, and millions of our brothers suffering all over Europe.

Residents of the settlement felt sick and depressed. Mostly the religious ones and older folks, some of them real orthodox with long beards and earlocks, still wearing their orthodox clothing.

Few days before Rosh-Hashanah we recived a friendly visit from Mr. Karnakow, the director of Otkritiy who being Jewish understood our situation trying to tell us that praying and missing work on those two days and on Yim-Kipur as well won't be tolrated, and that missing work will be punished with stiff penalties. So we went to work, but the old none working people had their services in one of the larger rooms.

In Nierendja the situation was different. Many people defied the warning and stayed home. Among them two cousins of grandma's Frances brother in law uncle Eisen; Celia and Pola from Auschwitz (Oswiecin) Eisen's home town. They all have been punished with 25% deduction from their pay. The ones who skiped work on Yom-Kipur served short jail sentences.

Back in our settlement Grandpa Abraham and grandma Frances took over the wall in next room to ours vacated by the girls who on Weintraub orders moved to girls dormitory.

Along with Leniowers their friends the Marmurs took over another wall. Other families there were the Klimants with a young son and two daughters Lola and Sala. Lola was already engaged, but didn't know where her fiance was deported while arested with single men. For a while to kill the loneliness she had a short affair with Lulek Dembitzer. The tragic part of her life came later when after amnesty when her fiance finally found her she was critically ill and died in his arms. Her sister Sala used to like very much a young Pole from Poznan (Posen) who with his mother and sister lived in another room. Their father Mr. Klimant used to sit all day long on the edge of his bed not saying a word. Their mother was the brain of this family. Both Lola and Sala most of the time didn't work at all, and Frieda used to be a very good friend of Lola. Rest of the walls in this room have been taken by Fenichels also from Jaslo and the Litwak-Mastbaum family.

Weintraubs ofcourse had a room on their own. For a short period of time Weintraub's older limping brother got himself assigned to our settlement to supervise the lumberjacks. Everybody loved him like a hole in the head. Luckily soon he was reassigned back to Nierendja.

People placed in other rooms were old folks Rosenfelds parents of the young Rosenfelds from our room, Baumrings sister and brother in law of Izio Messing who argued all the time. He kept calling her Miss Messing, Polish families of Wojciechowski and Latawiec, Scheinmans, Julies, Schnalls, Hartmans, Haritans, Haars, Goldbergs, Harpers, Yakuboviches, the Haber brothers, and Chaykievitch and his wife, and many others.

All single girls with or without families lived in the second building. There was also doctors office and apartment. In another small room used to live young couples the Lubelskis and Wilmans with their mother. Later a corner of the dormitory was made to a room when one Miss Nawalaniec gave a birth to a baby. Anna, Frieda and Ela together with Kanas sisters Janka and Irene had a room for themselves, so did Anna Niedziolek with her sister and her sister's daughter. Others in dormitory were Zosia Molik, Chaim Brenner's sister (the guy who wanted to marry Anna), Masne sisters; one ugly and the other very tall with a nice face, Boba Anisfeld and profesional nurse Zofia Fusinska.

This was the situation in our small camp by the end of September. Heavy snow was falling all the time and temperatures ran lower and lower. Each room in both houses had a large iron stove in the middle. Luckily we had plenty of wood to burn. All we had to do was to go out few yards from the house to cut down a tree and then chop it up so it would fit the opening of the stove.

To keep the room hot we kept the fire in stove going day and night. We kept watches all night long, not to let the fire to go out. My parents and I were forced to make special adjustments, because of our space near to the large window. During very cold nights the frost used to settle on this window even on the inside.

Each day there was less daylight, and finally it got to the point that daytime lasted from 9am until 3pm. But no matter how long a day was, work never stop.

The work on the road was hard and brutal. Not only for girls but for men as well. It was important that all roads leading to gold mines be kept open all the time. The surface had to be passable for trucks and horses pulled wagens, which wasn't everything. Our girls also had to build fences from evergreens bushes. First to cut them down and then to set them to keep blowing snow from reaching the roads, and also dig trenches in snow along the roads for the same purpuse. There was no let up all winter long. And after the snow melted damages made by winter had to be repaired all over again. Those poor girls used to come home in the evenings with frostbite noses, cheeks, toes, fingers, and even their behinds. But they worked very hard and endured. Simply there was no time to feel sorry and have a good cry.

Chapter 58 (cont)

Special Settlement No.2!

In late winter when sky was clear and sun shining bright, the white snow caused pain in eyes for most of us. Itching was almost unberable. In those days deep in the Soviet tayga there was no medicine available for this problem. Couple days off lying in a darkened room helped xxxxx somewhat. Also xxxgixxxxx xxxgixxxxxxbxxxxx sunglasses were useful but only for people who still had them from the good days before the war.

Most able men worked in tayga cutting down those large trees. Weintraub still was the supervisor and he assigned to us small parcels of forest (two men per parcel) with the responsibility of cleaning each parcel from all small and large trees.

We used to arrive in forest early in the morning (still dark). Our first chore was to start a large fire going. In the begining we searched for wild animals, even bears, forgeting completly that bears sleep in wintertime. Anyway we never found any animals wild and no wild. Each of us carried a piece of black bread in the pocket trying to keep it close to the body so it would't get frozen. The snow around us was waist deep so we needed small shovels to dig narrow paths to get to the trees. We didn't have electric saws as modern days lumberjacks. We only carried a saw and ax. With the saw we used to make a small cut in the tree as close as possible to the bottom. Even before that it was necessary to estimate the direction in which the tree was leaning. After that using the ax we choped off as much as possible wood around the cut and then proceeded with acctual sawing. Most of the time luck was with us. There were no injuries among us, even thou we had some close calls, when trees sometimes skided in and instead of falling forward landed close to the legs of some people. On one occasion the tree landed between the legs of a man who sliped on the snow without injuring him. On another hand there were few injuries in the forest near Nierendja.

Few times we came across trees so large and wide that five or six men with outstretched arms couldn't embrace them. Once we worked two days to cut through a large wide tree and couldn't make it fall. It was standing there for another two days before wind caused it to fall.

The happiest time of our work day was noon. From faraway we heard the whistle from Otkritiy telling us about lunchtime. Every day at that time grandpa Abraham arrived with his sligh, with hot soup. We gathered around the fire toasting our frozen bread and eating this delicious soup. (Really it wasn't that much delicious). But for a hungry men like us everything xxx tasted delicious. Most of the time it was barley soup (kasha), but once grandpa surprised us with a real potato soup. This was the first time we ate potato soup since we left Westren Ukraine. Each of us ate few portions and grandpa was afraid that he wouldn't have enough soup left for the people at the settlement.

On couple of occasions Weintraub showed some good will toward me and sent me to xxx work with other people to the local bakery. This work wasn't to hard and from time to time we could warm up inside the bakery. While working there we could eat as much bread as possible, but it wasn't allowed to take bread home. One time I even choped wood for the local diner and got to eat a good dinner for free.

My co-workers on days like that used to be Leon Julie, a young boy Haritan and Shmil Zalmen Goldberg. I will have lots more to write about him later. He was a shrewd man, even Weintraub respected him, and was a little afraid of him. The other guy Leo Julie was riding his father's back. His father was a good worker. Back home in Poland they used to own a bakery and I suspect that they had hidden money with them. Anyway Leon Julie almost didn't work at all.

Another young man who made Weintraub very jealous was Bolek Payonk. Son of a socialist who was a senator in Polish senate before the war. He was Polish ofcourse. Weintraub was furious when he even saw this kid talking to Ela. Grandpa Abraham didn't like either seeing Bolek around Ela, so one day he called him aside and asked him to stop seeing Ela.

Grandpa also explained to Payonk about their different religious backgrounds. Really Bolek Payonk was a polite nice young man. Before the war he was a cadet, student in Polish military academy. He understood what Grandpa Abraham ment. Anyway later he was re-called back to Nierendja to join his parents.

Work was hard and at times demanding. Women and men tried their best to make those few Rubles. Some of them made more but at the end they encountered the same problems as the ones who made less. Scales were low and it was very hard to meet ends. Some lucky people got away with murder by not going to work at all and some of them got favored treatment from NKVD brass especially certain young women in Nierendja.

As far as I was concerned Grisha Weintraub was an informer. He made me look bad,, even thou some others were worst then I.

As I said before earnings were low and most people hardly had enough money to purchase their food rations, It was different with grandpa Abraham. These people always could count on the soup, regardless of money.

Families used to be better off then singles, because they recived more food cards, more bread, and if more then one person worked in a family, they had more money to spend.

Let us forget for a while our people in Nierendja and at the special settlement. The Soviet system put together in Otkritiy and thousands other villages all over Siberia a mixture of nationalities with different intelectual backgrounds making them all prisoners working for nothing for the glory of Soviet State.

Most of them worked in tayga cutting down trees and in goldmines. Some of them performed all kind of jobs around Otkritiy. They used to walk freely all over the place all day long, before returning to camp at night. Those were so-called trustees. The other group of trustees, guarded the rest of the prisoners working in mines and forest. All of them armed with rifles, permited to shoot if occasion have arisen.

Many members of the communist high brass there once or twice in their lives have been convicted for crimes against the state and served some kind of a sentence. So no wonder that there was not to much culture in them. It used to be a common thing, that a man working as a miner or in other profesion would get caught doing something wrong, or maybe some other more serious infraction got arrested and returned next day to his regular job, not from his home, but from the labor camp.

The ton and sounds of the beautiful Russian language were distorted. It became rough and full of dirty phrases used all the time, and all over. Being atheistic people insulted God hundred times in course of a conversation, but often in need the same people reversed themselves praising God and asking for his help and forgivness.

Some of our own people who came from bottoms of Jewish population tried hard to adopt to this new system. In it they saw their salvation. Looking at them someone could say that they were happy there in this God forsaken place. They praised the authorities and the system, calling it dear to their hearts.

Once I had a misfortune to work for a week with a group of them. Our job was to load trucks with long logs. To lift one of those logs an effort from three or four men was necessary. When a big shot on a horse came to inspect our work those guys didn't waiste time at all to compliment him, the system and telling him how much they liked overthere. To show him how good they were they kept pushing me away from the work, yelling in Yiddish "gey a veg", meaning "move from here". They wanted to discredit me in front of this man. I managed somehow not to give in.

Other people despite living under Soviet boots created for themselves a silent leadership. Away from the camp commandant and other authorities these men served our people in Nierendja with advice, encouragement and hope.

The leaders of our so-called community were inteligent and profesional men. I don't remember all of them, but one of them Mr. Yarmark was a doctor. Others were Mr. Kanas from Cracow and Mr. Kwapinski, one of the leaders of pre-war Polish Socialist Party. He held the post of mayor, the last one before the war in the industrial city of Lodz. My uncle Ludwik also was a member of this group but kept mostly on the side. Yet they used to come to him for advise many times. Among others colonel Lachowich former aide to General Anders was also in the group and some others.

These people used to have endless discussions among themselves about the situation of our people, about prospects of ever being liberated from Siberia, But Hitler and the war in Western Europe, and Stalin's pact with Hitler were the main topic. They have been closely watched by the local NKVD. And no wonder..Nothing gets away from NKVD. And even in Siberia among our people informers kept their ears wide open.

Mr. Kwapinski became a very close friend of uncle Ludwik. Being older he was not required to perform the hard work. He was there with his wife and daughter. The Kwapinski family was in very bad financial situation, and if not for uncle Ludwik it would be very hard for them to survive.

Once Mr. Kwapinski was involved in a very unpleasant incident, which took place in the camp's food store. He came to the store trying to purchase one item only, hoping to bypass a long line of screaming women. One particular Jewish woman became much to vocal and kept insulting Mr. Kwapinski with some remarks about life in Poland before the war, and there was time for him to forget Poland and his status there before the war. She also used some others choice words which made Mr. Kwapinski furious. He lost his control and slaped the woman on her cheek. Luckily for Mr. Kwapinski uncle Ludwik was in store. First of all speaking in Yiddish somehow was able to calm this woman, and then explained to Mr. Kwapinski that it was below his dignity to get involved in a argument with this woman, who probably represented the lowest group in Nierendja which was sympatetic to communism anyway.

As always, no matter where he was, and in this case it was Siberia, people noticed uncle Ludwik right away and valued and recognized his high qualities and character. As in good times he continued to help people in need, and no wonder even the local communist authorities respected him.

Uncle Ludwik because of his age didn't have a steady job. But the locals thought that because of his honesty he would be a good cashier in the local diner. Uncle Ludwik took the job, because it was a position to be good in during bad times. But as it turned out in Soviet Russia everything was not as normal as in other parts of the world. Well uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose and their nephew Heniek had good meals, but no meal could replace all those headaches who came with this job. In a place like that where food was scarse no good thiefs took advantage of good uncle Ludwik. He knew about them but there was nothing he could do. Other hungry people didn't have money to pay for their meals, so uncle Ludwik as grandpa Abraham was giving them those meals on credit, but wasn't able to collect his money ever. At the end of each month even uncle Ludwik's salary couldn't cover the shortages. So he paid from his own pocket, which used to make aunt Rose furious.

In meantime the population of our settlement went through some traumatic experience, which ended in tragedy. One wall in our room was taken over by young couple Rosenfeld from Jaslo. They had a one or two years old little girl. She was a very nice child and Mrs. Rosenfeld was crazy about her. Shortly after the move from Nierendja this girl became seriously ill. None of us wasn't aware how ill this child was. And even doctors from Otkritiy couldn't pinpoint the diagnose, Our own doctors weren't able to help also. Finally one evening this child passed away in arms of her mother. Mrs. Rosenfeld was histerical and didn't let her child go for couple of days. The whole settlement was devasteted. This little girl was the first victim which Siberia took.Later there were more. Her father burried her in Otkritiy cementary, under hard frozen ground. They had to blast in order to dig out a grave.

Chapter 59

Winter 1940-1941!

Although the whole story is based around the settlement, winter and cold weather also played a very important role in our lives In Siberia.

Living in Soviet Union twenty three years after the October Revolution which supposed to change lives of all its citiziens for better wasn't an easy task not only for us, accustomed to life in much better conditions in capitalist system but also for Russians and other nationalities. For those oppressed by the czars, things didn't get any better. Poverty ruled all over the country, and only the ruling communists and their helpers had all the privileges. People who didn't keep quiet and did not sucumb to the new order disapeared forever or for many long years in the cold snowy Siberian wilderness.

Unfortunatdly for us Stalin and Soviet government put us in the category who didn't sucumb. Besides hard work winter and lack of proper nourishment like vitamins, fruit, vegetables and fat contributed to our misery. Never mind our quarters. We got used to them. There was one food item we couldn't complain about. Even thou in certain periods of time shortages occured, bread seemed to be our main nourishment. Yes bread and hot tea or hot water. The quality wasn't first class, but under the circumstances, nobody complained. This bread was always dark brown (Russian pumpernickel). In order to save flour bakers used to put in it lots of water, and in time bread came into our hands it felt like a heavy clay. No wonder that eating this kind of bread it affected our stomachs in weird ways, if you know what I mean.

Products like butter and sugar were seldom available. We recived them once or twice while there. Many people used to sprinkle little sugar on bread, others remade it into so-called bread kugel. With little sugar in it they pretended eating something similar to chocolate cake. Only once during our stay in Otkritiy we recived one orange per person, a small can of condensed milk and one small can of apricots. Kasha and kasha soup was always available. Few times the local diner served chopped sirloin also with kasha and shchy (cabbage soup), rasolnik (vegetable soup) and uha (fish soup) a Yakut delicacy if preapred the right way. On some occasions the diner served a good breakfest for our heroic hard working girls.

Ofcourse if you didn't have money you didn't eat chopped sirloins in the diner. To our great happiness only once the local food store gave each of us a piece of sausage. We cheerished this piece for a long time, just puting small pieces in our soups.

So as you can see starches dominated our diet. Short time before leaving Siberia a shipment of cabbage and potatos arrived in Otkritiy. For couple of weeks all we ate was cabbage and potatos. We ate cabbage and potato soups and anything else possible, anyone could make from cabbage and potatos. And if some people could make it even fater with few drops of oil the meal was even better. As I remember, we didn't have any oil, but on couple occasions I saw the old Mrs. Suedwertz who had plenty of oil, secretly just not to hurt our feelings put some oil into our pots, while cabbage was cooking. It was very nice and generous of her, and she didn't hurt our feelings.

In order to make easier for us to purchase our food the authorities agreed to open a small store in our settlement. Etka Weintraub ofcourse the sister of Grisha Weintraub got the selling clerk's job. Once a month they used to deliver our food rations to the settlement. Ofcourse bread they delivered daily. For a certain period of time this store was loaded with hundreds cans of crabs. During that time we ate nothing but crabs for breakfest, lunch and dinner. Just looking at them made people nauseated.

Milk was available but only for children and in the main store in Otkritiy. "Poor" Mr. Rosenfeld, who really wasn't poor at all used to go to this store and still recived milk on his dead child's milk card. He was standing there like a beggar asking for milk for the child as long as he could get away with it.

On some winter evenings when there was nothing else to eat my mother always reached for an already almost empty box of cocoa which we brought with us from Zbaraz and used to make for us cocoa with hot water and no sugar, just with a piece of bread. On another occasion during this winter we recived a food package from my father's sister Sala from Lvov. Even thou it was cold the package arrived half spoiled.

No wonder than that food was an often topic of our conversations. People used to prepare delicious dishes in their minds and then pretend to eat them and serve to others.

When better food was available at the diner the place was extra full. All Russians from the village ate there every day anyway and sometimes their wives crowded the take out entrance mostly when diner served blintzes. Inside each table was taken and the same way as lines formed outside a food store to buy food, in the diner lines formed behind the chairs so people could eat their meals..

While I was working in the goldmines, special lunches used to be brought in from the diner for the miners. Everybody at the mine including our people could buy "lepyoshki" (like our doughnats but not as sweet) or pastry, rolls, sausage and other better foods. For Soviet standarts those miners made more money then other workers and still after couple of days had to buy all that food on credit. Most of their money went to buy vodka. When vodka wasn't available they drank cologne..

We ate at the diner mostly on paydays, which means twice a month. Ladies from settlement used to walk there to buy soup or other food and then remake that at home to taste better and last longer.

As important as food were cosmetics, especially for young women. Powder and lipstick could be purchased freely. Plain dark soap without fragrance was easy to obtain. For brushing teeths some kind of powder was avaiable. After they ran out of it we brushed our teeths with plain soap, and also used the same soap as shaving cream. To shave was a real chore because one razor blade had to last for a long time. You could imagene the constant burning sensation on our faces.

There was no way to obtain any kind of clothing. The companies supplied working clothing and on each payday deducted a small fee for it. Sometimes the village store had in stock some cheap flanels or other fabrics for people to buy and later sew their shirts, underwear and other necessary items.

Because Soviet government needed lots of gold they established all over the country so-called "Zolotoskupka magazins" (Gold exchange). In those stores anybody who owned gold could buy items which ordinary citiziens never dreamed about. There were people in our settlement and Nierendja who used to have gold, but were afraid to go to the exchange because of fear of investigation by NKVD.

Once NKVD summoned grandpa Abraham to explain the couple of thousands Rubles sent to the family from Gliniany. This money was their own left there with friends. NKVD later droped this investigation.

Another important problem during those long winter months was to have a bath. Not everybody was able to go to the public bath in Otkritiy. Working people used to stop there once a week on the way from work. Most of the people even didn't have a decent pot to wash-up every day. But thanks to Leniowers who owned a larger baisin and never refused it to nobody our settlers were able to get a good wash-up every week. Ofcourse there always was a waiting list.

Lack of latrine was another problem. The worst time was winter nights and early mornings when people were forced to ran to nearby bushes and expose their behinds to the hard freeze. Finally after a long wait two older men Mr. Fenichel and Mr. Haar volunteered to build a new restroom for us.

The facility was a far cry from a regular restroom. Some people dug out a large hole and those two old men started to put up a structure arguing constantly like two fools. Many times other people had to restrain them from doing harm to each other. It took quite a while before the very popular shack was finally completed.

Needless to say this important facilty didn't last to long. As with any large group of people living together not in so ideal conditions, we encounter elements who even in good times didn't know any better. These characters didn't have a slicest idea about hygiene and sanitary conditions. These people used to do their thing wherever they wanted, ignoring completely the holes in floor. In short time the place became filty and no more useable. Soon that human manure got all frozen, and there was back to forest for the residents of the settlement. When spring came the smell around the settlement became unbearable. The entire facility was demolished and buried deep underground.

November 6th 1940 was the twenty third anniversary of Bolshevik revolution. Anna and her Stahavovchi workers friends were invited by the authorities to the celebration honoring this important day. They all went to the social hall in Otkritiy to listen to all those speeches and praises for Stalin and all other Soviet leaders. All speakers urged the workers to work harder for the glory of communism. A reception followed the village meeting, but the attenders needed money to pay for the goodies. Some people from settlement who had money came to town and bought some piroshki (pastry) for themselves. Later in the evening I met Anna in Otkritiy and we walked home together.

About three or four weeks before the celebration DOBERSTEIN approached us with a proposition to present our own program at the celebration. We agreed and thought that will sing for this occasion some well known to us Polish songs. We all were surprised with Doberstein's idea and deep down in our hearts we didn't believe that Soviet authorities would allow us to sing Polish songs. At the end it turned out that we were right. After all this practicing one day before the holiday Doberstein told us that he ment for us to hold our own celebration at the settlement. Well the anniversary of Bolshevik revolution wasn't our idea of celebrating. As I see it now, maybe there wouldn't be in those days such a bad idea to invite all the residents and have our own sing along.

With all the cold days and hard work 1940 was coming fast to an end. Anna and I used to be more close to each other then never before. I am quite sure that then she liked me a lot and we have been together all the time possible.

Besides my love for her many people liked and respected Anna for her good heart and understanding. She always was on the side of the underdog, and showed people ways how to overcome hardships of labor.

Life in settlement wasn't dull at all. First of all family secrets were hard to keep with families living next to each other, so everybody knew what was cooking in somebody elses pots. Sometimes they used to argue. Sometimes a small discussion expolded into a heated argument, but most of the time they all acted like friends with many things in common.

You can imagene the excitement when one November snowy and cold day Anna Niedziolek's older sister gave birth to a brand new baby boy. Nobody expected this baby in the wilderness. Everybody had a different suggestion on from where the pains came. One man even said that he could understand this lady's predicament, because he because of his ulcer gets this kind of pains all the time. Imagene his surprise after the baby came out. Evidently at the time of the arrest her husband wasn't around and remained behind in Ukraine. Many people in the settlement tried to put the blame on Doberstein because he visited her often, but the span of time was to short to make Doberstein the father of the baby. Later in the same barrack another baby was born to Miss. Nawalaniec. She also became pregnant before coming to Siberia.

The Arrival of the Christmas season was especially hard on the Polish-Catholic families. There was no church to go and no midnight mass. They prayed silently between themselves. There was on another hand no problem to put up a Christmas tree. The nearby forest was full of them. One more beautiful from the other. In our room families involved decorated this tree with ribbons, others donated candles and someone cut out a Bethlehem star and pined it on the top of the tree. For a while they sang those centuries old Polish Christmas carrols and then baked Christmas wafers and according to their traditions broke them between themslves and us. The evening ended with wishing each other good health and strengh to survive.

1941 arrived quiet at the settlement. The NKVD commandant from Nierendja surprised all of us with a visit to wish us a Happy New Year. He also invited people to go with him to Nierendja where a celebration was planed. Few people went with him and told us later that they had real good time. Anna and I didn't feel like to go, so we stayed together with a small group of friends talking, singing and hoping for better future. We played some Russian records on an old record player given to the girls by the authorities.

As before on such occasions when we enjoyed a quiet evening Weintraub the spoiler showed up and sent me and couple of others on a night assignment to Otkritiy. Our job was to unload trucks with logs for the Electric Power Station. But those trucks never arrived. Drivers probably got drunk celebrating New Year. In my heart you could imagene what kind of New Year I wished for Weintraub.

Going into 1941 certain changes took place in our settlement. First of all they dismantled the whole lumberjack brigade. For some of us this development was kind of sad. We finally got used to this work, and our new working place was in the forest just on the other side of the creek across from the settlement. I think this last job as lumberjacks was the first step to the downfall of Weintraub. We began to show some carelessness and evidently Weintraub didn't notice that the cut down trees weren't clean enough from knots and branches.

Many young people from the brigade got sent back to Nierendja to join their families. Among them Heniek Zimetbaum and Lulek Dembitzer who just recovered from a serious illness and wouldn't return anyway. They all joined the lumberjack brigade in Nierendja under the supervision of another Weintraub whom people hated there more then we did the younger Grisha Weintraub. Later WHEN we used to work in goldmines in Otkritiy we could see this brigade coming to work every day from Nierendja and clean the forest across from the mines.

There was no secret that Lulek Dembitzer was in love with Frieda Komorowski, amd everybody thought that she loved him too. So no wonder that it was a big surprise for him and to everybody else when once Frieda Komorowski arrived at the settlement with the NKVD commandant Okrakow.

I remember very well when Lulek told me that Frieda came to visit him. Rumors around both camps circulated for quite a while that Frieda Komorowski daughter of a Polish General Komorowski who fought Germans in Poland with an underground army had an love affair with Okrakow. It was a big shock for Lulek to see them together. I am sure that he was aware of the rumors. Just wasn't strong enough to acknowledge them.

Once I went to Nierendja to visit uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose. Lulek was short of money so he wanted me to ask Frieda to lend him some money. While I was talking with her Okrakow came in to the room and started to ask me all kind of questions. I got really scared and left the dormitory immediatly forgeting all about Lulek's money.

Anyway while Frieda and Okrakow visted the settlement we all had very good time.

The Harper family who used to be klezmers in their hometown in Poland unpacked their instruments and played all kinds of old melodies Jewish and Polish including "Horah" to which Okrakow danced Polka with some girls and with Frieda Komorowski ofcourse.

At that time Lulek finally realised that his relation with Frieda Komorowski was over. Well! To make long story short the relation between Frieda and Okrakow ~~also~~ ended on sauer note, for Okrakow. His superiors at NKVD found out about the affair. It was a disgrace for a ranking NKVD officer to have relation with so-called "enemy of Soviet State". He was fired from his post and removed from NKVD. Later we heard from some people in Nierendja that despite this punishment Okrakow secretly visited Frieda many times at night.

Luckily the whole affair didn't have to much impact on Lulek Dembitzer. Mabe some bruised ego. He was a nice young man and everybody used to like him. Anyway, most of the time he was away from Frieda. While living in the settlement he had a close friendship with Lola Klimant. I am quite sure that she liked him despite the fact that she was engaged to someone who was deported someplace in another labor camp for single people. As I mentioned it before some years later after the amnesty when Lola was very ill, she passed away in this man's arms.

Lola's younger sister Sala was an item with a very good looking Polish young man from Poznan (Posen). He was Leszek Wojciechowski. He was in camp with his mother and sister. This family also had a very hard time to survive. Leszek was the only one who supported them, and as I said before it was very difficult for one person to support family of three. His father was left behind in occupied Poland, and their only thing of value was an expensive foreign made camera, which Okrakow took away from them, on a pretence just to look at it, but he never returned.

Leszek Wojciechowski was an avarage worker, as I was. But Weintraub was afraid to pick on him, and left him alone. As I he figured that there was no point to give the back for nothing. And finally when he gave his back it cost him dearly. He was laid down with an illness for a long time.

Once some of us were transfered to a large goldmine about 5 miles away from home in a place called Turuk. There something came over Leszek. He took a chance on showing supervisors what he could do,, hoping to improve his and his family's situation. The Russians recognised his effort and gave him a chance to go down to a new mine with an excellent miner who wanted to make a bid for glory by reaching a quota never achieved before. Leszek's job was to assist this miner in digging and to cart away the dirt in a wheelbarrow to a designated area. Both of them remained in the mine for 24 hours. Yes they achieved the record and glory, and both became seriously ill. Both never returned to the mines again. Leszek was very ill with pneumonia. Nobody, even doctors expected him to live. But somehow, with God's help and his mother's and other people at the settlement he survived. Few years later he joined the Polish Army, the one organised by Soviet government, and took part in liberation of Poland. Some people saw him after the war, still in uniform with the rank of lieutenant.

While all the able people kept working, Soviet authorities made an offer to parents of young children to send them to school in Aldan, some miles away from Otkritiy. An opportunity was there, because besides learning, kids would get there better food, clothing and better living conditions. On another hand some parents were affraid that their kids would undergo communist indoctrination Some parents the ones who were more brave went along, others balked. As far as the kids were concerned I don't think they liked there. Most of them on one sunny winter day left the school and came home after day long march. As far as the indoctrination was concerned one of those kids who remained in this school for few months is now a very rich lady in New York.

At the risk of boring you, the Weintraub saga continues. The following incident kept most of the settlement in quiet anticipation for couple of hours.

All that happened that particular evening occured before Okrakow's dismissal, during another of his inspections. I don't know who told him; Maybe Weintraub himself, that he was in love with Ela. Anyway at the time of his arrival Okrakow ~~kept~~ suggested not once but quite few times that Weintraub and Ela should get married. Everybody took those hints for joke, but as the evening progressed this joke turned out into a serious situation. Okrakow called in grandpa Abraham, Weintraub and Ela into a room and as a commandant wanted to perform a wedding ceremony. I remember very well standing outside off this room with other people trying to anticipate what will happen next. We couldn't help to believe that all this was for real. Yet; I myself should have had fate in grandpa's Abraham judgement that he would never allow something like this to take place. And besides the whole proposition, Ela didn't like Weintraub at all.

Anyway this incident was the last straw in Weintraub's relation with Ela, and his close relation with Soviet authorities. To make cold winter for Weintraub even colder I thought up of a little story making Weintraub to believe that Ela still likes him, and I told him what he should do to get her back. Sorry but I don't remember any more what I told him to do. Anyway the entire plot backfired in his face. Ela wouldn't speak to him, and he got really mad at me threatening to get back at me. But he never did. He also never bothered me anymore. And I had my revenge.

Many months before in anticipation of opening new mines in Otkritiy area the authorities had as many of our people as possible working to cut down those trees so they could use them to support first the shafts and then the walls and cellings of the mines corridors. But our people did a lousy job cleaning those logs, and Weintraub did a slopy job of checking and accepting the work. Therefore his former friends and bosses handed him an ax, striped him from his former authority over us and told him to go to the forest and clean all those logs from all the knots and branches. And this was Weintraub's job until the day he left Otkritiy.

This also the time of very cold days and nights. Even with a very strong fire going on for 24 hours we still could feel chill in the rooms. Since the initial heavy snowfall in September and October it didn't snow to much anymore, only occasional fall from time to time. But the cold air was terrible mostly in the mornings and at the time of coming home from work.

The coldest spot in the area was on the opposite side of Otkritiy. Anyone who passed there without covered face could clearly feel as their noses and faces got frozen. To prevent any frozen part of your body to freeze permanently the only effective way was to rub the affected area with snow as hard as possible. Example: On one occasion during work on a stretch of a road, Ela needed to make a trip to the bushes. While being there she almost got frozen to death. With a very weak voice she finally was able to call her friends who helped her to overcame her dilema. (With rubing hard with snow).

Evening hours for those of us who didn't work nights were reserved for relaxation and conversations. Everybody had something to say. Some kept talking about the good old days, and others had a tendency to talk about their accomplishments at work. The way those people acted like they would feel enthusiastic about the whole thing. About themselves performing a great deed for the Soviet Union.. They really liked their jobs, freezing outhere in wind and snow. Personally I thought this kind of an attitude was disgusting.

The best attitude I think was the one of Lulek Dembitzer. He used to tell us stories. Not necessary true stories, but interesting stories with lots of imagination, and many of them were really funny. As I still remember the best was about Lulek himself and his two friends driving a car all around Cracow in reverse.

Winter 1940-1941! (REMEMBERING OLD STORIES)

Leniower girls used to tell us all kind of stories funny and serious about their lives in Brzyście. We found out that no matter how sick they were until Frieda's leg incident they never went to hospital. For example when Frieda was 10 years old she had a severe case of pneumonia. Doctors came from all over and none of them saw chance for her to survive. Finally grandpa Abraham went to see the local Rabbi to ask him to pray for Frieda, and this Rabbi told him to go and see this man in the village who wasn't a doctor but as the peasants used to say had some knowledge of medicine and certain powers. This man put leaches on Frieda's back, and those leaches sucked out her bad blood. She regained her consciousness and soon recovered completely.

On another occasion when Ela was 12 years old she got ill with scarlet fever. Even thou this disease was contageous, grandma Frances kept her home, and sent Frieda and Anna to their grandmother in Tuchow.

Among many other predicaments , there was this almost rail accident, when the entire family all dressed up went to see some show at the Nieglowice refinery. After the show Anna and Frieda went to a nearby store to buy some candies. On their way back they tried to cross a railroad crossing under the gate, noticing the fast approaching train almost in the last minute. You can imagine grandma Frances' reaction.

There were also some river incidents which finished with all three girls being grounded for a long time.

Grandma Frances would never let them swimm in the river. Once was to hot, and other times was to cold. They would stay there and watch their friends swimm, but couldn't break grandma Francis. Once a comical situation occured when girls friend Rose Reis was stuffing herself with blueberries and kept jumping for fun into the river. It was a cold day and Rose was shivering like a leaf, but was jumping anyway to show how brave she was. Anna, Frieda and Ela wanted very much to jump too, but not such luck with grandma Frances standing by.

A very serious situation developed when in early spring our girls went to pick river flowers growing on the banks of River Ropa. The banks there were stiff, and when one of them reached for those flowers she found herself halfway in the cold waters of Ropa. It took much effort for the other two to pull the victim out. It was another situation of blaming each other, the maid Aniela got her scolding, and another grounding for girls.

Among many guests who used to come to Brzyście an often visitor was grandma France' cousin Mandel Blut. He was a communist an later got killed in the Spanish civil war but his visits were for a different purpuse. Not just to inquire how his cousins Abraham and Frances were getting along. His visits were simply political. He tried to stir-up the peasants telling them not to work for grandpa Abraham. Finally grandpa forbid him to ever come to Brzyście.

Besides the good and fun and good fortune Brzyście also brought sadness and many unpleasant things because of illness and other incidents. No wonder That close family and many friends of Leniowers urged them to leave Brzyście and move to Jasło. Well as we already know they did after an opportunity presented itself.

As for me I also took part in those debates and story tellings. For some reason I don't remember anymore what I was telling them at that time. All I remember my craving after ice-cream. Maybe because of the closeness of North Pole I was thinking about the first ever ice-cream on the stick sold in Poland which was called "Pinguin." Many times also came to my mind the delicious "Italian ice-cream sold in Poland under the name "Gelateria Italiana."

And so the life went on. Despite the misery and hardships I am quite sure that 99% of all the deportees always thought positive and were convinced that sooner or later we all would come out of this cold and snowy Siberian mess.

Winter 1940-1941!

News from the outside world haven't been encouraging. We depended on Soviet news media, which haven't been accurate and because of Soviet- German pact were pro-German.

Hitler continued with his mastery over Europe, and as it seemed then nobody could do nothing about it. United States tried to help and finally March 11 1941 Congress passed "Lending Lease Act" by one vote giving the President power to provide all-out aid to Britain and other enemies of Axis powers. Also in March British navy finally won a decisive battle with Italian navy at Cape Matapan gaining supremacy in the Mediterranean. But this victory didn't stop Hitler from taking Greece and Yugoslavia, Still guerrila resistance continued in those countries.

Back at the settlement after disbanding the lumberjack brigade, the road brigade got expanded because of the need of more people to serve the snowy roads.

Then early in 1941 our good friend the Jewish party leader in Otkritiy Karnakow was transfered to another post away from Otkritiy. His place took the horse riding Balahnin, a man with rather mean attitude. His wife was a mining engineer and was handed a job of a chief director of a newly opened goldmine in Otkritiy. Also at that time the head man of the Lumber transporting company suddenly disapeared, and nobody saw him again. His job went to his deputy Zamiatin, a man with plain Soviet worker's personality and a habitual drunk. The supervisor of the road brigade was Makarow who tried hard to be on friendly terms with our people. He even visited us on Sundays at the settlement with his daughter who used to be kind off "Kooko". Her idea of fun was to run around and raise girls skirts.

For some reason Makarow got replaced by Giergel. A man of German ancestry who served a long prison term at the local labor camp. Giergel was a trustee, a man who could walk around the village freely, he also had a family somewhere in Soviet Union. Another victim of Stalin's purges.

Well Giergel was also good to our people, but still was responsible to local authorities. As with Weintraub with him was the same old story. Any times day or night when workers were needed he used to come to camp to get them. At least he pick them at random without any privileges for certain people.

Giergel also organised two other brigades to work at the local Power and Light Station. One brigade was the Meisel brigade and the other was Wilaman brigade. I was a member of Meisel brigade the so-called "weaker". The other was much better composed of older people but who knew how to apply some kind of system which gave them better results. Our job was to get enough wood necessary to run the station. There were eight men in each brigade. Each member had a job assigned to him. Two most important men in each brigade were the ones who operated the electric machine and the ones who pushed the logs under the saw. The rest of the brigades carried the cut wood to an iron cart on rail tracks. Another man was loading the cart with wood and then pushed it toward the station. All it seemed easy but really it was very hard work. The trick was to keep the station going. Any interruption could cause the station to stop which in turn would stop the mines and leave Otkritiy without light.

Once they offered this job to my father. It was very hard on him. He was forced to quit after two days. If not for help from some young people the power station would stop for sure. After this unpleasant experience father went back to road brigade.

Our two brigades worked there for couple of months. The hard work was even harder at night, not only because of bitter cold, but because of lack of bright lights.

Not far away from the station on the other side of the road was standing a small hut. There we used to wait for those trucks to come to be unloaded.

Lots of times we just sat there, waiting ~~and~~ But those trucks never came. The same hut also served as a special working place for older men, At first this job seemed easy for an older man to perform. It was a sit-down work. The purpose of this work was to make special cut pieces of wood into chips. Each man ~~there~~ was sitting there with an ax in his hand and kept choping. But to do that all day long those men needed extra strong arms, which they didn't have. Without adequate strengh they have been forced to quit.

Those chips were used to replace gasoline in many trucks. Each of those trucks had attached two containers, shaped like water heaters on both sides of driver's cabin. The heat from the burning chips inside of those containers gave those trucks enough power to move in cold weather and snowy roads.

There were few couples at the settlement,, I mean young couples, but none of them had a relation like Anna and I. In those days I loved her more each day, and I was beginning to be quite sure that she loves me too. We spent all our free time together and as far as I was concerned we would never xxxxxxx separate. I think that many other people in camp felt the same way about us. Being with Anna helped me a lot to overcome those terrible days, because I always kept this in my mind how happy I will be in the evening together with her again.

On the other side of Otkritiy few miles away from our settlement some large labor camps for dangerous prisoners were located. People who robed our camp earlier came from those camps. Their main job was to keep cleaning the tayga around Otkritiy. None of those prisoners worked in goldmines.

The road brigade from the settlement worked and kept those roads around camps open for all kind vehicles needed to reach those camps and to transport cut down lumber from the forest.

The distance and cold weather never stoped Grandpa Abraham to make this route daily and deliver hot food to the hard working people. It wasn't easy for him also, but he kept going.

Once on an evening run when he was bringing soup for supper to the settlement, half a way from the destination, for some reason his horse left the road and pulling the sleigh with the large can of soup on it finally stoped in deep snow. He (the horse) wouldn't move an inch, and grandpa couldn't make him to go back to the road. Evidently the tired horse felt good and worm in the snow. People on the way home from work stoped and tried to help, but the stuborn horse refused to move. More people came from camp ready to help but to no avail. The horse still was standing put in the deep snow. Grandpa unhitched him, hoping that he will move without sleigh. Still not such luck. Our greatest worry was the statue in Soviet law that if any harm would happen to horse or any other working animal was punishable with 10 years sentence in prison or labor camp.. Well! How ~~and~~ tell all this to the horse. It was getting late and dark and the horse was still in snow. Nobody had nerve enough to go to the stables and report the incident. Maybe it would help, but on another hand it might mean more trouble for grandpa Abraham.

Finally late at night when gloom settled all over the settlement, without any pushing or coaching the horse came out from the snow like nothing ever happened. Grandpa hitched him back to the sleigh and drove back to the stable. The family and other people at the settlement finally could relax, but many went to sleep without supper.

In February 1941 some young people from camp near Aldan came to spent a night in our camp after being released from serving a term in one of those hard core camps, for refusing to work. Instead to work they kept dancing around the fire. They continued with their act even in labor camp but after spending few nights in punishment cells they gave up their protest and completed their sentences.

My mother always being a person who couldn't sit still, always wanted to go to Otritiy to find out about the diner and food store. But not having any winter clothing, it wasn't possible for her to make the few miles walk.

Frieda helped out my mother on one very nice winter day. She let mother have her winter outfit completely with fufayka (jacket), pants and valanki (snowboots). Somebody else gave mother a winter cap, so she was on her way to Otkritiy. This particular day was my morning shift at the electrical saw. I noticed from far away somebody walking toward the village. Dressed in those winter outfits everybody looked alike especially from a distance. I never would realise that this was mother if she wouldn't tell me about in the evening.

Anyway since then mother made many more trips like that to Otkritiy, to the store, diner, and to Russian's homes living in Otkritiy to sell to them some of our clothing. Later many other ladies went with her.

The two guys Tadek Gibala and Izio Messing had the best "go" working in the diner. Gibala used to hang around Zosia Molik. Although she was much older then him, she tolerated him because of the good things he used to bring her from the diner. Izio Messing on another hand had his sister and brother in law Mr.& Mrs. Baumring who lived with each other like dog and cat to think about. After each of their arguments he used to call her by her maiden name "Miss Messing".

Izio Messing kept hanging around Frieda, but as I saw it not with his whole heart. Once he invited her and served her a nice dinner at his bunk, which was next to ours. I watched him closely all the time. It was something about him I could never figure out. With his good looks he attracted many young women, but it seemed to me he always was rather cool toward them.

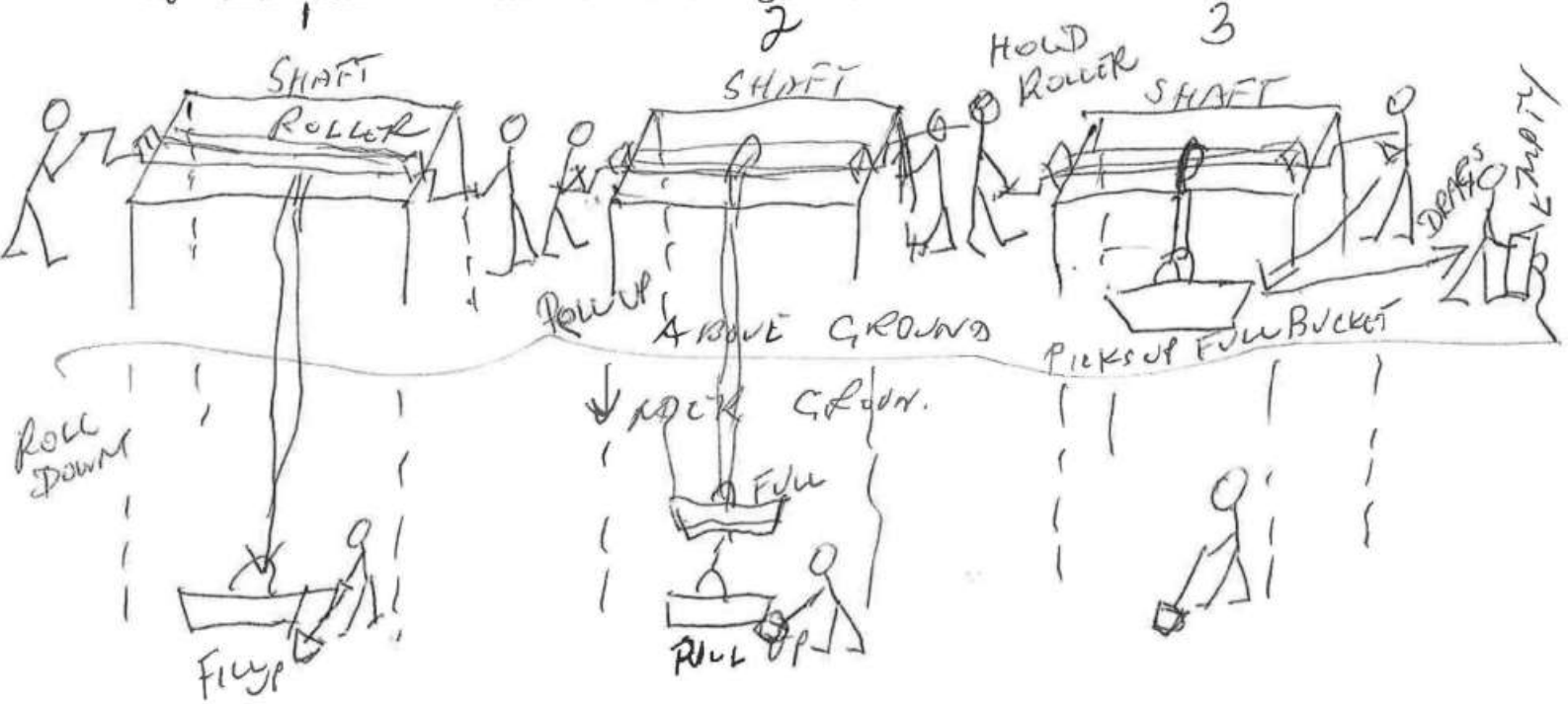
When the time came to open the new mines in Otkritiy, the authorities removed our two brigades from the Electric Power Station, and most of our able men were sent to work in the mines. As always there were few lucky ones who didn't endure this newest misery. As on previous occasions I was among the perennial victims. Nothing have changed. If there was no Weintraub some other big shot came along, but at least he was one of them, a Russian, and we didn't expect anything good from them. And as before the same group of people who never worked, got away from this new adventure again.

The new mine was located near the road from Otkritiy to settlement. At least the walk to and from work wasn't long. Eventually we made a small path across the tayga which made the settlement only few minutes away.

We were divided into three shifts and assigned to different miners at each shift. To begin with they started to dig six separate shafts. The day shift began at 6am until 2pm. The afternoon shift ran from 2pm until 10pm, and the night shift was from 10pm until 6am. We alternated all the time, which ment that every two weeks I was working the day shift. This ment that for two weeks each month I almost didn't see Anna at all. Sometimes when I finished at 10pm I was able still to catch her before she went to sleep.

With our new assignment at the mines, we heard more pep talk from our shift masters them ever before. To produce lots of gold was very important to Soviet government. We used to have many meetings with political leaders, who emphasised the meaning of gold to the country and communism. They urged us to make quotas and over for the glory of the party and working class. The whole thing was tied closely to the five years plans, which the Soviet government and party adopted at the time when they won the revolution. Throughout the years of Soviet reign the five years plan was always a failure and never reached its potential. Another gimmiks connected with the plan were so-called "Subotniks", which ment that workers were obliged to give up their days off on Sundays, and work for the Motherland one day for without pay, few times during the year. I remember once how bad I felt when Anna and her road brigade got send out for 10 days to perform some work elsewhere. Lulek Dembitzer went on Sunday to visit his then girlfriend Lola Klimant, but I was forced to stay behind because of the lousy Subotnik. I had to work for nothing this particular Sunday.

My first shift at the mine was night shift.



I have been assigned to a miner, who was digging downward, pretty deep. In those days our main concern was to get the dirt out and dispose it around the shaft outside. The ilustration above, shows the entire operation.

The man on the bottom of the shaft (miner's helper), usually a prisoner from the nearby camp used to fill-up heavy iron bucket with dirt. I and another man on the top, rolled the full bucket up to the top hanging on a thick rope. When the bucket reached just above the shaft's opening, one of us with all strengh was holding on to the roller handle and the other tried to pull the bucket from shaft's opening, hoping not to slip on the frozen ground. Bucket secured on the ground have been taken away few feet and emptied.

This operation continued for full eight hours. It wasn't easy. One wrong move on this frozen ground could cause a disaster, which occured once, when a bucket sliped out from one Russian prisoner's hands and went down the shaft killing another prisoner who was standing below.

As time passed by, the mines kept expanding in all directions with long corridors, connecting the six original shafts. A tall wooden tower was erected, with a conveyer to process the dirt, which after washing and purification, turned to clean shiny gold. A man in charge of this operation, decided once to take some pure gold for himself. What was so ironic about the entire situation, was that the guards who caught him were the trustee prisoners from the labor camp. He was arrested and convicted and then returned to his old job, as a prisoner.

While production of gold intensified, our people, including myself were send down the mine to perform harder more hazardous jobs. Pushing wheelbarrows loaded with dirt to the tune of miner's voice yelling "faster, faster" all the time was most common. Other jobs included carrying heavy lumber on our backs, helping miners digg, or stop the onpouring water from an underground well.

To stop water coming through the walls miners used sponges made of small pine tree bushes. They looked like small pon-pons tied together with thin soft flexible pine sticks. They used to call them "putchki". To make those putchki the mine leadership created an older women brigade, who worked at home, right at their bunks, sitting down all the time.

This new jobs gave a chance to our mothers, wives and old men to make some extra money.

Frieda became the new supervisor of the "putchki" brigade. Since she lost her job to Hanka Litwak, she was unemployed. This new opportunity was just perfect for her. The rest of us working people were responsible for bringing the pines for our relatives. So after day working on our regular jobs, in the evening we used to go to the nearby forest and cut it for our ladies enough pines necessary for the next day of work.

Each day an old Russian man came with his large sleigh to pick-up previous day's work and then delivered it to the mine. All those women didn't make it to easy for Frieda. They couldn't understand why their work wasn't picked-up daily. Even the large sleigh couldn't carry all the "putchkis" made daily. After some thinking Frieda finally worked out a plan so everybody could be happy.

Meanwhile the work at the mines became harder and more demanding. The size of the mines grew and so the workload. Some of us used to work under the shift master Falun. He was an old communist and hated our guts. He never stop preaching about the glory of communism and never failed to point out to us how decay the capitalist world was in his dirty and insulting way of speaking.

I used to come out from below all covered with dirt and my work clothing shined from particles which resembled gold. No wonder that an idea to get away from the mine and Falun started to shape in my mind.

Also at that time another man achieved a breakthrough with communist authorities concerning his job. Mr. Asch from Warsaw was a chauffeur. As all of us he was forced to work hard on all kind of jobs, but he was aware that Russians didn't have enough truck drivers available, so he didn't stop trying, even thou he realized that he wasn't a free man in accordance with Soviet law. I guess a decision finally was reached at higher levels to assign Mr. Asch to a truck, which made him and his family very happy. An old Polish proverb used to say; XXXXXXXXXX "Show a man one finger and right away he wants whole hand". And so was with Mr.XXXX Asch. He felt very important at his new job. He was the only one among those Russian drivers who anytime he saw us walking from our jobs home he almost all the time refused to let us board his truck, to make easier on us after hard day's work.

So far I mentioned and wrote about many people at the settlement and Nierendja, but I completely forgat about a young woman from Cracow Regina Kremnitzer. Regina was an orphan since her childhood. She always felt alone, even with so many people around her. Everybody especially girls tried hard to be helpful and friendly with her. For time being she used work with the road brigade and later on some other jobs. Few years later Regina went through some emotional experience about which I will write at the proper time.

Despite the dangerous work at the mines, wages didn't change for us. By Soviet standards the miners made good money, but not enough to last them from one payday to another. Our standard wage even at the mine was 10.28 Rubles per day. The only ones who xxxxxxx sometimes made more money were our girls from the road brigade.

Keeping the above in mind I developed a plan how to get out from night shifts and maybe from the mine forever. The second part wouldn't be easy to achieve because only our NKVD bosses had the power to transfer us from one job to another.

On one very cold night in March 1941 I worked with other two men bringing those iron buckets loaded with dirt out of the mine. I didn't feel like to work at all, and was very upset with myself. An idea stroke me then that there was no better time then present to make good on my plan. I told those two men that I was sick. I went to the office and told our shift master Falun the same story. He wasn't to happy about my announsment but there was nothing he could do.

Before I lay down on the bench Falun remained me, that a plain release from doctor don't mean nothing to him. A new law in Soviet Union adapted at that time stated that an ill worker needed to bring from doctor so-called buletin, with explanation of the illness and other remarks. Those remarks were intended to help the leadership of all enterprises in Soviet Union to determine if this sick or ill worker was entitled to recive sick pay.

So I played sick for the rest of the night. In the morning I went home, trying to get some real sleep. But I couldn't. I started to worry what would happen if Dr. Ettinger wouldn't give me the paper. I knew he wouldn't give me a buletin, but my aim was to get release from the mine.

I saw Dr. Ettinger later in the afternoon and I explained to him my right eye problem, being blind since my birth, and that it was difficult for me to work at night. For awhile an idea stroke me that if Ettinger wouldn't give me this paper I might wind-up in a prison camp.

Still Dr. Ettinger was a Jew with heart. I don't know if he believed me or not. Without one word he gave me a statement saying that I was not able to perform nightime jobs because of poor sight therefore I should be assiged to daytime jobs only.

I didn't go anymore to my night shift. Next morning I presented my doctor's release to Mrs. Balahnina and was sent to the day supervisor to do some variety jobs on the ground from 6am to 2pm. I didn't get rid of the mine but I gained daytime employment for the same 10.28 Rubles, not as dangerous and hard as before and free evenings with Anna.

March came around and people began to think about spring. But Siberian spring was still like middle of hard winter. Days got little longer, but this didn't stop our water hole in a nearby stream to freeze all over again. Before we were able to break the ice we used snow for our drinking water.

Rheindeers looking for their feed at night used to come close to our settlement digging in snow for moss. I myself saw them few times standing there and staring at me. This was the time of year when they were easy to catch and kill. Rheindeer meat was sold in the local store and once we recived it on our rations cards.

Another daily feature, was a smiling Yakut walking every day from a village deep in the tayga to Otkritiy Post Office to pick-up his villagers mail. He never said a word to us. Just kept smiling.

After Okrakow's dismissal because of his affair with Frieda Komorowski, one of his deputies took over his job as a commandant. Nothing changed. The daily routine was the same as before. To replace the deputy NKVD sent another young officer. I don't remember his name, but he was the only NKVD officer I knew with some heart and human feelings. He couldn't do to much for us, but at least he was nice and tried to understand our predicament. He was willing to listen, and this ment a lot. He was like a country boy who came out from his village to make a good and happy life for himself under communism. We named him "Macius", a Polish name which really fitted his personality.

The relation between my father and my mother was the same as in good times. As before the war he didn't talk to much. Not once it was hard for him to get up in the morning and go to work, but he never complained and went anyway. Quietly he performed his duties and never had problems with his supervisors. He seemed to enjoy Israel Suedwert's company. They worked together and walked to and back from work together. He also used to have cordial relations with other people living at the settlement.

Even thou spring was just around the ~~xxxxxx~~ corner cold wintry days and nights still didn't let down. On weekends we still had to make sure that we have plenty of wood on hand to keep warm. For this purpus we used to cut down trees around the settlement, then saw them and chopped them into small pieces. to bring all that wood to camp the Lumber company from Otkritiy loaned to us a sleigh and a horse. Your aunt Ela was the driver. You should see her handling this horse, like a profesional. Lots of work was involved, but we had lots of fun doing this.

Many times circumstances forced us to live without bread for few days. Once they kept repairing the oven in the bakery. On another occasion they ran out of flour. Ofcourse there always was another excuse. Sometimes on days like that I used to go to Nierendja, hoping to get some bread overthere.

When possible uncle Ludwik always made sure that I got some bread. He also treated me to a nice dinner in the diner. He still stuck to his old habits from Cracow by sliping in my hand 5 Rubles and telling me to go and buy something. But what could I buy in Nierendja, and for that matter even in Otkritiy.

Shortage of bread hit Nierendja few times also. So on such occasion they used to sent Bumek Goldstein to come to the settlement in hope to obtain some bread from us.

To demonstrate to you how fast anybody could fall from the pedestal quickly in Soviet Union, without given reason at all; read the story of our neighbour in the room. Mr.& Mrs. Boczulski used to be a very nice couple from Cracow. Him and I could sit and talk for hours about Cracow. It's streets, parks, historic buildings and the charm and beauty of this city. Mr. Boczulski was very interested in those things, because he was an artist painter, and his specialty were treasurers of history. He was also one of those people among us who had an easy job. So to speak in his own profesion. His employer was the school in Otkritiy. He not only taught kids how to draw, but also painted their official propaganda posters. ~~XXXXX~~ Him and his wife enjoyed pretty good life there. He even used to dine with the local teachers in school cafeteria. All this came to an abrupt end when one morning the principal told Mr. Boczulski that his services as an artist painter were no longer required, but if he wish he could continue to work there as school janitor. It was a tremendous shock for Mr. Boczulski, but really he didn't have no choice. Insted to go to work on the snowy roads or in mines he accepted janitor's job.

April arrived, still with plenty of snow on the ground. Yet we felt that spring was just around the corner. Days got longer, sun was much highier and at noon the air felt real warm. In forest in places with less snow we could see blueberries and cranberries blooming. In the village store they already put up new barrels to store those berries and conserve them for next winter.

Snow kept melting on the roof of our house, and water began to leak to our rooms. Another neighbour of ours MR. Borowicz who was there with his wife, AND son ~~in~~ my age, and small daughter, and another married daughter, decided to plug the leak. In peacetime before the war Mr. Borowicz was a postmaster in some larger city in Poland. Only thing left from his old glory was a leather belt he used to wear with his postmaster's uniform, which he was forced to sell to a Russian because of lack of money. So Mr. Borowicz claimed up a tall ladder and tried to find those holes in the roof. Instead he sliped and fell all the way to the ground. Luckily he didn't break any bones but got left with plenty of bruises. He spent quite a while in bed. Later while recuperating he made some extra money by making for people new more comfortable bunks. As you can see our people didn't expect any changes and tried to,prepare for more comfortable and easier future.

~~XX~~ Expecting lots of water from the melting snow our daytime brigade at the mines was busy digging small canals to keep water from flooding the mines. Acctualy we didn't digg, we were blasting the hard frozen ground with dynamite.

Winter 1940-1941!

Once on a beautiful and warm day, whem we cleaned deep canals from ice and snow, one of the Fenichel girls REMOVED all her warm clothing and striped to her underwear, and continued to work in this fashion. It was pleasant to work with sun shining so bright. But on another hand the warm sun and white snow used to make a mess from our eyes. We all went through this. Because of lack of sunglasses the only medicine was to lie in bed in darkened room, or cover the head with any kind of covers.

I liked to work very much around the power station. My job there was the same, to make small canals to divert water from the main building. The station stood next to the road. I was there every day at 6am. At 7.30pm I could see all our people from settlement going to work, and among them Anna. We always took couple of minutes to have a short conversation.

Because of the melting snow water was flowing all over the place. The road from settlement to Otkritiy was going down hill, and for few days changed to a proportion of a large stream. Our legs up to knees were submerged in water. For many people mostly women there was quite a task to walk home.

For Anna and other men and women working with the road brigade this was a very difficult period. Small dams and bridges got destroyed by onrushing waters, and they all were on call day and night. I re-call a time when they came home from work one afternoon and after an hour rest they went back to work. My father also was in the mist of this rush. Everyone of them was very tired. Girls cried, men kept complaining, but to no avail. As always roads had to be kept open, and no effort was spared to keep them that way. At one time they worked two days without stoping.

Yet with all that nightmare around us, there was a pleasure to see snow disapear, and see the wonders of nature right there under the small bushes. Ripe blueberries and cranberries were already there. Ready to pick and eat.

In meantime the work at the goldmine in Otkritiy slowed down and many workers including our people got sent to a much larger mine five miles away in a village called Turuk. This mine was more mechanised, but still most of the work was done by hands. The conveyer was running through the main corridor so all the dirt from side mines have been dumped there. I was responsible for keeping clean a section of this conveyer. My job wasn't very hard. But some of our people worked hard. I already told you the Leszek Wojciechowski story who almost paid with his life after 24 hours of hard work trying to go over assigned quotas.

The stint in Turuk didn't last to long. Our leaders returned us to the mine in Otkritiy. The production of gold got curtailed with only two shifts ten hours long each. As much as I hated I had to give up my evenings with Anna at least every other week. Marcel Mastbaum and I became partners. And we were the only ones from our people still working there. My new boss was shift master Tatarnikoff the same man who was my boss at the small mine way back in October 1940 when Weintraub sent me there. Tatarnikoff gave ME a job to clean a wooden patio at the mouth of the main shaft. This dirt was coming out there, like a lava from an angry vulcano. There was no way I could keep this patio clean for ten hours. So finally I gave up. when the new shift came to work, Tatarnikoff was forced to put on this job three strong prisoners in order to clean up the mess I left.

My last job at the mine together with Mastbaum was to deliver the heavy and long logs to support the corridors walls. It was a hard job also, mostly because Mastbaum had difficulty to raise those logs and put them on his shoulders, or back. It was up to me to help him to do this first and then go and raise my end by myself. Ofcourse because of the above situation Mastbaum was forced to carry the thick end of the log, while I was carrying the thiner end. The most difficult part of this job was to pass corridors with low cellings. Then it was necessary for us to bend almost in half in order to squeeze through.

Chapter 60

Arrests and Interrogations!

Few days before Germans attacked Soviet Union, the mine director Mrs. Balahnina asked us to buy Soviet government bonds (Zayom) in order to make Soviet Union even stronger in case of enemy attack. Ofcourse it was voluntary but there was no way to get out of it. I bought a bond for one month of my wages. 260 Rubles after deductions. And for what? Few weeks later Germans were already deep in Soviet territory.

Spring also brought a new supervisor for the road brigade. They sent Mr. Gergel away and nobody ever heard from him again. The new man was much younger. Married to a waitress from the diner. He didn't last to long. He went to prison to serve a term for a crime he committed earlier. They the authorities replaced this guy with Mr. Kuznietsov. A free man a real native Siberian, who lived there for many years.

Spring 1941 would also be remembered by leaders of our people in Nierendja (not the Soviets) as probably the most terrible of their lives.

Let me explain it first. Arrests in Soviet Union are a breaking point in anybody's life. They are like a bolt of lightning which has scored a direct hit on people involved. They come like an earthquake, which not every person can cope with, and as a result of people slip into insanity. The whole world is shattered in peoples life in Soviet Union, when somebody from the authorities hisses at someone "You are under arrest" The mind is incapable of embracing these words, and drawing on all life's experience, can gasp out only: "Me? For what?" And this is a question which though repeated millions and millions of times before, has yet to recive an answer.

And all of a sudden the fateful gate swings quickly open and four white male hands, unaccustomed to physical labor but nonetheless strong grab people involved by the legs and arms, collars, caps, ears and drag them in like sacks, and the gate behind them, the gate to their past lives is slammed shot once and for all.

That's what arrest is in Soviet Union. It's a blinding flash and blow which shifts the present instantly into the past and the impossible into actuality. That's all. and neither for the first hour nor for the first day were they able to grasp anything else. Except that in their desperation the fake circus moon blinked at them, as saying: "It's a mistake! they will set things right!"

The reason I gave you here an insight into arrests in Soviet Union was, that even arrested once before, and decreed to spent rest of their lives in darkest parts of the world, some of our leaders got arrested again in Nierendja and charged with spying for Germany, against Soviet Union.

It was hard to believe, in all that isolation, thousands of miles away from civilization, how could Soviet authorities there could fabricate charges like that. But they have, because people like former mayor of Lodz; Mr. Kwapinski, Mr. Kanas, Mr. Yarmark and others, were leaders to whom people came for advise, they discussed politics, and many other subjects, and Soviets couldn't tolerate people like that in their midst.

Usually a sharp nighttime ring or a rude knock on the door, and the insolent entrance of the unwiped boots of the ever unsleeping State Security operatives wakes the frightened and unsuspected civilians. But in case of our people in Nierendja camp, NKVD just invited them to come to the office of the commandant, and even didn't let them to take some warm clothing, Without reading any charges they just kept hurrying them and saying: You don't need anything. They will feed you and cloth you there. It's warm there (wherever you are going). The method of hurrying was one of the ways to keep people frightend.

Later after the arrests became public knowledge, the following account but not proved circulated around both camps. As people said everything started with the arrest of colonel Lachowicz, former aide to general Anders future chief of staff of Polish army in Soviet Union. Lachowicz after hearing all the charges against him, to save himself, had agreed to sign a document charging with spying all his friends.

Ofcourse colonel Lachowicz was innocent too, but he was a weak person, and his health wasn't to good either. After short interrogation in Nierendja NKVD took all those men to the district city of Aldan. And there it was where the real hell had begun.

Many times uncle Ludwik took part in conversations and disscusions with the arrested men. For a while we worried a lot that some harm would come to him, but luckily he was never charged.

NKVD drove them to Aldan in vans marked on the outside with names of products and companies which never existed. They didn't want people to know, that those were prison vans. The NKVD headquarters in Aldan was an imposing wooden building as other buildings there. As the vans slowed down the large steel gates began to slide open. It was like in a gangster movie, one of the men thought. First the gate slid sideways into the wall with grinding sound. Another loud sound let those prisoners realize that the gate closed behind them, and the doors of vans opened and they found themselves in a big courtyard, with an NKVD officer politely saying: "Look, don't worry, this will just take half an hour, please come this way." His voice was soothing and reassuring. At the door he stood aside for the men to enter first, and then skipped in front of them down the hall. There was no one else in sight.

They turned down a narrow side corridor..It was lined with doors strangely close together. Without breaking the rythm of his stride the officer kept opening one door after another and motioned them forward courteously. This way! He kept saying pleasantly. They walked, moving as quickly as they had been all along, and then suddenly came to an abrupt halt and found themselves in rooms like boxes, empty boxes with a bench, but still together. Mr. Kwapinski told me later that he spun around and started to yell: "What the hell!" But he yelled to the door that was already shutting hard behind them. The door was lined with iron and peephole in it. The peephole opened and closed again, but not before Mr. Kwapinski saw behind it a dark eye, with a dark eyebrow. Definitly, it wasn't the light-skinned NKVD officer.

Then the men were instructed to be very quiet. They were told that it was not allowed to shout in there, and again they were told not to worry. It will be only a moment.

Another officer came around and said: "Will you come this way!" Some of the men thought that their ordeal was over, but not so. This officer led them around the corner and motioned to another door. The room behind this door was also bare except for a table and straight backed chair. And again the door behind them was locked.

In this windowless room was the last time where all those friends from Nierendja were together. They got separeted afterwords.

From this moment on the story you will read will be a story of one man only. I assume that the other men, relived the same horror as Mr. Kwapinski, the man who told me about his experiences, when once I saw him in Otkrity after his release from prison, because of an agreement between Stalin and general Sikorski who was the head of Polish government in exile in London. The agreement took place in Moscow after Germans invaded Soviet Union in June 1941.

As per Mr. Kwapinski a man in NKVD colonel's uniform, entered the room and introduced himself, as a commandant of the inner prison. Mr. Kwapinski was ordered to take out everything out of his pockets and then to take off all his clothes and put them on the table. He was told to go to the toilet if he needed, or just call the guard if he needed a drink of water. The colonel made the list of Mr. Kwapinski's propery, and before leaving used NKVD's favored phrase: "Don't worry, you will be fully informed pretty soon".

After the colonel left an orderly came in with a knife and began to ripp all Mr. Kwapinski's clothes along the seams. He felt inside the lining, lapels and he ripped out the shoulder pads. Then he picked up Mr. Kwapinski's shoes and went after the soles, leaving them flapping. He also took his shoelaces and belt.

The door was un-locked, and a good looking woman doctor came into the room, with a clipboard and a pencil. She checked out Mr. Kwapinski all over. Later he was checked by a dentist, photographed and fingerprinted. After a hot shower he got dressed again in whatever was left from his clothing, including the flapping shoes.

Another guard came in and Mr. Kwapinski followed him along long gloomy corridors lined with doors. Each door with its peephole and food slot with a sliding metal panel. The corridors were carpeted and almost the only sound as they moved along was the guard's clucking of the tongue, a signal used in large Soviet prisons, that a prisoner was under escort. They finally stop in front of one of those doors. The room behind this door was longer and wider then the others. It was a stifling cell. The ceilling was high and the air hot. Along one side was a narrow wooden bench standing. Above the door was an intense naked bulb about 150 watts in heavy wire-mesh cage. When the guard was closing the door, Mr. Kwapinski asked him: What happens now? And the guard answered: "Don't worry, everything will be fine".

Still no food was offered, but sometimes in the evening of Mr. Kwapinski's arrest they came to take him for interrogation.

Inside the interrogation room was a huge barred window with dark brown curtains, large table and swivel chair. The room was half dark. So it shoock Mr. Kwapinski, when a man's voice said: My name is colonel..... (I don't know his name). I am your interrogator,

The interrogation was the begining of the real hell and horrors for Mr. Kwapinski and his friends.

Back in the interrogation room the colonel mentioned Mr. Kwapinski to sit down on a hard chair. The colonel sat down himself behind the table, opened the file and kept reading it to himself for few minutes, looking up at Mr. Kwapinski from time to time with an amused expression. When Mr. Kwapinski wanted to find out why him and his friends were there, the colonel held up his finger, indicating that Kwapinski should wait a minute, and went on reading. Finally he put down the file and said: Yes, yes! That is what we are here for. That is what I am here for. Do you know why we have brought you here? No! Answered Mr. Kwapinski. There is no reason why I should be here.

The colonel interrupted this speech with a wave of his hand. Think! He said sharply. Think about it for a moment. Then you can tell me about it, and I will be glad to hear, what you have to say. And quickly in a more serious style he went on to tell Mr. Kwapinski, that he was charged with espionage against Soviet Union. Mr. Kwapinski answered emotionally: There has been a terrible mistake made! I have never engaged in such activities.

Let's not waste any time citizien Kwapinski, Colonel said smiling. You said we have made a mistake. I tell you we never make mistakes. He picked up the file. It's all in here. Places, dates, names of accomplices. So don't worry about it being a mistake! Then he leaned over the table looking sternly at Mr. Kwapinski and repeated in a very quiet voice: NKVD does not make mistakes my friend, We never make mistakes.

The colonel handed Mr. Kwapinski a paper. It stated that under Artivle 58, sections 6,8,10, etc., of the Soviet criminal code Mr. Kwapinski was charged with espionage, political terrorism and anti-Soviet propaganda.

All this began to look preposterous and serious to Mr. Kwapinski, and he wondered how all this happened to him.

Before taking all the personal data from Kwapinski, the colonel said paternally. You should have thought about that before you undertook to be a spy in our country. Because this is not a common crime, and you do not have the privileges of a common criminal. However, he went on, maybe something could be done about it in the morning.

~~This interrogation lasted all night long. At the end of it Mr. Kwapinski~~ signed ~~a protocol to show agreement~~

This interrogation lasted all night long. At the end Mr. Kwapinski signed the first protocol, to show an agreement that the notes reflected conversation accurately. He signed the document in Polish script, which was opposite to the Russian Cyrrilic script.

Next morning, and every morning from then on, guards used to leave in Mr. Kwapinski's slot a complete loaf of bread. On the top of the loaf were two pieces of sugar and tea. Later in the afternoons all prisoners were fed with some gruel called soup.

Later that evening they took Mr. Kwapinski to another cell. Since then on cell No. 111 was his home. The cell's walls and floor were painted black, and the bed was a black iron cot. In the screened recess over the door was little 25 watts bulb. The thin hard mattress and threadbare sheet and blanket smelled terrible. Carefully Mr. Kwapinski checked over the entire cell. It was small, maybe seven by twelve feet. Next to the door stood a cast-iron toilet with a wooden lid. It could be flashed by running water from the little sink which stood beside the toilet and drained into it. At the far corner if you stood up on the bed you could reach the frame of a small window with heavy wire-mesh reinforced glass. But standing up on bed was not allowed. Anytime the guard opened the peephole he hissed in loud whisper, calling Kwapinski "prisoner"and threatning him with punishment cells. Even when he lay in bed, Kwapinski had to keep his hands above the blanket.

Mr. Kwapinski's interrogation went the same way as the interrogation of his friends. The aim of NKVD was to make each of them to denounce the others, in which they didn't succeed. The questioning went on almost uninterrupted day and night. The men conducting the interrogations were mean and ruthless. They presented to all the arrested men all descriptions of their meetings, conversations with other people although distorted to the advantage of NKVD. Mr. Kwapinski and his friends simply couldn't comperhand simple meaning nothing talks had been distorted. Those conversations just used to be discussions between friends, harmless and accusing them of spying was preposterous.

Anyway to get them to sign those confesions those interrogators used all the methods available to them. Mostly at night sessions they been threatened with loaded pistols.After such a night sessions they weren't even allowed to sleep. Besides sleeping they also weren't allowed to sit on their beds, by the guard constantly watching through the peephole. Another punishment was to wash their cell's floor every morning. Two hours later after a sleepless night like that they were called to interrogation again, and when they falled asleep in their chairs the interrogator used to pour cold water over them. Many times a ruthless interrogator applied merciless beating to wake them up, They spent long hours or sometimes days in dark cells, in very light cells, in hot and cold cells and in so-called coolers in the basement. When one of the men once made not so kind remark about the system NKVD put him in a cooler for more then a week and fed him with water and bread. Sitting there in light clothing with a thin blanket he used to spray his water ration all over the floor to freeze, so he could skate in order to keep warm. The probably worst of all cells was the cork cell, where the prisoner couldn't hear his own voice. On certain occasions some men developed somekind of communication system like Morse code to communicete with each other by taping on the wall.

Mr. Kwapinski and his friends spent 52 days in prison. Despite the terrors of the investigation they managed to keep their faith. All of them didn't confess to nothing. Acctually there was nothing to confess too. They kept their minds from collapsing by singing, praying, reciting poems and solving equasions in their heads. Mr. Kwapinski himself undertook a long walk from Aldan to New York, with all the details necessary for an adventure of this magnitude. All of the men never signed any papers, but this didn;t mean nothing to their captors. Even without signed confession they convicted them without trail to 25 years of hard labor. They explained to them that once arrested by the "Organs" (secret police) there was no way for them to be released. A signature might give them less severe sentence.

Chapter 61

Summer of 1941!

As it turned out later all those interrogations and hardships were for nothing. ~~Either was~~ NKVD lost. After German invasion on Soviet Union, Stalin and the whole Soviet system was in a big trouble. Russians needed help badly from the free world including the Polish goverhment in exile in London. After the Polish Soviet treaty was signed all Polish citiziens in Soviet Union regained their freedom as per amnesty negotiated by both countries.

Most Polish citiziens released from prisons, labor camps and special settlements, headed for Ural mountains were the new Polish army was formed.

Mr. Kwapinski and his friends came back to their families in Nierandja and to an anormous greetings by the entire population.

Hoping for better life elsewhere, people went south to the warm parts of the country. Little they knew then, that hopes for better turned out to be a nightmare for most. It was to late to realize that Siberia in those days besides cold was a much better place to live.

It is important to notice at that point that during Mr. Kwapinski's ordeal uncle Ludwik kept his wife and daughter from hunger, and when Polish government called them to come to Moscow, uncle Ludwik also paid for their expences.

In the month of June the long awaited Siberian summer finally arrived. The cold winter air changed to fresh warmth. Trees got greener, and roads dry and clean. But working habits didn't change. Hard work have not eased up. And again Anna, Ela and my father kept working even harder, because after winter roads needed reapairs badly. It was like a visious circle. From one extrime to another. Cries and complaines bounced off deaf years. The authorities always used to come up with the same answer. "No work, no food".

At last the work at the Turuk mine came to an abrupt end. Returning to Otkritiy mine was like to be home again. The pace slowed down there and many people were transfered to other jobs including our people. Only xx Marcel Mastbaum and I were left there.

Back in Nierendja another tragedy stroke our people. The former Anna's teacher in Jaslo the blind profesor Kaczkowski passed away. The prediction by the NKVD officer back in September 1940 came through. Profesor Kaczkowski couldn't survive Siberian hardships.

In meantime two new companies formed in Otkritiy who promised much better wages. One was another construction company and the other was an outfit digging for moss. Moss in Siberia was badly needed for all kinds of insulations.

Many of our people would be interested in this new opportunity, but without permission from NKVD it was a no,no. After the amnesty the situation changed for better.

The situation in western Europe didn't change at all. Hitler continued conquering the continent. Reading the Soviet press made us even more depressed. It seemed then that Germany and Soviet Union were destined to rule the entire future world.

That was the time when Hitler's "Afrika Korps" on March 30 1941 launched a counteroffensive in North Africa. The big surprise of the war was when Hitler's deputy Rudolph Hess parashuted into Scotland on his own peace mission to Britain. On May 20 Germans invided the island of Crete in eastern Mediterranean and after 10 days of heavy battle forced the British to surrender. At the same time President Roosevelt freezed all Axis assets in United States and ordered closing of all German consular and propaganda offices. The only bright spot for the British was the sinking on May 27 of the German battleship Bismark in the Atlantic.

With warm weather upon us we finally came out outside. After work longer days gave us an opportunity to rest and relax, and enjoy fully the fresh air. We took our blankets and walked the short distance to the nearby forest.

And as in winter we were trying to forget our daily misries, talking, reminiscing and imagene how our future would develop. In those day Anna and I were unseparable. We have been together every possible moment. This also was a time when Soviet Union allowed imported movies to show. Couple of Italian pictures made their way to Otkritiy. The theme of one of the pictures was a story od a raising singing carrier of a poor boy. I saw the picture once before the war in Cracow. The stars of this picture were Jan Kiepura the famous prewar Polish singer and his Hungarian born wife a songstress Martha Eggerth. No wonder then that half of our camp went to see the picture.

Not aware of German plans Soviet Union continued helping their future enemy. Large transports loaded mostly with coal and many other products kept going to Germany, while Soviet population suffered. Insults from the past wouldn't stop Hitler and Stalin from at least temporary friendship.Close acociates of Stalin tried to worn him about Hitlers plans to invade Soviet Union but he wouldn't listen.

So on June 22 1941 Stalin finally was proven wrong. On this day he found himself in the midst of a large German invasion, launched on a 1000 miles front from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Hitler was so determent to capture Russia, and also as Stalin wouldn't listen to his generals. One hundred fifty divisions almost three million men poured across the Soviet border, spearheaded by armored columns and bombers.

Taken completely by a surprise the Red Army fell back in confusion, it's bewildered officers pleading for instructions from their superiors in Moscow. Thousands of Soviet soldiers were killed, hundreds of thousands more taken prisoners. The overwhelming German onslaught seemed to sweep all, driving 200 to 400 miles deep into Russia in the first month. Once the Soviet defences were breached, the attackers divided into three fronts. Army group North struck out for Leningrad along the Baltic coast. Army group South drove through the fertile Ukraine toward Kiew and the rich oil fields of the Caucasus Mountains. Army group Center raced toward Moscow as the ill-starred armies of Napoleon have done. The center force quickly took the lead plunging two thirds of the way to the Russian capital in just 3½ weeks. By September 1941 Stalin have lost 2.5 Million men. The advance slowed down in August 1941, as the battered Russians began to re-group, and the Russian people themselves commenced to rally to the defence of their country.

The news of the German invasion came to us at the mine and other places. Radio and Soviet government, newspapers kept informing us about the disaster. During his statement to the nation Soviet commisar for foreign affairs Vyacheslav Molotov Declared: "Nashe delo pravoye. Vrag budyet razbit. Pobyeda budyet za nami" (Our cause is just. The enemy will be destroyed. Final victory will be ours).

For the first time since our deportation, and for the last, all of us fully supported Soviet government. We knew right away that this was our big break, for which we waited all along. And also for the first time we were sure that this was the beginning of Hitler's end.

We realized immediatly that Soviets will require all the help, they could get from the west. And we also knew that the German attack will force the Soviet government to talk to Polish government in London, which in turn will ask for the amnesty for all of us.

The propaganda machine of the communist party have begun to work immediatly, urging Soviet people to rally around the party and government, and to work much harder in order to bring upon speedy defeat of the enemy. This was also true for our mine. We didn't produce enough gold, so the management forced us to work longer hours and on Sundays.

In order to change their image in the west Soviet government changed from Council of Commisars to Council of Ministers. They also changed ranks of their military, to ranks as aproved in western countries. Instead of their red plastic markers on officers uniforms colars, they put epauletes on their shoulders with stars.

The famous NKVD the Soviet secret police was changed from Narodniy Komisariat Vnutrenih Del (National Commisariat of Internal Affairs) to MVD, Ministry Vnutrenih Del (Ministry of Internal Affairs). First their work and purpose remained the same as before. Later MVD became just a Ministry of Internal Affairs. The spying and secret police work was changed to KGB. "Komitet Gosudarstvenoy Opasnosti" (Committee of State Security). After that they used to hunt people even more, because a war was going on.

Negotiations between Soviet Union and Poland have begun shortly. It became clear to all of us, that it was only matter of time, before we will be free again. But seriously, on another hand, as we found out soon enough, nobody in Soviet Union was really free, ever.

We continued to work as hard as ever. Maybe even little harder. But everybody felt relaxed in anticipation of better days to come. Heated discussions went on the progress of negotiations, the war in the west and Soviet misfortunes on the frontlines.

Away from our work we noticed a komsomol (communist youth) soccer team practicing and playing on a field carved out from tayga, with many stones sticking out from the ground. But it was a field and young people enjoyed themselves.So one evening I got struck with an idea to play a game with this people. Many of our young people agreed and we asked Mr. Boczulski the artist who taught art in Otkritiy school to be our representative in arranging a game between our settlement and the young communists. There was no problem at all. The young people of Otkritiy accepted our proposal without hesitation. The NKVD also didn't object, and the new assistant to the commandant, the good guy, whom we called Macius tried even to help us to get ready for the game.

It wasn't easy to put a team together. Some of us played soccer before the war. But how could we get hungry people, working hard all the time, without training for more then a year to play soccer again. Yet despite those doubts, these people felt that it was their duty to play in this game, to show our oppresors that we were alive and ready. Some of them especially Poles felt like they were representing Poland. The only thing missing were red and white uniforms and the Polish white eagle.

We were two people short to put a team together, so we filled in the holes with two guys who never played soccer in their lives. I think that those two Poles were even more hungry than the other participants, and I also think that our game in Otkritiy was a first game ever played in captivity between the captured and the captors. Later after the amnesty, many Polish soccer teams sprung up all over Soviet Union, wherever Polish citizien resided. So maybe our game was meaningless to others, but had meaning to all of us.

But the most important problem of all was lack of shoes and uniforms. People didn't have shoes anymore for daily wear, but the ones who still had them voluntiered to gave them to us for this occasion. We didn't have real uniforms either, but T shirts and shorts from back home replaced them. Mr. Boczulski alternated with a Russian referee. It was a nice Sunday afternoon. Despite the fact that many of our people were working this particular Sunday, most population of the settlement showed-up to cheer us. Ofcourse I was one of the players. Besides me, there was Payonk the cadet, Haber brothers from Cracow, and one Mr. Chaykievich who used to be a good soccer player before the war. The goalie and another player came from Nierendja.

After the pre-game greetings and to our surprise shaking hands the game have begun. The first fifteen minutes we played better then the Russians. We even scored our first and last goal. We ran out of gas, so to speak, and for the rest of the game just tried to survive. Our assistant commandant Macius tried to cheer us up to hold on, but we lost 5-1, which acctually was victory for us, just for holding out. Even thou our physical weakness and malnutrition came into open, we gave them a good game. Our Russian opponents wanted to play again, but we couldn't oblige.

Chapter 62

Amnesty!

One soccer game with Russians was enough for us.The idea was great as long as it lasted. But it wasn't possible to perform at hard labor, and play soccer on weekends, without good food and practice. It just didn't mix.

In meantime negotiations between Poland and Soviet Union in Moscow went on. Hearing good news was like an itch on human body, which wouldn't go away.

On another hand authorities kept exerting lots of xxxxxxxx pressure not only on us, but at their own people as well to work harder to help the war effort. In the beginning food shortages weren't to severe, but shortages of money kept occuring more often. Many times there was no money available on paydays, because of lack of currency at the local bank. It was really weird. When food was available we didn't have money to purchase it. Later when money finally was available there was no food in the store. Many people even ran out of money to buy their daily soup and bread. And still grandpa Abraham kept helping them out as long as he could.

The xxxx total happiness and relief came on the day when NKVD told us at the settlement, and residents of Nierendja, about our amnesty as per agreement between Poland and Soviet Union. Actually the most important article of this agreement was to organize a Polish army in Soviet Union under the command of General Anders, and draft all able Polish citiziens freed by the amnesty, so they could fight on the side of the Red Army until Germany will be destroyed.

In another important article of this negotiations Stalin promised to return to Poland all eastern territories he annexed to Soviet Union in ~~August~~ SEPT. 1939. Territories like Western Ukraine, White Russia and the parts of far north-eastern Poland including Vilna which in 1940 became part of Lithuania.

Stalin and his Soviet Union were in big trouble in those days, so at that time he didin't oppose Poland's demands, saying to everything "dadim", which means we will give it to you.

It took few days until the good news really settled in our minds. After we digested all of it, we started to explore our possibilities. After all a savage war, after almost two years since it began, still was going on and Hitler still was in control on all the fronts.

Most of our people wanted to leave Siberia. They started to feel already the warm southerly breezes. Many of us with relatives in United States wrote letters to them hoping that they would be able to get them out of Soviet Union, or at least sent them food and clothing parcels. Little they realized then THAT emigration to United States was virtually not possible, and that just for involvement in such activity they would be arrested and prosecuted.

After all those informal conversations, most of our people decided to leave Siberia and head south. It seemed like a good idea in that particular time. After all we were free then, and free to travel anyplace in Soviet Union, except ofcourse the occupied area, AND places near to frontlines. But! Wait, not so fast. NKVD had different ideas. After all nobody in Soviet Union could travel without an official permit. O yes! They issued to us new documents, confirming that we were Polish citiziens, but listed on the bottom of those documents places, where they would like us to go. All those places were small towns along Trans-Siberian railroad. Still our benefactors would prefered for us to stay put in Otkritiy or Nierendja and keep working there. Well! Many people obliged them. As it turned out later this was the right thing to do. In proper time later the authorities moved them out from Otkritiy and Nierendja to Aldan, and few years later when situation on all fronts improved they transported them west closer to final reparttriation point to Poland.

Us and uncle Ludwik, Goldsteins and Balins, and Leniowers and their friends as well decided to go south. We found out that afterall we had legal right to travel xxx there.

With our freedom also came a change in attitude of local people toward us. From then on we became "comrads" instead of "citiziens". Ofcourse from then on we could look for our own jobs, not in places chosen for us by NKVD.

Chapter 62 (cont)

Amnesty!

Workers at the mine wanted to know what our next move will be. They didn't expect us to leave Otkritiy. When we told that we will leave to join the Polish army, they just laughed in our faces, meaning that we would never fight in any army. According to them, knowing how Soviet system was working, none of us would ever leave Soviet Union. Well! For once they were mistaken.

After the amnesty became official my first thought was to leave the mine. So that would make Marcel Mastbaum the last man to work there. Most of the people remained at their places of work. Anna and Ela continued work with the road brigade. So to be with Anna all the time I also joined the road brigade. My image of being lazy followed me any place I went, even thou I didn't hear those remarks while working at the mine. The supervisor of the brigade even asked Anna how her being such an excellent worker could associate with a"lentiay" (Lazy) like myself. It didn't upset me anymore. I just wanted to pass the time before we left Siberia. Anyway this supervisor was stuck with me and there was nothing he could do about it.

Some other people changed their jobs. My father went to the better paying "Moss Company" and many young people left for the new formed construction company. The Lumber Transport Company, the main employer of our people lost most of the workers.

The next question of the agenda was the question of finances. How to raise money for our trip south. As everybody agreed, our women and some men hit Otkritiy with the leftovers of our personal belongings. Some people still had plenty of them, some like us still had just a little. Others who didn't have nothing anymore to sell, were forced to stay behind. These people kept selling everything. Clothing, bedding, jewlery, leather goods and Russians kept buying. At the end the results turned out to be good. For us the selling spree made us enough money for the trip.

It seemed sad for those people who stayed behind in Otkritiy to see the others go. Maybe some of them were jealous. But as I said before in a long run their staying in Otkritiy made them the winners.

Shortly before leaving Otkritiy I became a victim of malnutrition and lack of vitamins. I developed some kind of growths on some parts of my body and my underarms, which were the most painfull. The black ointment Dr. Ettinger gave me helped to heal just the growths on my body. But the growths under my arms wouldn't heal, so Dr. Ettinger was forced to cut them out, which was even more painfull, but put an end to my misery.

So with money available for the journey, it was settled that we will travel with uncle Ludwik. According to my way of thinking, there was no reason for me to work any longer. I quit my job with the road brigade and started to take it easy for the first time in year. Really there was fun to work with the road brigade. I couldn't effort to stay behind, so I tried my best to do a good job. The brigade was large then and many people cheated, by showing the supervisor longer stretches of repaired road, stretches they never touch. Sometimes they succeded, but mostly the supervisor was aware of their cheating. Some arguing took place, usually ended with a joke, when some people said; "Ve Sovietskom Soyuzie nada obmanyvat. Kak nye obmanyvayesh, tak zhyshia tvoya propala". (It's a must in Soviet Union to lie. If you don't lie your life goes down the drain).

On the new documents we recived from NKVD, some idiot in Aldan NKVD office who probably didn't know how to read and spell, changed our name From "Mondschein" to"Makschein". And this was the name we went by in Soviet Union. Knowing the ways of Soviet beaurocracy, it was better to leave this way, then try to change it.

Leniowers as some of their friends, decided also to travel south, and kept raising money for the long journry. Grandpa Abraham, Ela and Anna kept working almost to the last day, before leaving.

Chapter 63

Leaving Siberia!

And there was the big problem, as far as I was concerned. I started to realize then, that my relation with Anna was in jeopardy. My heart was breaking, just thinking what might happen to us. Anna and I talked about this problem, but we didn't discuss it seriously enough. The trouble was that we didn't confront our parents, about how we felt about each other. I guess our parents didn't realize also, that whatever was between us was serious. Now I am quite sure, that by discussing the matter with our parents, a solution would have been found, and we wouldn't have to part as we did.

The evening when I came home, and saw there uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and Heniek all packed and ready to leave, was one of the worst of my entire life. I felt like to cry. I knew then for sure that Anna and I meant a lot to each other, but nothing have been said, and none of us was willing to make the first move. We thought that later we will meet again in Uzbekistan even thou us and uncle Ludwik were heading for Samarkand, and Leniowers and their friends choose to travel to Fergana.

Winter was just around the corner in our part of Siberia. It was already middle of September. It wasn't snowing yet, but days got shorter and colder.

On one of those cold evenings we said good-by to all our friends and neighbours, and took all our stuff to Otkritiy. Uncle Ludwik still had plenty of luggage, cases and bags loaded with all kind of things. The three of us (mother, father and I) didn't have to much left. I guess for uncle Ludwik and family I was a convinience, to help them to carry their stuff.

That particular night Anna walked with me to the outskirts of Otkritiy. We both cried, hugged and kissed. We didn't know then if we ever will see each other again. We promised each other to write to the barber Schlaferman in Otkritiy about our whereabouts. But in those days, who could predict what will happen. In a large country like Soviet Union, with a bloody war being fought, our chances to meet again were almost zero. It was already very late, and my dear Anna had to go back to the settlement. We kissed again, and I stood there for awhile watchung her disapearing in the dark. I felt so helpless, and alone, and my heart kept pounding.

We spent our last night in Otkritiy in the local truck depot. It was a sleepless night, because of a constant noise coming from the garage. I had only Anna on my mind, and the others probably thought about the rigors of the journey. Early in the morning other passengers arrived, and among them some of those miners who used to believe so strong, that we never will leave Siberia.

About 7am we bought our tickets to Aldan and boarded an open truck. The only means of transportation from Otkritiy. Rain mixed with snow was coming down pretty heavy/. We made ourselves comfortable as much as possible and few minutes later we were on our way.

Passing by the Lumber company I still was able to catch a glimpse of Anna, who saw our truck approaching and ran out outside to wave good-by. She was there ready to go to work. This moment still stay's in my memory until today.

So we left in Otkritiy our sorrow, our humiliation, depravetion of our basic rights, hunger and very hard work. But I guess that at that moment none of us thought of being thankfull for just being alive, while millions of our brothers and sisters in Europe were killed and prosecuted every day and night by Hitler's henchmens.

After couple of hours we arrived in Aldan, and unloaded our stuff at the truck depot. We were told that trucks going to Tinda our next destination won't be available before next morning. We took over a small corner in the rather small waiting hall. In Tinda we would catch a local train going to the Trans-Siberian railroad.

In meantime many Russians and our people from the nearby camps around Aldan filled up the hall to wait for their turn to leave.

Father and uncle Ludwik went to the local NKVD to change our destinations from some small town in Siberia to Samarkand.

We took two beds in a nearby hotel, or rather dormitory. Two of us men kept watching our baggage all the time, while the other two were resting in the hotel. We also ate couple of meals at hotel's diner.

Uncle Ludwik made there an aquaintance with a Jewish family from Tarnobrzeg, who new our relatives, the Nussbaums there before the war. There were six of them in their family, so we decided to share a truck with them.

In the girls dormitory at the settlement, there were those two Masne sisters. One was ugly, and the other younger was better looking but awfull tall. Their was a German background. As we understood they always were short of money. So imagene our surprise, when in the morning we noticed them sitting in the waiting hall with all their bags, I guess ready to travel. Really I don't know why? Maybe because of their German ancestry, later in the day NKVD, arrested them.

Before we boarded our truck, which this time was all covered, we met a very friendly communist official. He was one of the lucky ones, who used to travel extensivly all over the world. He spoke with us for a while, and was very fond of the western world.

Winter arrived with full strengh the morning we left Aldan. The roads around this wooden city got slipery fast. But our lady driver was a master in driving in snow, even thou her truck was not equiped with snow tires. Only once on an uphill road, we pushed the truck to help her out. After four or five hours of driving, we left the last the snow area behind us, and didn't see a real snow for many years to come.

So our trip to civilization went on. We spent couple of nights sleeping on the floor in halls or garages. In one of those places we came across a man whom we knew in Cracow. Back there he was a businessman. In Siberia he drove a truck. The biggest satisfaction came, when we arrived in this small village, where one year before on our way to Siberia, they wouldn't serve us food in the diner, but they couldn't refuse us on our way out.

Back in settlement,, many families wanted to travel with Leniowers. There were to many of them, and Leniowers didn't know whom to choose. One thing was for sure; They will travel with Marmurs. They always got along very good with each other. Mr. Marmur was Max, and used to be an executive of a glass making company in Jaslo. His hometown was Bielsko. His wife Cesia (Cecilia) was from a Sileasian city Sosnowiec. With them was their four years old son Belek (Rabbi Dov Marmur from Toronto nowaday). Anyway to make a long story short, in addition to Marmurs, the group consisted of Schnalls, Julies, Goldbergs, Suedwertses, Fenichels, Lubelskis, and Polish families Wilman, Latawiec and the artst Boczulski with his wife.

Their trip went on as ours. They boarded trucks in Otkritiy, traveled to Aldan, after couple of days layover they embarked on the three days journey to Tinda.

Many other such groups as Leniowers traveled together. My cousins the Balins and Goldsteins also traveled together. Among all those groups one was strickly Polish, under the leadership of colonel Lachowicz,. All of them traveled to Buzluk in Ural Mountains to join there the Polish army under the command of general Anders former commanding officer of Colonel Lachowicz.

As we found out few weeks later from our former equipment menager Mr. Rzepka, who with his wife also was a part of this group, they were forced to split, because Mr. Rzepka and some others didn't have funds to go further. They all had to relay on transports formed by Soviet government, and go to places designated by them. On another hand the Polish camp in Buzluk closed, and the Polish army was transfered to Margelan in Uzbekistan near Fergana to prepare for an eventuality to be transfered to Iran just south from Uzbekistan.

As we lerned later, people who choose to remain in Otkritiy had to vacate the Nierendja camp and the settlement, becuse NKVD needed quarters for new victims to do the hard labor for them. There weren't many rooms available in Otkritiy, so the locals shared their one room apartments with our people. Extra money was more important then inconvenience.

Leaving Siberia!

By the time Leniowers left Aldan, the train from Tinda was taking us to our next destination; Urusha on Trans-Siberian railroad.

From our point of view Tinda on the way out, was a different place from Tinda on the way in. From far away we could see the river and camps, where we waited to be transported further north. Our one day in town, we spent walking around this wooden town, with many wooden sidewalks. We also ate a meal in one of the diner's. And still the feeling of freedom was overwhelming.

In weeks to come many other former special settlers came through Tinda on their way to a new life. They didn't know what to expect, but each of them had hope.

Among those returnees was the Yakubovich family, who even though they didn't have money, they kept hoping that some way they will be able to get out.There were four of them. The father who was quite old. A Jewish with a long beard and earlocks. His oldest son was also religious, with a short beard, short earlocks and still dressed up in orthodox clothing. With him we used to work together on our first working detail after our arrival in special settlement. His name was Shmuel, a good and decent man. His two younger brothers weren't religious at all. Moshe was able to get himself out from hard work most of the time, not going out to work at all, without any releases from doctor. For some reason the authorities didn't touch him. A young man with very little education, after return to Poland and after a brief training, by Polish authorities was given a job of a chief prosecutor in some city in Silesia, which used to be part of Germany before the war, with instructions to prosecute former war criminals. The youngest was Simon. He was my age. Sometimes we worked together and we became sort of friends. To make some money for further travels the Yakubovich family took residence in Tinda for couple of years. After that time father and two of his sons left Tinda, but Simon stayed back. He married some older woman with kids. After few years of living in Tinda he got lonesome after his family, left this woman behind and went to Poland. This was already after the war. By then the old Mr. Yakubovich was no longer alive.

The train from Tinda was a passenger train, with some cattle cars attached. The same monotnous route, with labor camps and towers along the way. The slow moving train kept stoping from time to time for prisoners to unload the cargo from cattle cars. How would our future shape we didn't know at that time. But the sadness of the landscape, the slow moving prisoners going back and forth around those cattle cars, made us thank God for letting us leave this forsaken land.

Chapter 64

Stalin and War!

The mass of our people liberated from Siberian camps kept going west and south. Coming from the west going east and south was an on-slaught of Soviet people fleeing from the victorious German armies. These people were telling horror stories about atrocities commited by German soldiers, SS troops and the Gestapo. There was no secret that in Ukraine Germans have been greeted as liberators by people who had little love for the communist regime in Moscow. Soon they found out that German occupation supervised by the dreaded SS was barbaric. Men, women and children were murdered ~~xxxx~~ crops and homes burned and plundered, and animals slaughtered. This kind of treatment and cruelty united the Soviet people against Germans, who later eagerly answered Stalin's call for a "Great Patriotic War". Hitler has sown the seeds of his own defeat.

Still Germans weren't the only ones to kill. During their fast march toward Moscow, while capturing the important White Russian city of Smolensk, Germans discovered mass graves in a forest near a small town of Katyn. They ofcourse opened those graves and discovered there 10,000 recently killed fresh bodies of Polish officers held by Russians as prisoners of war. The investigation by the International Red Cross, and testimony by people from nearby villages revealed, that the retreating Red Army didn't have time to evacuate those officers, and on another hand they didn't want to release them and fall into German hands, decided to get rid of them. The German High Command made the discovery public. Being hot themselves they have hoped that for time being the free people all over the world would forget about German atrocities. Soviet Union ofcourse denied to be any part to this atrocity. Somehow they hoped ~~XXX~~ that the whole incident would be soon forgaten. But not so. Families of those victims still remember them. Until today a strong public opinion of Polish people still demand a thorough investigation and apology from Soviet Union and reparations. There are signs that present Soviet government, with gladnost and perestroyka may finally oblige the Polish people.

The wartime in Soviet Union was also the time, when the myth of Stalin soared. Stalin ruled and the population worshiped him, as they were taught to do so. Large segments of the population had a complete monarchist feelings toward him. Their love was clean and real. It was a good feeling, based on the fact that one man embodied the goals of the nation, her ideas, her plans and dreams. The Russians always yearned for a "vozhd" a supreme leader, and in Stalin despite his cruelty they saw such a leader.

Many Russians felt more comfortable under iron rule, and his name evoked in them a passion for order and efficiency. Under his iron rule many millions of people were killed and deported, all uprooted from their lands and forced into areas of Siberia and Central Asia. As Krushchev said many years later; "No man with common sense, can grasp how it was possible to make whole nations responsible for inimical activity, to use mass repression against them and to expose them to misery and suffering for the hostile acts of individual persons".

Another fact of Stalin's insecurity was his refusal to believe his own inteligence service about an imminent German attack on Soviet Union in 1941. He himself kept the myth of Stalin as a great wartime leader, but refused to act on the basis of reality, and was far from understanding of the real situation at the front. This was natural, because during the whole war he never visited any section of the front, or any liberated city, except for a one short ride on the closed to front highway during a stabilized situation. To this one incident were dedicated many literary works, full of fantasies of all sorts and many paintings. Simultaniously he was interfering with operations and issuing orders which did not take into consideration the real situation at a given section of the front and which could not help but result in huge personal loses.

In summer 1941 relations between United States and Japan have worsened. In July president Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets in United States and discontinued trade with Japan.

Chapter 65

Trans-Siberian Railroad!

In August 1941 president Roosevelt met secretly at Sea of Newfoundland with prime minister Churchill, where they issued the Atlantic Charter. On September 8 1941 Germans completed the encirclement of Leningrad starting 900 days siege of the city. Eleven days later the fast moving German army occupied Kiev, the capital of Soviet Ukraine.

One of the first to leave Nierendja was the former socialist mayor of Lodz Mr. Kwapinski. The Polish government in London directed him to go to the Polish embassy in Moscow. As before uncle Ludwik helped him and his family financially and with his traveling arrangements. Later the Polish Embassy sent Kwapinski to Tashkient, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan as Polish council to help those thousands of Poles being released from Soviet labor camps.

Back to our journey from Siberia, we spent one night only on the Tinda train. This part of the trip was rather comfortable, and we had a good night sleep on the upper folded so-called beds. I assumed that by that time Anna and her family followed us, not to far behind.

Our train arrived at the first stop on Trans-Siberian railroad in Urusha. One year before Urusha was the last station on Trans-Siberian railroad, before our train switched to tracks going north. Then we didn't expect to be there so soon again, thinking that we will spend rest of our lives in Siberian wilderness. After leaving the Tinda train, we took a closer look at the impressing station, bilt back in czar's times. We unloaded our baggage on the platform, and having some time available we set out to explore the building. The restaurant was as empty, as a year before, but the counter was loaded with caviar as it was a year before. Nothing else was available no bread or drink.

The train from Vladivostok to Moscow was due to arrive in Urusha later in the afternoon. We bought our tickets and then the station master told us that due to the circumstances out of his control we cant't board the train in Urusha. I guess because of the nearby Soviet-Chinese border, this area was so-called restricted area. A small local train took us to the next station, and there we found out again, that we should move to the next station. And again it was I who who carried most of uncle Ludwik's heavy cases. Well! Finally at this third station we boarded the train. We had to hurry, because there was just a three minutes stop. Once on the train we tried very hard to find place for six people. By Soviet regulations we weren't allowed to change the cars. This was our assigned car until we will reach Novosibirsk. We got lucky when couple of stops later some people left the train, and we took over their places. After that our main priority was to find places to sleep. Those sleeping places in Soviet railroad cars were above the baggage shelves. We found some single places all over the car. Aunt Rose and mother slept in the compartment and guarded our bags.

By Soviet standards this was an elegant train. It had special cars and compartments, and sleeping cars and compartments for people who could effort those luxuries. Many VIPs traveled this route and we could recognize them by their dress and behavior. Women were extrimly well dressed up. Probably many of those people were foreigners, maybe even from United States. For the past year we didn't see at all such a high class. We couldn't take our eyes of them when they passed our car on the way to the dinning car. One thing was sure; We couldn't effort the dinning car. Maybe uncle Ludwik could, but he and his family never went. In a matter of facts, after buying our tickets, we almost didn't have any money left. We took some bread and food from Otkritiy, but it didn't last to long. For us and those other simple travelers, it used to be a treat on certain stops to buy potato pancakes sold by peasant women, three pancakes for a ruble.

There never was enough time on any station to eat hot soup in a restaurant. But running in search of bread was even worse. It was very hard to obtain a loaf of bread, and who found it, paid a high price for it.

Also on the train was this Jewish family from one of the camps around Aldan. We always competed with them searching for bread. They won most of the time. Either they knew where to find this bread, or simply like they were buying us out, paying more rubles for a loaf.

Milk and pickles, two other articles we didn't see in a year were also obtainable on small stations. To us they had been a real treat.

Traveling in Soviet Union on a long distance train, one should be extrimly careful. There were all kinds of people walking back and forth. Listening, snooping. Some of them could be NKVD agents, spies, thiefs, murderers and maniacs. On Anna's train one of those men tried to get her, while she was asleep at night. Luckily she woke up in time and ran in a panic to her father. She didn't want upset him, so she just told him, that she was afraid, and would like to spent rest of the night with him. Another night she went through an other incident, when sleeping high above, she fergat where she was and fell down to the floor, thinking that it was close below. Thanks "God" that she didn't hurt herself seriously.

Often NKVD patrols boarded the train and checked passports and documents of all the passengers. Becaus of the war going on those checks were rather scrupulous. They always found some characters with a reason to take them out from the train. But us: At least that time around we didn't worry. We weren't afraid, and enjoyed the freedom at least for time being.

Traveling with Leniowers was the artist from Otkritiy Mr. Boczulski and his wife. From time to time Mr. Boczulski liked to play poker. At the settlement he played sometime with grandpa Abraham and other people but not for money. The story was different on the train. Mr. Boczulski came across this man Fein who was an avid poker player. In Nierendja he was transporting Lumber from the forest on a horse pulled wagen. He was also the man who moved us from Nierendja to the settlement. Well! To make a long story short this Fein finished off Boczulski completely. He left him blank. Few months later we found out that being without money, they both Boczulski and his wife enlisted into Polish army.

In meantime our train was moving fast toward Novosibirsk. During that time my thoughts were always with Anna. I was thinking how, when and where we will be together again. I was hoping that she will catch up with me in Tashkent, while I wait for the train to Samarkand. Little did I expect the mess I will find myself in Tashkent.

So on the way, we passed again the beautiful Lake Baikal, and tunels dugg in stone by prisoners still in czarist times. This time around we watched and observed with ease and peace all the wonders of this place. Shortly afterwards we passed the old Siberian city of Irkutsk, where on our way to exile temperature was 32 degrees in the middle of July and snow on the ground.

Being on the subject of Lake Baikal, an interesting story comes to my mind. A story I red many years later here in Kansas City. This particular book described genuaine stories about great escapes. In short it was an adventure of seven determined men to escape from a Soviet slave labor camp near the Artic Circle. These men set out on foot on an incredible journey of more then 4,000 miles. Only the hardiest of the band survived the awesome trek to reach their final goal India. Their walk started in April 1941 around Easter from a camp No. 303 near Yakutsk, the territory so familiar to us. There were seven of them: Three Poles, Lithuanian, Latvian and an American arrested by the Soviets while helping them to built their Metro Subway in Moscow. Only four of them survived, and the American among them. They walked south, crossing the border to Mongolia, not far away from Balkai. Through Gobi desert, China and Tibet they reached Himalayan Mountains and from there to India, where they arrived almost exactly one year after they started.

We arrived in Novosibirsk a very importand industrial and railroad center after 4 days on Trans-Siberian. This time we look at the giant station from a close range, not being stuck on a far away side as one year before.

Chapter 66

Road to Tashkent!

City of Novosibirsk in those days was poor looking. Old housing with a mass of population. In 1949 after Mao Tse Tung won the revolution in China, he sent a delegation of Chinese communists to lern from their neighbours to the north. These people after visiting Novosibirsk couldn't get over how dirty and poor this city was in comparison with their own large cities.

We left our train and settled in the corner of a tremendous waiting hall. This place was filled to capacity with people, mostly soldiers trying to catch trains in all directions. What we saw, was something we wouldn't believe if we wouldn't see with our own eyes. According to Soviet constitution everybody there was considered ~~equal~~ equal. But not so. Separate ticket outlets for soldiers and officers. Seperate for VIPs and ~~separate~~ separate for plain ~~folk~~ folks. The same went for shops and restaurants.. The big shots got everything without delays. The plain folks spent hours in long lines.

We also spent a while at the ticket window to get ~~our~~ our tickets checked for the trip to Tashkent.

The train to Tashkent was waiting in a different part of the station. Again a long walk with all those uncle Ludwiks, ~~bag~~ bags and cases. As always somehow we managed.

It was already late in the afternoon, when we boarded the train, not as elegant as the Trans-Siberian. Because the train originated in Novosibirsk, there was no trouble to find a good compartment for the six of us.

We moved slowly in south-easterly direction approaching the Soviet Republic of Kazachstan.

The Soviet Socialist Republic of Kazachstan first came under Russian domination in 19th century after many years of Mongolian domination. It was first created as autonomous republic in 1920 and became a constituent republic in 1936, with todays population of more then 10,000,000 people. Kazachstan is second in size to Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic. The capital of Kazachstan is Alma-Ata (Father of Apples). The whole area is characterized by dry steppelands and semi-deserts. In the north however the soil is fertile. The most important city of Kazachstan is Karaganda, because of oil fields and coal mines. Agriculture is practiced not only in the north, but also in south and east, and some of the desert land has been reclaimed by irrigation. Wheat, cotton, rice, tobacco, rubber plants and fruits are grown there. Principal stock raised is sheep.. The Kazachs are Moslems and despite restrictions they still believe.

As all over Soviet Union the easiest thing to get at a rail station was hot water (no charge). Bread as always was almost impossible to purchase. Still in the south of the republic for the first time in over a year we ate fresh and dry fruits. Potatos and pickles were also available. In a matter of facts I ate so much pickles, that I got sick from my stomach. I felt terrible for couple of days. The worst was waiting in the line for my turn to enter the rest-room.

Many people on this train were refuges from Ukraine, fleeing from the Germans. Most of them Soviet Jews. Another group on the train ~~was~~ were young Jewish men still in Red Army uniforms from Lvov. Soviet authorities discharged them after signing the pact with Polish government in London.

Soon after passing Alma-Ata we found ourselves close to crossing the line into Uzbekistan. And then the road to Tashkent was wide open.

Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic is a part of Soviet Central Asia as the republics of Kazachstan, Kirgizistan, Turkmenistan and Tadzhykistan. Uzbeks are Moslems and were ruled by emirs and sheiks and Genghis Khan, until occupation by Russia took place between 1865 and 1873. During world war two the republic recived complete industrial plants and estimated 2,000,000 workers from European Russia and Siberia, including people like us in order to replace plants and production lost to Germans. Actually Uzbeks used to be an inner enemy of Soviet Union, and as result of the war openly awaited Americans, British and I amm quite sure would also welcome Germans with open arms.

Chapter 67

Tashkent!

Deep down in their hearts Uzbeks hated Russians and their Soviet rulers. They remembered Cosaks raids under the command of Marshall Budyoniy, who murdered them and took away their lands into collective farms. Uzbekistan borders with Afghanistan to the north. Later when we used to live in a collective farm in Fergana province, on a clear summer morning we could see from our village the far away mountains who separeted Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. The Arab propaganda used to reach Uzbeks and other Moslem nations in Soviet union through secret means. In our conversations with them we found out that even then, so many years ago they hated Jews also. They thought of us being Polish or Russian, and in their language they called us "Uruslars".

Uzbeks on their collective farms produce cotton, rice, wheat, grapes and sugar beats. They also raise silkworms. Nowaday Uzbekistan has huge textile mills. In our days there all this was done by hands and legs, and your grandma Anna certainly can testify to this fact. There live 15,000,000 people in Uzbekistan, and the most imporatnt cities are Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Fergana.

On a late September afternoon our train from Novosibirsk pulled in into Tashkent. Still on the train approaching the city we saw many trees and gardenlike landscapes. Most of the homes and buildings and mosques were bilt in old Arabian styles. Modern construction was then with some exceptions a thing of the future.

We left the train and walked into a spacious waiting hall. And there our misfortunes and predicaments have just begun. Our first shock came when station's authorities told us to leave the waiting hall. The other shock came when the same authorities informed us that they don't have a slicest idea when a next train to Samarkand would be available. Ofcourse it suited me fine. My thinking was: The longer the better. I still was hoping that Leniowers will arrive any day.

Because of the mild weather all year around we were told to go to gardens area. Those areas equiped with benches and called "Zaals" served as waiting hall at the Tashkent station. So not having any other choice, we took our bags again and went outside. To our horror we discovered that this place was filled-up to capacity with thousands of people, arriving in Tashkent from all parts of Soviet Union.

We "schleped" our bags around and finally found a small area for us in the middle of this so-called garden. As long as the rain season was some weeks away, we thought that somehow we will survive the cool nights. It was getting late, and darkness came soon enough. We all missed very much our wooden beds from Siberia. We still wore our Siberian "Fufaykas". They helped some. We bundled as much as possible and tried to get some sleep.

We kept waiting, but the railroad people couldn't give us a positive answer. I personally still didn't mind,and kept going to the station to meet trains from Novosibirsk hoping Anna would come on one of them. The situation was bad, especially for aunt Rose, and it didn't look like it will get better soon.

Each morning and during the day and night as well, it was an ordeal to get inside the restrooms. Long lines of people waiting to get in blocked the sidewalks and traffic. I was really jealous looking at Uzbeks. These people men and women alike, summer or winter wore those long cotton lined coats called "Chekmen". To do what each of us needed a bathroom or restroom for, they simply done it outside. In towns, cities and villages all over the country. They urinated or had stool on the spot, where they stood. They just assumed a "squat" position and covered themselves with those long chekmens. First I thought, that this was their way of resting. It was a real surprise when I found out otherwise.

There was no way to get inside station's washroom. Many people didn't wash at all for many days. But once walking around I came across a large river. Actually there was no river, but an irrigation canal.

I saw kids and adults swimming there. So late at night mother and I used to go there to wash and make our bodies clean. Mother used to go there in daytime also to wash our undergarments. Most of our days we spent looking for bread and other foods. When our money have ran out, we had to sell something fast. I am quite sure that uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose were still in good shape. They both tried to help out a little.

There was no other way but to sell my last father's suit the one made by his tailors friends in Zbaraz. He never had a chance to wear this suit. Mother and I took a ride on Tashkent's streetcar to the city market (bazaar). The fee for riding the streetcar was 15 kopeyek (Russian change), but because of inflation, there were no kopeyeks available. So the conductors used take one ruble bill, without giving change back. Imagene how much money those coductors and their bosses split among themselves every day.

The car was full of people. Mother and I stood in the middle all squeezed up, when suddenly she started to scream! "It's Lusia, It's Lusia". Mother kept pushing through and I right behind her. First I didn't know what she was talking about. Then mother explained to me that she saw Lusia Foerster, her niece from Gliniany and Krynica walking on the street. Anyway it was to late. we stoped our chase, because Lusia disapeared in the crowd.

After the initial shock, we continued to walk to the bazaar to sell the suit. We wanted for it 500 rubles, but nobody even came close to give us an offer. Disapointed we were ready to go back to the station, when some Russian man approached us and offered 250 rubles, if we would follow him to his home, because, he didn't have any money with him. It wasn't to much, but not having offers at all we agreed. After 15 or 20 minutes,,we came to his house. The man went inside and brought the money. We parted with the suit, and it took us quite a while to find a streetcar going to the station.

Back at the station in our "Zaal" everybody got excited after hearing our story about Lusia. Most of all we were happy that she was alive.We decided to try to find her.

Next day the same man whose family rode the truck with us from Aldan, came to see uncle Ludwik with another "frimen Yid" with a plan how to get out from Tashkent. Ofcourse first of all they wanted money,so they could bribe some railroad official. With their talk they only made uncle Ludwik mad. He was very much anoyed with their proposal, and told them to leave. But those two guys wouldn't take no for an answer, and played on uncle's conscience and integrity, complaining how a man with his statue, could turn them down in such fashion as he did.

Talking with people around the place, we found out that there was a cafe in Tashkent attended by Polish refugees. The name of this place was "Cafe-Tearin", located someplace in the middle of Tashkent. Poles used to come there because the main attraction Was Hanka Ordon a famous Polish actress and songstress. Jews used to like her because of her all time hit song "Mein Yiddishe Mame". She wasn't Jewish, but the way she sang that song, with a feeling of a Jewess, made her so popular. So we went to this cafe asking for Lusia, and indeed found out that she was coming there with her husband Sigmund. So then we knew for sure, that both of them were alive. We left a message for them in the cafe and told the people where to find us.

We didn't wait to long. Next day Sigmund showed up at "Zaal #3". He told us that him, Lusia, their baby boy Georgie and Lusia's mother aunt Dina were also stuck in Tashkent, but rented a clay hut near the canal

We found out that they used to live for a while in a resort town of Zaleszczyki in south-eastern Poland. They left in front of fast moving Germans and traveled all the way to Tashkent. As I wrote earlier their father uncle Salo Speiser and his son Tolo got stuck in Warsaw in September 1939.

We have been in Tashkent already more then a week, and there was no sign of Anna. I began to worry, and got a feeling that time was runing out, and that somehow we will leave Tashkent soon, even before Anna would get there.

My worries quickly materialized, when rumors started to circulate among Polish refugees, that Soviet authorities with help of the Polish delegation planed to sent many of us to build a new irrigation canal, someplace in south-western Uzbekistan near the Caspian Sea.

I realized then that this idea had something to do with holding all Polish people in Tashkent, while Russians didn't have no problem at all to leave the city.

To build this canal Soviets needed many workers, so they decided to sent the Poles coming from Siberia. On one sunny day the Polish actress Hanka Ordon and Polish army capitain showed up at the station and told us a very encouraging story about this project. As all previous Soviet projects this one was as inspiring as many others. All we had to do, just go there and work for the glory of Soviet State, help to defeat the fascist Germany, so we could return to our homes in Poland as soon as possible. As always they promised us nice quarters, good food and new clothing. I was surprised that this Polish capitain and Hanka Ordon went for this "bull". I guess, they could't resist the Soviet pressure, and probably there was something valuable for them in this whole affair.

My aunt Rose on her weak legs, chased after Miss Gordon for some assurances. After all before the war aunt Rose was a big fan of Hanka Ordon, and she was sure, that a person of Miss Ordon's statue would never lie to her.

My beging, crying and warnings went on deaf ears. After all, who would listen to me. So meeting with Foersters didn't help me at all. They were very anxious to leave Tashkent, to go someplace, find work and settle down for the rest of the war. Both of them as doctors, wouldn't have no problems to find jobs in their profession. But if they knew at that time what their future will bring, I am quite sure they would choose different approach. As far as my mother and uncle Ludwik were concerned, all what mattered then was to stick with Foersters as long as possible. At the end I was the only loser.

So the old story repeated itself. Hundreds of people went on the train, like a herd of stupid sheep. Miss Ordon's encouragement gave aunt Rose all the strengh she needed to board the train. Looking at all these people being pushed around, someone could get an impression, those were Nazis or NKVD loading the train with prisoners.

After the train left Tashkent the capitain and his assistants toured all the cars with fierry propaganda speeches, how enemies of Poland and Soviet Union tried to interupt this transport from leaving Taskent, and help Germans to win the war. I thought that a political leader of communist party was talking, not a Polish army officer. And on another hand, who could know. Maybe this man was a communist political leader.

Train kept moving, and I lay on my bench with thoughts about my dear Anna. I decided to be passive, just to lay there, and not to help out with any chores. First opportunity presented itself pretty soon. On a stop in Samarkand uncle Ludwik needed to pick his heavy stuff, which he shipped in advance. It was night. I didn't wink even my small finger. Uncle Ludwik, my father and Heniek hurried like dem fuking fools to load this extra baggage before train will move. Uncle Ludwik was lucky again. All three of them breezed heavy and puffed, but finally made it. Father didn't have no problems to locate our small baggage. I was really hoping then, that the train would leave without them.

Suddenly next morning, everything changed again. As before in Tashkent, rumors of a different kind started spreading all over the train. People kept circulating news, about terrible working conditions at our future destination, and lack of quarters and food. The core of the rumors were those few Jewish Red Army soldiers, whom we met on the train from Novosibirsk. They seemed to know everything about this place, telling us about workers there camping outside exposed to the hot sun and very cold nights.

The bad news finally reached into the brains of our small group. They got their minds together and decided to leave the train in the next large city, which happened to be Bukhara. Really the main railroad center on this line was Kagan. There was few minutes ride from Kagan to Bukhara, which was located on the sideline, on a small local train.

It was daytime, when we arrived in Kagan. Our capitain told us, that we will eat dinner at the nearby army post. We decided first to eat the dinner, and at night to make our move to leave the train. We figured that to feed the large crowd on the train would take well into the night. One Dr. Tune from Wieliczka, a small town near Cracow joined us.

Suddenly my hopes and chances to find Anna became real again. It was like finding lots of money, which I would give away to be with Her again.

In meantime car by car we went to this large mess hall at the army post. As far as I remember they served us fish fish or fish soup, with black bread and hot tea or colored hot water

Late at night train was still standing on the side track. As quick as possible we removed ourselves and our baggage from the train. This time around I was flying with uncle Ludwik's cases. Everybody on train, including the capitain was asleep and nobody saw us. We positioned ourselves near the spot, where the small train for Bukhara was standing.

It was a cold night. Some of us were sitting, and some were sleeping on the bags. Looking at the blue sky above I was very happy, thinking about Anna.

It was a long wait until afternoon next day for the few miles train ride to Bukhara.

While waiting aunt Rose gave me 30 rubles to buy something to eat. I went to a nearby food stand and took my place in the line. Suddenly some woman started to scream that her 30 rubles had been stolen from her. A young girl standing behind me right away pointed at me that she saw me stealing the money. A militiaman came to investigate. I was flabergasted and scared to death. After all I had aunt Rose's 30 rubles in my pocket. In my mind I was already lost forever in some faraway Siberian labor camp. I was all reliefed, when I noticed the militiaman walking away. Evidently this woman found her money, because she quit yelling. Writing now those few words I still can't help thinking, where would I be if this woman wouldn't find her money.

Chapter 68

Bukhara!

The city of Bukhara, with population circa 100,000 is the center of the region also called Bukhara. It is surrounded by clay walls, which were build in ancient times for the protection of the city from invaders. It contains many mosques, and number of other interesting buildings all constructed in clay. Most living quarters and official buildings are also made from clay.

Emirs used to rule Bukhara, who in 1873 acknowledged Russian supremacy and granted concessions to the czar. In ancient times the district was called "Sodiana". It was conquered by Arabs in 8th century. In 1220 by Genghis Khan, in 1370 by Timur, and in 1505 by Uzbeks.

The small train from Kagan finally arrived in Bukhara late in the afternoon. We settled for time being on a small plaza with Lenin's monument as in all Soviet towns and cities. Garden and flowers surrounded the monument.

Uncle Ludwik, Sigmund Foerster and I went to town to find some lodging. We didn't go to far. Close to mid-town we found an old Moslem monastery converted into hotel. We reserved couple of rooms and went back to the station to get the rest of the family and baggage. We rented an "arba", a two wheeler pulled (NKZL) by a donkey to transfer our stuff to the hotel.

At last after all those days of traveling and living outside, we found a place to sleep and rest, clean-up a little. Yes in the courtyard of this hotel were many restrooms (no more standing in lines) and sufficient washrooms for us to use freely. The place was almost empty. Our room had only one bed, so we all slept on the stone floor, except of aunt Rose. And as always mother was able to wash some of our things in the washroom.

Next morning we started to look for some food. Surprisingly we found many stores, selling bread without restrictions. Ofcourse we stood in line few minutes, but this didn't bother us at all. On the bazzar we still could buy fruit and vegetables and dairy products sold by peasants for considerably low prices. It was obvious, that not to many refugees knew about Bukhara at that time. We also bought food for Foersters, and after a good meal prepared by my mother, we decided to look for a place to live.

My mother was the one who found our first apartment, on a street near the city market. The room was rather small on the top of the owner's regular apartment. When we slept at night there was no room to move around. Even our small cooking stove stood outside. (Uncle Ludwik brought this stove from Siberia) We slept on the stone floor, as it was customary for the whole Uzbek nation. The owner, a fat Uzbek told us that he was working in soda pop factory. Making soda pop was a major industry in Bukhara. Every Uzbek we used to talk to worked in soda pop factory. They called there "Lemoniadniy zavod"(Lemonade factory). In a matter of facts most of Uzbeks didn't work at all. Our landlord was visible around the house day or night. ~~In a matter of facts~~ Soviets didn't trust Uzbeks, and it took them quite a while before they started to draft them into their armed forces.

Once we even had a visit from a friendly militiaman, who came to remain us to register with the local militia, as was directed by law all over Soviet Union. This militiaman was very happy with the Soviet rule, and described to us the beauty of Bukhara in summertime.

At last time came to to look for work, but decent jobs were no longer available. Refugees like us could only work on outskirts of town, demolishing old clay huts and rebuilding the clay walls of the city.

More and more refugees kept arriving in Bukhara. Many Russian Jews and Jews released from labor camps. All of them spent their days on Lenin street in mid-town. Some of them were well dressed, others still in their prison clothes. People with money and blackmarketeers you could recognize right away. Still most of the people were poor and hungry.

Chapter 68(cont)

Bukhara!

Foersters continued to live in the hotel few weeks longer. Most of the time we shopped for their needs and visited them daily. During that time Dr. Sigmund Foerster went to Tcharjou a city 300 miles away from Bukhara in Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. He carried with him recomendations for him and his wife from somebody in Bukhara for jobs as doctors in city hospital in Tcharjou. Obviously they had been accepted, because as soon as Sigmound returned they packed their stuff and left for Tcharjou. They liked there. Needless to say a year went by and Lusia got seriously ill. We never found out the nature of her illness. Anyway after a short bout with it, she passed away, leaving her husband Sigmund, one and a half year old baby boy Georgie and her mother behind. A tragic loss of a young live, and for the family, and another victim of this horrible war.

Nights were getting colder in Bukhara and it became obvious, that we needed to look for another apartment. After couple of weeks we found one on Kalinin street. One of thosse narrow Arabic style streets, where a wagen could hardly pass. And again the apartment was on the top of landlord's apartment. It was larger then our previous apartment also with stone floors. Our small stove couldn't keep it warm at night anyway, so we covered ourselves with as many "shmates" as possible. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose bought themselves couple of iron beds, and the rest of us slept on the floor. Dr. Tune from Wieliczka shared the apartment with us. He also bought himself a bed. He was paying part of the rent, and mother used to cook for him., but aunt Rose collected the money. At that period of time Mother, father and I were practically broke. We were thankful and much obliged to uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose for letting us stay with them and actually being fed by them. The way I saw it then, for all those chores mother and I performed for them, we earned our keep.

Dr. Tune was a very nice man and a very good doctor. He worked at the Bukhara hospital, and after working hours, he speculated on black market. By the living standard of those days, he was a wealthy man. He carried with him one boot, because somebody stole from him the second, until a war invalid who lost a leg in combat bought from him. His family remained in Poland with Germans. Few months later after we moved to Alti-Arik (Palasan), so I could be with Anna, he passed away.

With time situation in Bukhara changed dramaticaly, and became right out dangerous. The city was full of refugees. Our people released from Siberian camps, hardly could walk around ~~there~~, because of weakness from hunger and disease. Not clothed, still in their torn camp rags, not fed because of lack of money, and without roof over their heads. They slept on the streets, and Bukhara hospital was overcrowded. They used to keep two or three people in one bed. When hospital ran out of beds they lay on floor all over the place. Many of those who slept on streets never made through the night. Every morning those small wagens pulled by donkeys, used to pick them up for burial in mass graves. A situation familiar to the one in Jewish ghettos in Cracow, Warsaw or Lodz.

There was almost no food available in government stores, but on bazaar, for high price almost everything was available. Not just food! Who wanted to and had money could buy clothing, shoes, underwear and even luxury items.

To buy daily bread on ration coupons, we used to leave house shortly after midnight. My father, Heniek and I took shifts, to find out on many occasions after 5 or six hours of waiting that bread was no longer available. On days like that we paid high prices on black market. Still thanks to uncle Ludwik we kept surviving. Many times my dear mother dug deep down in our old and only suitcase to come up still with a piece of white bedsheets from the old home in Cracow, in order to sell them. The question was! How much longer? Wherever we went there were lines and more lines. People were on the edge, and constant hostility and fights kept breaking out between Europeans and Uzbeks who always put blame on us for their miseries.

Chapter 68 (cont)
Bukhara!

Many so-called Bukharan Jews used to live there for generations. It was quite a group, who in their appearence looked more like Uzbeks than Jews. After living hundreds of years side by side a stranger could hardly tell a difference. Ofcourse some of them adopted to Soviet lifestyle and European way of life. Most of them especially the older generation spoke fluent Hebrew. We visited few of their homes and noticed Hebrew prayers inscribed with xxx colorful paints on the walls. They used to be rather friendly, and wanted to have some kind of abond with us, but was hard for them to covey their thoughts, because of fear to talk. Most of the time we met with them while waiting in food lines.

To describe my life in Bukhara in those days, the key word was "frustration". I was very much upset with myself, because not having any news from Anna. I knew very well, that the whole family arrived finally in Tashkent, few days after we left. I was sending wires to certain people in Otkritiy, hoping that some of them would answer and give me a hint about Anna's whereabouts. But not such luck. My wires remained un-answered.

In meantime people from Bukhara housing authority visited us in our apartment trying to convince us to leave the city, becaus of overcrowding and settle in some small town nearby, or even join a collective farm. We managed to persuade those people to let us stay ay least for time being.

Most of the time in Bukhara we spent our days and part of nights in bread and foodlines, or selling clothing on bazaar. It wasn't unusual in those lines and even while walking on the street when I was smoking when somebody would aproach me, and ask me to share with him part of my cigarette.

Also in one of those lines I met once a girl my age from Bielsko. She was there with her parents. Her name was Irene Moskovits. We spoke few times and discovered that we knew some mutual friends in Cracow. She was a nice person, but like many others got seriously ill and passed away.

Because of lack of money, even aunt Rose had to reach to her gold jewels, so we could go to a place who used to buy gold and exchanged it there for canned goods.

The other must chore was, to listen to public radio, about war news. XXX Although Red Army stop Germans at the gates of Moscow, on other fronts they kept advancing, burning and killing innocent people. Also relations between Japan and United States have worsened, when war minister of Japan and a leader of military extremists xxxxxx became that country's prime minister. Nothing seemed safe in those days. A U.S. destroyer on convoy duty with arms shipments was sank by a German submarine with loss of 115 lives. The only bright spot of the time was, when British Eight Army in North Africa have begun a desert offensive in Libya.

The Soviet losses on their huge fronts became so enormous, that just to show the population some hope, the high command started to list in Pravda and Izviestia numbers of German prisoners taken by their ranks.

Polish delegation opened their offices in Bukhara. We went to register, but the day was November 11, Polish legal holiday commemorating Poland's independence 1n 1918 after world war one. Next time we went there the place was full of Polish citiziens, but the chief delegate was entertaining a brother of former Polish hero and leader Joseph Pilsudski. Sometimes in near future all us men went to register for draft to Polish army. The main question was about "religion and nationality". We all told then that our religion was Jewish, but nationalty Polish. My father was the only one there who answered both questions with "Jewish". I still can't understand his reasoning. In those days our first priority was to return to Poland. Why would he said that his nationality was Jewish under those circumstances?

There were some people from Cracow in Bukhara, and uncle Ludwik kept in touch with them. Some of them were all right, others in bad shape. Mr. Tigner, a furrier one of the richest Jews in Cracow, who even founded his own synagogue was in terrible shape. Yet at the end he was lucky. XXXXXXXXX

Mr. Tigner's wife somehow escaped to United States. Thanks to some miracle she found her husband in Bukhara. Her food and clothing parcels and money saved his life.

By another coinsidence I came across in a park of a family. A man, his wife and small child who used to live before the war in our complex. They were Jewish of course, especially him with many visible Semitic features. As I remember him, a very snapy dresser. Even in those horrible days in Bukhara the whole family didn't change. He wore a dark suit with white shirt and a tie. I don't remember anybody in those days, even people with money wearing a tie. As amazing as it looked, they still pushed the same baby boggy as in Cracow. The wife and the child were dressed up also and looked rather well. We had a short conversation, and the man told me that they escaped after Germans took Cracow. These people either had lots of money, or he was involved with Soviet authorities.

Another surprise came when we noticed on the street the former horse pulled cab owner from Zbaraz. My mother was shocked seeing him there, and asked him in Yiddish "Naftule, vus mahst du here?" Ofcourse Naftule didn't know what to say. Anyway after we left Zbaraz he probably committed some crime, and a Soviet judge committed him to Siberia. He was liberated with other Polish citiziens by mistake, because as resident of Zbaraz in Western Ukraine he was a Soviet citizien.

In ~~November~~ January 1941 Uncle Ludwik went to Samarkand to visit our relatives there. Goldsteins and Balins were very happy to see him. But the news uncle brought back to Bukhara weren't happy at all.

We finally found out, that uncle Gabriel spent all that time, since he was arrested by Soviet border guards trying on insistance of aunt Mala to cross into territory occupied by Germans, in Soviet labor camp. They charged him with spying for Germany. He came to Tashkent hoping to find his family and all of us. He went to seek help at the Polish legation in Tashkent. Mr. Kwapinski, who at that time was the Polish consul in Tashkent, incidentally walked by, as uncle Gabriel was telling to a clerk his name "Nussbaum". Mr. Kwapinski, thinking that this was uncle Ludwik turned around and wanted to greet him. Uncle Gabriel explained to Mr. Kwapinski that Ludwik was his brother. Knowing that uncle Ludwik planed to go to Samarkand, Mr. Kwapinski fed uncle Gabriel, gave him money and some clothing and sent him to Samarkand. Needless to say uncle Gabriel already then was a very sick man. Instead of uncle Ludwik, he found Esther Goldstein and the Balins.

Uncle Gabriel was a happy man seeing Goldsteins and Balins. For the first time in all those months Esther put him in a warm and clean bed. He cried like a little baby. Esther called in a doctor, who at that stage couldn't do a thing. Dear uncle Gabriel who always could humor people around him, died in Esthers arms, He was 53 years old when he passed away December 20, 1941.

Unle Gabriel's beloved son Saul passed away someplace in the Ural Mountains, In Mariyskaya ASSR, at the age 28, on January 8, 1942, nineteen days after his father. Daughter Zosia and her husband Robert Abeles have been killed March 29, 1943 after the liquidation of Cracow ghetto in concentration camp Plaszow, suburb of Cracow.

Another example of uncle Ludwik's compation and love for others was a habit opposed very much by aunt Rose and my mother to bring strange people to the house, so they could spent the nights with us. There were some Jews in Bukhara who because of overcrowding weren't registered with local militia, and couldn't find steady quarters for themselves. A not registered person when caught could be arrested and suspected by local authorities for all kind of crimes. And exactly those kind of people uncle Ludwik used to bring to our apartment, even not charging them one ruble for the convinience. Somebody else would make lots of money, on others peoples misery. But not, good, old uncle Ludwik.

So the overcrowded Bukhara became almost impossible to live in, and Uzbeks kept hating refugees Russians and us more and more each day.

To lift-up public's spirits, the military command of Bukhara used to send each Sunday morning, military bands to march on the city's streets and play patriotic songs. But what Russian people needed most was the other kind of spirit, to get drunk and forget. But those kind of spirit was almost impossible to buy. Except on black market only.

Instead the lemonade factory produced something similar to soda pop, only more sticky. On Sundays hundreds of people stood in front of those wooden booths, awaiting their turn to get a glass of the "pathke". People with their own glasses got their drinks first and fast. The ones without glasses had to wait for the one glass available at the booth. The price was 20 kopeyek. But as in Tashkent kopeyeks were no longer available. So everybody paid one ruble without reciving any change.

Once feeling very low, after some argument with my mother and uncle Ludwik I ran away from home. I wandered around Bukhara feeling sorry for myself and thinking only about Anna and how could I find her. I even didn't come home for dinner. Later in the afternoon I was sitting on a bench in the park, when uncle Ludwik found me. Dear uncle Ludwik. Always trying to patch up things. He convinced me to go home. One good came out of this story. In the evening I ate a double meal. Mother kept my dinner for me, and later I ate my supper.

An old Polish proverb said a long time ago, that a key in any person's life is patience. In many ways this was and is true. But my patience was running out and I couldn't see a way out from my situation.

Little did I realize that at that time, help was just around the corner. And again it was uncle Ludwik, who in his quiet way was around when I needed help the most. Without saying a word uncle Ludwik all those months in Bukhara tried hard to find somebody with connections in Fergana. Because of his persistance he came through as always. It turned out that one family from Cracow had relatives in Fergana, and promised to ask for their help to find Leniowers. It was a long shot, but it gave me hope that something positive will develop soon.

So another couple of weeks passed by, and when again I thought that all of this was in vain, uncle Ludwik came home with an address of an family in Fergana who was with us in the settlement in Otkritiy. The person in this family who knew the whereabouts of Anna was Miss Boba Anisfeld a lawyer from Jaslo who in early days at the settlement used to work with Anna as member of the road brigade.

Right away I wrote a letter to Miss Anisfeld, and in her reply she wrote that Leniowers no longer live in Fergana. The whole family and their friends were forced by the authorities to move to a collective farm about 30 km away from Fergana. Miss Anisfeld also sent to me Anna's address at the farm.

For me this was the best news since we left Otkritiy. I didn't waste any time I wrote Anna a long letter immediatly.

The corespondence between us flourished from then on. Because of lack of letter paper I kept buying Stalin's propaganda books with shiny white covers. I wrote letters on them and also made my own envelopes. I also made clear to Anna that as soon as possible I will come to see her.

As far as I was concerned there was no reason for me to stay in Bukhara any longer. Even thou we still led half dececnt life in Bukhara, thanks to uncle Ludwik, but life there was no picnic, and how much longer could it last. That why we decided that I will travel to this place near Fergana where Anna was, and the rest of the family will follow later. I purchased my ticket two weeks in advance. I was surprised that ~~that~~ they sold to me this ticket without questions and restrictions, or without demanding a special permission to travel. The official at the station, believed my story that I was going to join my family.

Chapter 69

Fergana!

Leniowers and their group were more lucky then us. They didn't stay to long in Tashkent, and I figure, that by the time we settled in Bukhara, they already have settled in Fergana. On the train from Tashkent to Fergana, they lost part of their baggage,but thanks to their friends, at night with a small candle burning, they searched through the entire train and finally found their lost cases.

Fergana was about 8 km away from the main railroad station. This small town was called Gortchakovo. On arrival there Frieda developed some inflamation in her weak leg. Leniowers found a doctor, who told her to rest the leg for couple of days. So while they camped under open skies, Frieda lay down on the bags resting.

In Gortchakovo grandma Frances met her uncle Joseph Salomon from Cracow, who was a step-brother to grandma's father, with his two sons: Lolek and Edwin. The greetings were rather warm. They had lots to talk over, but at the end when uncle Joseph Salomon made a suggestion that one of the girls stay with them, to help them out in housekeeping, grandma Frances categorialy denied his request. From those three men only son Lolek survived. He returned to Poland soon after end of the war, and was able to claim Salomons wealth.

Still in Gortchakovo Anna and Mrs. Marmur continued with their daily walks to Fergana trying to find a place to live. On the third or fourth day they rented a large room in one of those clay huts. Soon they moved all their belongings to Fergana, and took over their new home. But as soon as they have settled little Belek Marmur got sick with German measles. There was in those days a measles epidemic in Fergana and the health authoities had their hands full. Belek was very ill. His parents took him to the hospital, but his condition instead to improve, worsened. In those days many kids were dieing in hospital because of measles. One of them was a 14 years old son of the Menase family, relatives of Miss Anisfeld who gave me Later Anna's address. So Marmurs decided to take their son out of hospital. Grandma Frances gave to the Marmurs one of those old-fashioned comforters filled up with goose feathers. Tender loving care by his parents and with the help of this comforter to keep him warm all the time Belek recovered.

The other members of the Leniower group also have settled in Fergana.

Anna and Ela found a job in a rope factory, where they met Leo a brother of my aunt Mala. They spoke with him about our family. Leo always was a nice man. He used to have a good heart. Even there somehow he came up with a loaf of bread and shared some of it with the girls.

Everything was going along, according to a plan. The family thought, that if grandpa Abraham would find a job pretty soon they will be settled for good.

But Fergana, as well as Bukhara started to fill up with refugees arriving all the time. The city being overpopulated forced the authorities to take up drastic measures. So Leniowers and their friends became victims of those measures.

Leniowers, Marmurs, Schnalls, Suedwerts and his mother, Goldbergs, Fenichels and the Polish families Wilman and Latawiec,and the Julie family who went voluntary because their son Leo wanted to be close either to Ela or Frieda.

That particular time was a short ride in cattle cars. Pretty soon train stoped at a small station Vanovskaya, 30 km away from Fergana. An important village because an oil refinery was located there. Crude was brought there from Caucasian oil wells and by underground pipeline from an oil well in neraby Tchemiom Mountains.

The whole group spent few days in cold, siting in those cars. The weather was really bad. Their wait came to an end when finally regional authorities transhered them to Palasan, a village 2 or 3 km aways, and assigned them, to collective farms located there.

Chapter 70

On the Way to Palasan!

While I was getting ready to leave Bukhara, winds of war spreaded to other parts of the world. Those events indicated that second world war won't be just a short affair, and it will cost more brutal fighting, more killing and more human sacrifice. The real bombshell came when on December 7, 1941 at 7:55 PM Hawaian time, Japan unleashed a surprise air attack on Pearl Harbor. The attack imposed immense damage on U.S naval and military forces, destroying much of the aircraft and sinking many American warships. As a result of the attack Tokyo declared war on United States and Britain.

On December 8 1941 U.S. Congress adapted declaration of war against Japan, and Churchill informed the British parliament that Britain also was at war with Japan. At the same time Japanese forces invaded Thailand and Malaya, and made first landings and massive air attacks on Philippines. Germany and Italy also declared war on United States, and so did Hungary and Bulgaria. First victims of the war in Far East were British warships Prince of Wales and Repulse sunk by Japanese air attacks. December 22nd Churchill arrived in Washington, DC for talks with President Roosevelt, and on Christmas day December 25th the British colony of Hong-Kong surrendered to Japan.

There was no reason to celebrate the end of 1941 and the New Year of 1942. The world was on fire, Even thou we cherished our freedom frm Siberian Tayga, many of us didn't survive this period for one reason or another. On the German side killing of Jews continued, and all we could do was to pray and hope for a better and peaceful future.

In Bukhara I put in my knapsack my clothing, whatever I have left from my wardrobe. With 30 rubles in my pocket and very little food, mostly raw carrots, cucumber, radishes, raisins and little piece of bread. My mother gave me her blessing, even thou she was reluctant to let me go in those unstable times.

On a sunny January afternoon I took the local Bukhara train to the main station in Kagan. I had plenty of time to kill before my train arrived. So! Where a hungry person goes in my situation? To a restaurant ofcourse. There were some things available to eat, but I didn't have enough money to buy them. My journey would take me two nights and two days. I was scheduled to arrive at my destination on the third night. I set myself at a long table. Across was sitting a Polish officer and eating a good meal. He even drank wine with his food. I was just sitting there watching him. He raised his head and gave me a long stare. I guess he was figuring that I was Polish to. He turned to me and said, that he wasn't hungry anymore, and that he was a healthy man, nodding to me to eat the rest of his food and drink the wine he hardly touched. He pushed the food and wine toward me, said so long and left. I didn't hesitate at all. I said thank you, and put away those vegetables with chunks of meat, and wormed myself up with good sweet wine.

Just about that time my train arrived. I boarded it quickly and without problems found myself a seat next to a window. It was late in the afternoon and it was getting dark. It was cold and also dark in the car. Some passengers kept lighted candles. But one had to be very careful on those trains. I never took off my jacket and knapsack from my back! It wasn't worth that much, but it was all I owned. This train was traveling from Ashkhabad, capital of Turkmenistan to Tashkent. In order to travel to Vanovskaya I had to make a change on a station called Ursatelskaya to a train going from Tashkent to capital of Kirgizistan Frunze. I arrived in Ursatelskaya late next day.

In Ursatelskaya, as elsewhere according to Soviet rules, people changing trains were obliged to OK their tickets at the ticket window, and have mark them with the number of the car they should board. It seemed like another one of those restriction to keep control of travelers.

I ran to the ticket window to discover a large crowd waiting there. For a moment I thought, that there was no way I would get my ticket checked in. I started preparing myself to spend the night at the station. When time came all those passengers stretched their arms out, to reach the clerk at the window. It stroke my mind, that this person behind that counter was a savior for those waiting on the other side. After all our immediate future was in hands of this woman in the window.

But then as far as I was concerned a miracle happened. I kept looking at her face all the time, but she couldn't see me. All I felt her hand taking the ticket out of my hand, and returning it to me. I was the last one. The other stretched out arms pulled back, and the crowd dispersed without saying a word. There was still enough time to run and catch the waiting train, which started to move slowly. I was lucky, and somebody was watching over me.

It was night again and dark all over the train. There were no seats available, so I made myself comfortable on the floor, sitting on my knapsack. Next morning, on some station I bought myself few potato pancakes and drank some hot water. A young Jewish man recognized in my appearance that I was one of those liberated Polish citiziens from Siberia. He was a smooth operator. All he had with him, was a bag with many silly items, which he explained to me were some very old Kazakh relics, and he tried to sell them to me. He didn't realize that I was a poor soul, and even if I would have some money, I wouldn't buy from him this junk anyway.

Finally I found a seat and spent on it the rest of my trip. The train was runing quite late, and I arrived at Vanovskaya station after midnight. I was the only one to leave the train there. It was very dark inside the station and outside. In a matter of facts the whole place was dark. From far I noticed a weak light shining through a small window. I kept walking in direction of that light, but as soon as I left the station I steped into a mud road. There was no other way. The whole place was full of mud, wherever I went. At last I reached the place with light. It was a "Choy-Hana" an Uzbek teahouse, a room where Uzbeks sit with their legs folded under, as the Arabs do on high benches, talk and drink hot tea, their favored drink.

When I walked in the room was full of sleeping Uzbeks called in by the government to build a new irrigation canal. Only one man was awake drinking his tea. He greeted me with a Salem-a-lechum, invited me to sit-down and have tea with him. Couple of years later this man always remembered me when I used to work on Vanovskaya on the new refinery construction. He was one of those modern day Uzbeks, who owned a small shack near the bazaar. He drank alcohol, against the rules of Islam, and bilt his own stil in his shak.

Early next morning he asked one of the Uzbeks there who was going home to lead me to Palasan, the village where Leniowers used to live.

Vanovskaya was in Fergana district, in Alti-Arik region. (English translation "Seven Canals"). Uzbek word for village is "Keshlak". The village of Palasan was ruled by "Sel-Soviet" (Village Committee). Palasan was divided into six kolhozes (collective farms). Those were: Achun Baybayev (Uzbek revolution hero),a kolhoz where Leniowers used to live. Others were kolhoz Itifak (Uzbek word), Kurulush (another Uzbek name), Kuybishev, Kirov (both Soviet Russian heros) and kolhoz Theleman (German communist hero).

Palasan was located on the main highway to Fergana. I followed my guide through empty fields, until we came to the highway. We walked couple of hundred meters and then this man pointed to me a kolhoz store and the real Achun Baybayev kolhoz. I turned to my left and found myself on a village road with clay huts on both sides and separated from the road with high mud walls. A man walking by, who as I found out later was Kolhoz's cashier, in few minutes left me standing in front of Leniowers "kibitka" (house).

Chapter 71

Dreams Come Through!

At last I stood in front of the courtyard, where Anna's house was located. Like other houses in the village x clay walls protected this house from outsiders eyes, An old Moslem custom to protect their women from male xxx strangers. The young Uzbek who pointed the house to me, guessed right away that I was looking for Anya-Abram or for Frieda-Abram or for Ela-Abram. He thought that I was a husband to one of them, and told the news to half of the village.

I entered the courtyard, walking toward the house which was standing to my left. Anna noticed me through the window and came out to greet me. It was a very special moment for me. I was overwhelmed, and didn't know what to do. I wanted to kiss and hug her, but I guess seeing other people inside the house stoped me from doing so.I still thing that we just shook our hands. Well! Finally my day arrived and I stood next to Anna. Anna's parents, Frieda and Ela and all those friends from Siberia were glad to see me again.

The house wasn't to bad, under the circumstances. It had two rooms. Schnalls used to live in the smaller room next to the entrance. There were four of them; Mother, daughter and two sons. Schnalls home town in Poland was Dzikow. A "schtetl" near Tarnobrzeg, home of my relatives the Nussbaums.

The other room was larger with three large windows, xx small iron stove for cooking and keep the people warm. Large bench-bed combination for each family served as tables, chairs and beds. (Uzbek custom). Over each family's bed on the wall bags hung filled-up with flour or kasha. When the bags got flat or empty, it indicated bad and hungry times. Needless to say those bags were empty most of the time.

There were 10 people living in the larger room; Leniowers 5, when later uncle Josef Eisen arrived there were 6 of them, Marmurs were 3 people, and ofcourse Suedwerts with his mother 2. The wall on Marmurs side had a niche, small but big enough to protect their son little Belek from rain during the rain season, when water dripped freely all over the house. On the other side across the house was standing a clay oven, bilt to bake "lepyoshki", Uzbek flat bread. The trick was to heat this oven to hotest degree possible, then stick lepyoshki to the walls so they could bake themselves from the heat coming from the ashes.

The much needed facility was a large hole, behind the house, being cleaned out all the time by the very hungry village dogs.

So for a while I was Leniowers guest. My first morning there I ate a good breakfest, with lepyoshki, noodles with milk and coffee. It was really generous of them, but those weren't times for guests, and they couldn't effort a guest for longer period of time.

As I found out later, Anna came out to the station one day before my arrival, but I wasn't there because of the train being very late. Anna also skiped work for a day, so we could be together. We all kept talking. Everybody wanted to find out, what was going on around the world. But there was nothing new I could tell them, besides that our world was burning. As always I was trying to sound optimistic.

Anna and I went out, and she showed me the whole area. Then we went to Alti-Arik, the seat of the regional council. We talked alot,and I was hoping that Anna was as happy as I was.

In the afternoon we went to see the other people from Siberia who lived in other kolhozes. The family Julie, who was most prosperous from all used to live in kolhoz Itifak. With them in the hut was this orphan girl from Cracow, Regina Kremnitzer, and also an old crazy shoemaker. Reis was his name and he was a German Jew. He was always saying some crazy things, but made good money fixing and making for Uzbeks shoes. Goldbergs, friends of Julies from Poland used to live there too, although they worked for a different kolhoz.

In kolhoz Kirow Wilman's used to live. I think by then Mrs. Wilman gave a birth to a baby. With them was the Latawiec family, and Gross family who came from other parts of Siberia. Grosses, a mother, daughter and son, presented themselves as Polish, but in fact they were Jewish. They claimed their father was a capitain in Polish army.

Chapter 72

Kolhoz Achun Baybayev!

Well! My dream finally materialized. I was happy, because I was with Anna. Nothing else mattered. Ofcourse surroundings, and whatever was happening, and was about to happen, have not been dreamy. But at that time all this didn't concern me at all.

So going back to the life in Palasan, some people suffered, others menaged, and few complained even thou they didn't have no reason to complain.

After my first visit with Wilmans and Grosses I noticed that Miss Gross was a mother of a baby boy. There was no husband around to see. A common explanation was. His father is fighting the War. The truth was Miss Gross had the baby with some Russian man in Siberia.

The rest of the first day with Anna was quickly coming to an end. During this evening I was also told that the Kutcher family from Nierendja was there living with another Jewish family Zelichowski in a Kolhoz named after German communist Theleman. Those were the same Kutchers who used to be friendly with authorities in Siberia, mostly the younger brother of Mr. Kutcher. The Kutchers had four or five childrens. In Palasan and Alti-Arik they also had friendly relations with local authorities, who probably for a certain favors allowed them to speculate on black market. Mr. Kutcher's one leg was shorter then the other. He wore one shoe only on his good leg. He was trying to impress on people an idea that his leg was damaged in the war. Kutchers and Zelichowskis even thou they argued constantly were rather good friends. Mr.&Mrs Zelichowski had two children; A boy and a girl. The boy used to speak Uzbek, like a native born.

There were two Russian Jewish families living in kolhoz Achun Baybayev also. One was Mrs. Homski a widow from Odessa, with son Monia and daughter Racheka. Mrs. Homski was a seemstress and poor. The other family was the Esterless family also from Odessa. Mrs. Esterless claimed that her husband was in the Red Army and already lost in action. She had two boys: Older Sania, my age and a younger one Shurka. A no good brat, maybe seven or eight years old, who also learned Uzbek language fast, and in conversations used the dirtiest words possible. Belek Marmur was even younger then Shurka,,and also spoke Uzbek rather fluently, but never spoke dirty. His parents would never allow it.

Mrs. Esterless played a role of a lady. She also made her living on the black market. They never experienced any hunger. Nowbody knew what kind of company she kept, but my aunt Rose swore that once when she went to see Mrs. Esterless, when nobody answered her knocking on the door, she entered the house and saw Mrs. Esterless in bed with some man, and she was sure that the man was an Uzbek.

In a Kurulush kolhoz nearby, which later merged with Achun Baybayev lived a Russian Jewish family from Moscow. Mr. Fischelson and his wife, were alredy older people. He was a tailor and used to make a good living making or repairing for Uzbeks their cotton lined long coats (chekmen). His oldest daughter was Katia with a small boy. Her husband was fighting the war. The second daughter had two children, and a husband also in Red Army. A drunken truck driver once on a narrow village street ran over and killed her son. This driver recived only few months in jail for this crime, and after release got his old job back.

The youngest daughter of Mr.& Mrs. Fishelson was still young and very good looking. She fell in love and married an old Tatar, who was rich, married with few grown children. The Tatar and his young wife had a baby boy together, after which this old Tatar got tired and returned to his old wife. The oldest son of his, was a high ranking officer in the local NKVD, and he was the one who convinced his father to return to his wife.

Another Jewish Russian mother with her young son were from Kiev. She was a teacher. I no longer remember their names. All I recall my endless discusions with the boy, about Polish and Russian history. He always denied all those defeats first Moscow, then Russians suffered from Poles throughout the centuries. He even wouldn't aknowledge the crushing defeat the Red Army suffered on the banks of Vistula River in 1919 during their first Polish invasion, even THOU THE SOVIET HISTORY BOOKS ADMIT BEING DEFEATED

Rounding the list of refugees in Palasan was this Polish Jewish young couple from Eastern Poland. Mr.& Mrs. Reis were not related to the crazy shoemaker Reis. As former residents of Eastern Poland they were recognized as Soviet citiziens, therefore not eligible for any help from Polish government in London. Mr. Reis had a good job with regional supply company, and in the h[illegible] of the campaign was drafted into Red Army. His wife found all the consolation she needed with other men.

Now after all the greetings were over, and Anna went back to work I started to prepare to get settled in Palasan. Ofcourse I wanted to register in the same kolhoz, find quarters for six persons, and then register with the militia in Alti-Arik. I didn't expect any problems. After all I thought, I was a refugee, like all those others coming from all over the country, and entitled to the same kind of help.

After couple of days looking around I found out soon enough about the red tape and other Soviet regulations. Kolhoz wouldn't register me until I would have a referal from Regional Soviet in Alti-Arik. Next day in Alti-Arik I was informed, that in order to settle in Alti-Arik region I needed a referal from the district Soviet in Fergana. I was disgust with all those regulations. After all there was war going on. I couldn't stay to long and impose on Leniowers, and I also took a place in Schnalls room to sleep. And first of all I wanted my family to get moved as soon as possible. Needless to say it didn't go good and fast.

There was no other way but to go to Fergana. I tried three times, before they sold a ticket to me, for the twenty minutes ride to Fergana. First day they didn't sell tickets. The train was full. Second day in the evening I tried to get on train without a ticket. Soon I was discovered and thrown out. Finally on the third day the man behind the counter sold me a ticket. Later I found out, that was easier to walk those 30 km, than try for a train ride. My train stoped in a place called Gortchakovo. From there I walked 8 km to Fergana.

A Polish soldier whom I met at the station gave me direction how fastest to reach Fergana. After all, it was afternoon already, and I wanted to reach Fergana in daylight. I was looking for Miss Anisfeld's home. The same Miss Anisfeld who helped me to find Anna. She and her family used to live on Stahanovska street No.3. I was told that this street was just behind Lenin street in so-called downtown Fergana. When I reached Fergana I entered Karl Marx street, the longest in town, which ran through the entire length of the city. After 20 or 30 minutes walking I finally found Lenin street, the only paved street in Fergana, with a cinema, restaurant, and some shops and halls. Without trouble I found Stahanovka street in the back of Lenin street. I found the house No 3, because of a small miracle. They all looked alike, and all were standing behind wooden fences, but none of them were numbered. I actually stood in front of No.3, but if not for Miss Anisfeld, who just then came out from the house, I would be forced to knock on all those doors to find No.3.

Miss Anisfeld as usual was friendly and greeted me in this matter. Inside she introduced me to her family, who also told me about their tragedy, of loosing their son to measels epidemic. I explained to them the reason my for my being in Fergana. After some small talk they offered me a coup of hot tea, and a place to sleep on a hard wooden bench. Even thou the night was rather cold, it was allright with me. All I need was an overnight roof over my head. I covered myself up with my own jacket. Early next morning I thanked them for their hospitality and left to find the district Soviet.

Back on Lenin street I stoped in restaurant for breakfest. They served tea and hot cabbage soup. The hot gruel warmed-up my stomach, and I felt much better after all night long freeze. A passerby on the street told me, that district Soviet was on Karl Marx street. But when I got there, they told me that referals were given out in a different building, also on Karl Marx street.

At last a nice young lady handed to me the papers, without any questions.

One paper was for three persons, for family Makschein. This was our name we used to live by after leaving Siberia because some screwball, screwed up at Aldan NKVD. The other two papers were for uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose, and their nephew Heniek Zimetbaum.

It was still early in the morning, so as fast as possible I returned to the rail station in Gortchakovo. I got informed there, that before I could board the train I need so-called "sanitarnaya obrabotka", which ment to go to a bathhouse, take a bath and get all my clothing "deloused". First of all I didn't want to go there, because then I was clean, and my clothing instead being deloused could as well get louse-up. Secondly I didn't have any guarantees that the bath pass would get me on the train.

Going on the train to Gortchacovo I noticed a straight line between Vanovskaya and Gortchakovo. Standing there at the station and looking at those rails I decided to follow them back, to Vanovskaya. Later I discovered, that there was no need to walk along the tracks. This was much longer way, and I could get arrested for spying if somebody from militia or NKVD would see me. Besides there was a dirt road going through a village of Faysabad leading directly to Palasan.

Late in the afternoon walking on tracks, but without problems I arrived on Vanovskaya again. I was very tired. It was the first time in my life including Siberia, that I walked so many kilometers atonce. I spent my last 5 rubles on a wagen ride to Palasan. At that time I even didn't have one kopeyek in my pocket. Before my trip to Fergana I borrowed 30 rubles from my friend Leo Julie, and you could believe me, that as much as I wanted to I wasn't in a position to give this money back to him until two years later.

On the way to kolhoz I saw Anna getting some fuel for their cooking stove. (Details how to obtain fuel will follow later). I wanted to get off the wagen, and help her, but my feet wouldn't carry me, so I continued on the wagen the rest of the way to Palasan.

Back in the house I told everybody about my adventures in Fergana, and then I got a good night rest on couple of Schnalls wooden boxes. In the morning after everybody went to work I took my papers to the Regional Soviet in Alti-Arik, registered there, and recived my new referals for six persons to be admitted to kolhoz Achun Baybayev.

Kolhoz Achun Baybayev was located on a large plaza, with it's front on the main highway. First there was the village store, with no merchandise to sell. Next to the store stood the village "Choy-hana" (teahouse). There the men used to drink their hot tea and gossip. Teahouse also served as communal meeting place and for court sessions.

Kolhoz buildings were located behind the store and teahouse, and separated from the village road by a rather tall clay wall mixed with shreded straw. The large entrance gate served people to get in and out and ~~as well~~ the animals, horses pulled wagens (arbas) as well.

The inside plaza was shaped as capital "L". The bottom part of the letter was the kolhoz storage building (ambar) and the offices. The long part were barns, stables, and grain storages. In summertime much of grain was stored outside on the plaza, until before the rain season. The head of the kolhoz was "Perecidatel" (Leader). Second in command was "Hosulat"(Agricultural Adviser). Other members of the leadership were: Cashier, storage supervisor, and leaders of field brigades. Stableman was also a main sheep shephard. But the most important man was the secretary, because he knew how to write and read. The most of the kolhoz leadership was illiterate including the leader. On the bottom of the scale were two young people already educated in Soviet schools who kept count of working people and norms. They also knew how to write and read.

At the time of my arrival in Achun Baybayev, an illiterate man was the leader. His name was Nazar-Aka. The word "Aka" means brother, to emphasize teachings of Islam that all men are brothers. Women added to their names word "Hon" which ment sister.

Old ladies have had added "Hola" to their names. In Uzbek language the word ment "Campr" (old lady).

My first meeting with the kolhoz leader Nazar-Aka wasn't friendly at all. He was mad and mean alltogether. He was yelling some words, which I didn't understand anyway. Truly, he needed another six people in his kolhoz, like a hole in his head. With the war going on, bad economy and all kind of shortages, he faced many problems with his own people. Yet, our being there was out of his hands, and he had to accept us. As time went by he became friendly with me, the same way as he was with others. He learned some Russian words from us, mostly the dirty ones. He loved listen to our conversations, and used to have lots of fun when he could catch any of us using those words.

He wasn't able to pronounce "Czeslaw" so he called me "Cherknov".

But all the friendship aside, he wasn't to anxious to find room for our family. The locals wouldn't give up their spaces, even if they had some available. It took some time, after our family arrived, that we finally get our quarters. For time being we felt very bad to sit on the backs of Leniowers and the others in their small house. At last the kolhoz quartermaster assingned to us a small one room house, taken away from an old woman Tilo-Hola. She used to produce there larvas to raise cocoons for silk manufacturing. Another peasant was forced to give up one of those large wooden bench-bed combinations.

As soon as I was accepted, even before my parents arrived I went to work. My first day assignment and initiation as well, was to clean out the stable from cows manure. (Uzbek expression; "Goon Taschy"). Our work there was Agriculture in a most primitive way. Besides cleaning stables, we worked in fields, cleaning them before the spring planting season, we dug ditches, and small canals for irrigation purposes. But the most important work was to clean cotton fields from previous year's debris. Those dried-up sticks served the whole population as heating wood. We used to carry them on our backs on the way home from work. Sometimes we crossed over the main canal not on a real bridge, but on a thick pipe thrown over the water. With those sticks on our backs, one wrong move, and any of us could found himself at the bottom of the canal. Not such a good idea, if you take into consideration, that most of us didn't know how to swimm. On some occasions, the Schnall brothers carried grandpa Abraham on their backs, because he couldn't force himself to walk on this pipe.

In those early days, it wasn't to bad. The kolhoz still HAD plenty of wheat and flour, so each day after work the cashier paid us with one kilogram of flour per person. Even Israel Suedwerts got paid, and he had plenty of money from his relatives in America, and didn't do one honest day of work.

I lived with Leniowers maybe three weeks. As always they have been kind and very good to me, considering the not so good situation. Later when my family arrived we all spent another week laying all over the place at night. In daytime wasn't to bad, because most of us went to work.

Back in Bukhara my mother have waited a long time before she recived my letter. As usually she thought the worst have happened to me. Still at the end, all worked out fine. That time around my family needed permission to travel. At last when they arrived on Vanovskaya, half of uncle Ludwik's baggage was missing. We thought it was stolen, but finally arrived one months later. In meantime Leniowers gave us their own comforters sheets and pillows.

So with our new room, baggage and stove in place, at last we were able to arrange our quarters, unpack our few rags and position suitcases and some uncle Ludwik's wooden cases in a way so they could serve as chairs and tables, and to start going on with our lives, hoping for early end to the worldwide madness.

Before spring of 1942 arrived the kolhoz leadership didnt hesitate to sent us to work many kilometers away from Palasan. It took for us much longer to get there, then to perform the work assigned to us. And again it was digging and carrying dirt , while constructing another irrigation canal.

Kolhoz Achun Baybayev!

As before on Siberia I spent evenings after work with Anna. We have been together all the time possible. Really there was no place to go. When days got warmer and longer, we went for walks, or rested after work in a shadow of a tree, the only one in the courtyard, and with some grass around it.The rest of the courtyard was just clay.

My last official visit to Alti-Arik before planting season began was to register with militia. I tried to convince the Uzbek in charge there, and I succeded not to pay attention to the "Makschein" on our documents and to register us under "Mondschein" our real name. This militia oficer didn't object and obliged me. It wasn't "kosher" because if I would be arrested or forced to show my documents I still would be "Makschein". Anyway in Polish delegation we registered as "Mondscheins".

Spring finally came and in March 1942 the rain season ended, and work in cotton fields began. From then on everything depended on irrigation. A large canal was slowly flowing near Vanovskaya. From this canal all towns and villages all over Fergana Valley took water for drinking and irrigation, through smartly build labirynths of small or larger ariks (canals) flowing along villages roads and surrounding all cotton fields, wheat fields, vegetable patches, corn fields, and with an easy access to private fields and gardens.

At the entrance to every village, there was a large and deep pool, always filled-up with water. During the hot summer days, when water was essential for irrigation, populatipn was forced to use water from those pools, even if the water wasn't clean enough. Young people from the village used to bath there all the time. And we never drank this water before boiling it first.

As part of their dressing code all Uzbeks, men and women alike, carried with them colorful scarfs. As religious Jews tie themselves with a black thin rope with pon-pons around their waists to separate the upper body from the lower, so the Uzbeks use their scarfs to do the same thing. In many other special ways those scarfs are also being used as billfolds and documents holders, and as protection of their heads from sun and sweat. Their heads were always covered with almost replicas of Jewish kipas or yarmulkas. Uzbek name for it was "dupe". Uzbek man also used their scarfs as swimming trunks. They simply tie them around their bottoms the same way, mothers tie diapers around their babies.

Another old custom having to do with water, didn't allow men to carry buckets with water either from pool or river or canal. This so-called tradition always was a part of womens chores. I found out about this tradition the hard way. I went once with a bucket to fill-up with water from the pool. When I moved few feet away from pool going back home, boys who swam there to show their displeasure started to throw stones at me. I threw some stones back and ran home. I never went to the pool after water with men around again.

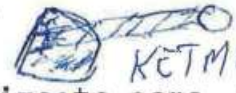
Arik passing next to our hut, served us in summer as our bathing place.

Kolhoz Achun Baybayev have had three or four working brigades, with a man in charge for each brigade. Us and the Russians living in kolhoz had our own brigade. Our leader was Mr. Marmur. His first name was Max, so Uzbeks used to call him "Maxim-Aka". (Brother Max). Grandpa Abraham was Abram-Aka, my father was Yakob-Aka. our girls names were: Anna-Hon, Elo-Hon, and because couldn't pronounce "F", they called Frieda Prudo-Hon. Grandma Frances was Phaygo-Hon and my mother Roso-Hon.

The leader of the kolhoz attached our brigade to Uzbek brigade No.1, under leadership of a man who was son in law to an old man Koreak-Bua. This man before the revolution was the richest man in Palasan. Most of the kolhoz land used to belong to him. Soviet took away from him most of his land, and also left him with his two houses. In one of those houses Leniowers and their friends made their home. Koreak-Bua and Tilo-hola would never let us have their houses if the authorities wouldn't force them to do so.

Soviet leaders of that area knew very well, that Koreak-Bua was a real good expert on agriculture, so they gave him a job as a first perecidatel (leader) of the kolhoz.

In each brigade 100-200 men and women worked on the parcels of land assigned to them, by the collective leadership. At first a tractor from the main regional garage wrecked all the fields. Next ploughs pulled by oxes, gave it a once over. Then women with light instruments used to break hard pieces of dirt. Places where tractor and ploughs couldn't reach, were mens responsibility to dig and clear out the area with an large instrument called digger, or in Uzbek language "ketmen". This kind of digger served many purpuses, which at present times are being performed by machines.



Spring of 1942 was just the beginning of bad times to come. This was an interim period between winter and summer. Not only for us but for the majority of Uzbeks and Russian refugees shortages of food were hard to overcome. Crops from previous year were already exhausted, and the ones available on bazaar were to expensive for our pockets. Kolhoz still was paying us with the one kilogram of flour, but on certain occasions, they made all kind of excuses not to pay us for our work, by simply telling us, as they used to put it, that "producta" (flour) was not available that particular evening, which was a dirty lie, because we saw the large container all filled up with flower. They simply stole from us our daily ration. It was a sorry sight to see all of us at midnight going home emptyhanded, with nothing to show for our hard work, just to get up in few short hours again and go to work, worrying that the same thing might happen again. Seldom on next evening they would pay us back. Nothing we could do about this situation. We had to be satisfied with what we recived. After all the previous night was much worse.

Every day at 5am those brigadiers practicaly draged out those Uzbek women to work. Men went themselves. They knew they don't have any other choice. When fields were faraway from villages those women were given rides on large "arbas" (wagens pulled by horses, with the driner sitting on horse's back).

All Uzbek women have dressed in long dresses, light thin shoes or boots. Their only underwear were pants longer then their dresses. Women who fed their babies by breast used to have two openings on both sides of their dresses. They usually covered their faces with a scarf or jacket, but on special occasions they wore veils called "paranhza". Modern Uzbek women covered their heads as men with "dupes" (kipas).

Men used to wear boots all the time. During the hot summers they wore specialy designed shirts and pants made from linen. Pants were usually shorter then regular pants with funny looking baggy behind. We always thought that this style was for precautionary measures (emergencies). Mens and womens clothing for winters was always cotton lined.

All Uzbek chewed a special kind of tobacco, called "nosovoy". Most of them smoked pot mixed with water. Most of their homes, even the rich ones had one large room with many niches, where they kept their pots and pans and all kinds of other things and food. They kept their valuables and clothing in colorful chests. For cold winters they dug a large square hole in the middle of the room, and kept it filled-up all the time with hot ashes. They slept around that hole with their feet in it and covered with comforters. By tradition all Uzbeks slept outside in summertime.

The hard work in fields was getting even harder, when sun was claiming highier and highier. Noon was the time for lunch and short rest. As all over the world even in Uzbekistan in collective farms some people were poor, and some of them used to be better off. The poor ones were hungry as us. The others ate good lunches. Mostly we brought from home some raw vegetables or fruit when possible. In springtime was even hard to get raw vegetables, except for the large green raddishes. During the hungry days in kolhoz we credited this raddish as our main lifesaver.

On some occasions kolhoz have prepared soup for lunch. Sometimes there was kasha soup or wheat soup or when meat was available they cooked vegetable soup with meat chunks, called "shurpa". Preparing a soup like this, or in a matter of facts to prepare any kind of food by Uzbeks was like to attend a very important ceremony. They used to fill-up a large drum with all those vegetables, and lamb meat, after adding salt and fat, they kept pouring into the drum as much water as possible. They picked and made one man from the whole bunch responsible for making a large fire under the drum and who kept stiring it all the time until the stuff was ready to eat. Without any doubt this soup was delicious, and who of us ate faster, got a good chance to get another portion.

At their homes Uzbeks have done their cooking the same way. Only the drum was smaller and always set on so-called oven, shaped as a small fireplace, all built from clay mixed with choped stroh. There was a hole under the drum and another hole in the ceiling for the smoke to get out.

Uzbek national menu was very good. Women and men as well could prepare many delicacies, and their most cherished delicacy was rice pilaf, made from rice, vegatables and xxxx lamb meat.

During the working hours they drank lots of tea and ate lepyoshki, their flat bread. To eat plenty of lepyoshkis was our dream, not easy to fulfill. Our daily diet contained two small lepyoshki, one in the morning with coffee or tea. When lepyoshki weren't available we ate a milk mixed with water noodle soup. For lunch we ate mixed noodle and vegetable soup, and in the evening the second lepyoshki with green raddishes and tea or coffee again. In the village we used to by milk by "stakan" (glass). One glass daily for the whole family for 5 rubles per glass, just to feel the taste of milk. Our tea was so-called green tea used by Uzbeks. Coffee was "erzatz"made from some dried out oats. When real tea wasn't available my father used to skin small thin sticks from young fruit trees, which dipped in hot water like xxxxxx tea bags, gave the water xxxx tea's coloring and taste. In summertime our diet was much better, because of new fruit and vegetable, avaiable on the bazaar, or under trees and in fields with an easy access for us to steal.

At times our hunger was so great, that we couldn't wait for fruit to get ripe on trees. We used to steal them still green. After cooking as we ate them, sauer, our mouthes and tongue could hardly tolerate them, but we kept eating them anyway.

Hard times and scarce food supplies. A xxxxxx sorry sight to see our group sitting in a circle and envy Uzbeks eating their lepyoshki and drinking tea. Maybe some of them felt sorry for us, and offered a cup of tea with a silly question; "Choy kushayet?" (Would you like to eat some tea?) We accepted tea, but would rather eat a piece of lepyoshki. And here comes another sad thought. Who can forget the time, when Anna xxx got an extra plate of soup during the lunch hour in field and took it home walking 3 km. just to bring some of this soup to grandma Frances, because her mother was hungry, and then went back to work.

This was also a time that even thou cotton production was very important to the war effort, the authorities in Moscow were forced to reduce it's planting almost in half in order to plant wheat and other crops because of the loss of wheat rich Ukraine to the German occupation.

From lack of food grandpa Abraham and his friend Max Marmur got all swollen on their faces. To help out in very serious situation, my mother, grandma Frances and Mrs. Marmur used to go around the village asking for work in Uzbeks homes. With men hard at work in fields, some of their wives showed little compasion. On another hand those women were lazy, even to do their work around the house. So our ladies worked for lepyoshki, some flour, little milk, one egg xx or a bowl of soup. For that they cleaned Uzbeks homes. made butter from milk, and separated rice from outside shells. All of us had to have patience. But in those trying days, patience was no virtue, and the new crops were still sometime away.

Chapter 72 (cont)

Kolhoz Achun Baybauev!

In May 1942 suddenly Josef Eisen, brother in law of grandma Frances arrived in Palasan. We don't remember how he located the family. Anyway it took him eight months to find them.

After his arrest in Gliniany, with Frieda's then boyfriend Dudek Glueckman and ~~other~~ others NKVD transported them by train and ship to one of those hard-core labor camps far north near Murmansk area at Barents Sea. Trains couldn't take them that far, so Eisen found himself on one of them famous death ships, where they fed the prisoners with fish and herrings. This was a ship where hundreds of prisoners very thirsty stood in lines day and night in order to get into the only restroom for prisoners on the entire ship. After eating those salted herrings these people drank galons of water to quench their thirst, which in order caused dysentery. It seemed like a scene from a horror movie. All those men yelling, fighting, and those who couldn't hold anymore relieving themselves on the spot.

But Josef Eisen was a man of faith, and his faith helped him to survive. He was also smart. Maybe, just maybe he had some hiden money with him. I am quite sure that he was wise enough not to eat those salty herrings, and didn't try to wash them down with water. Since his childhood he had some kind of a defect in his left arm.So probably this defect kept him from hard labor. Even in those terrible conditions he menaged to observe Sabath. During Passover he didn't eat bread, somehow exchanging it for sugar, and also fasted on Yom-Kipur. Like thousands of others after the amnesty he headed south. When he arrived in kolhoz he was still carrying with him some of his clothing, he took with him in time of his arrest, including his hat he used to wear in Tuchow before the war. He was always very clean and neatly dressed.. Everybody was very happy to see him, but most happy was grandma Frances who in her heart have hoped that Eisen and her beloved sister Helen will still reunite with God's help.

I met Eisen for the first time in Achun Baybayev. Grandma Frances was determed to keep her brother in law in best shape possible. In comparison he had the best going of all of us. He was much better off then the whole Leniower family. I guess girls resented this situation sometimes, but none of them wouldn't want to upset their mother.

Uncle Eisen never worked in Achun Baybayev. He had a sharp tongue, talked alot and criticism of other was his game. His views counted most of the time, no matter how others felt about them and that somebody got hurt in course of those discussions, He used to walk around the village talking with Uzbeks about Judaism and Islam pointing out to them some similarities. It got to a point that Uzbeks started to call him "Mullah" (A Holly Man). He also liked to show off his defective arm, mostly to Uzbeks who came home wounded ~~at~~ from the frontlines, like somebody was saying I was there before you.

So thank to good care by grandma Frances uncle Josef Eisen survived, but his wife a very dear grandma's sister Helen did not.

In meantime hard work in fields continued. Cotton was almost all planted, and winter wheat was almost ready for harvest, and so kolhoz was getting ready to plant corn and "Dhzugara" (barley) on those empty wheat fields.

Despite all those better news our situation didn't improve. More and more after long hours of work in fields, at night we kept going home emptyhanded. Without any concret explanation kolhoz simply refused to pay us. Yes we had some friends there like those two Soviet educated young Uzbeks who kept control over the workers, but there was nothing they could help us with. One of them Tohir already came home from the war without his left arm, the other one was Urun-Bay Abdurahmanov, a very decent young man who was drafted later and never returned.

Without other means of support the time came for us to look for work elsewere. Shortly an opportunity presented itself for a seasonal employment in a place called "Ray-Sholk" (Regional silk). Anna found the place for us. They produced silk threads from cocoons. At least there we recived small pay, 600 grams of bread and hot soup for lunch.

Chapter 73

Regional Silk!

For next three months of summer Regional Silk was helping us in our fight for survival. The work wasn't hard at all, but extrimly boring. The supervisor there was Halbekov, an Uzbek and a real specialist in his trade. The director of the plant was a young, good looking Soviet educated man. He probably was a party man, very seldom seen around the establishment. With everything he depended on Halbekov who was an expert on cocoons, but not a good public relations man. He was a quiet man. He spoke Russian fairly well, but his orders and speech as well used to come out like a murmur.

All of us worked there in the beginning after Anna found the place. Every morning our group marched together; Ela, Frieda, I, Heniek Zimetbaum, Mrs. Marmur, Schnalls and other Polish and Russian refugees. Working there didn't mean that we abandoned Kolhoz Achun Baybayev. Later when work at Regional-Silk was completed we returned there hoping that situation changed, but not such luck. Our misery continued.

At last the time came, when ripe fruit was hanging on the trees ready to be picked, and lots of it lay already under the trees. We used to walk around with cloth bags picking "urug" (apricots), "sheptaly" (peaches), all kinds of plums, apples, pears and others. But the most important fruit which started all of us on the way of some improvement was "Tut". This fruit was white and shaped like small rasberries. It grew on tall trees.. It started to fall in early summer, and was very sweet. Uzbeks used to pick "tut" and dry it in special dishes. Its color changed after drying from white to light brown. And came out from the dish in a shape of cake. In either form; Fresh or dry "tut" for time being was our lifesaver.

Another opportunity presented itself to us while walking home from Regional Silk. In this small village midway between Alti-Arik and Palasan was this large fruit orchard. We didn't realize then that this orchard was a private property. We were sure that it was under kolhoz ownersship, so every day we used to load up full our bags. Finally the owners got wise of our dealings and one afternoon ambushed our whole group while we were stealing their fruit. We had a real fight on our hands, but no one of us got hurt. Schnall brothers did most of the fighting, covering our escape and leaving our daily loot behind.

There was this young man in Palasan, also liberated after the amnesty. His name was Abraham Presseisen. Everybody used to call him "Abrashka". He was from Sosnowiec in Polish Silesia, a son of a nice well off family.

When he came from Siberia to Palasan and later to Alti-Arik, he was sick. He went to hospital, but his health instead to improve got much worse.. It got to a point that doctors thought that he will be gone shortly.

Our Anna was one of those people who helped him as much as she could, ofcourse with the help of Polish delegation also. Anna used to bring him extra food, talked to him and tried hard to cheer him up. Evidently doctors and Anna's help paid off. Little by little Abrashka regained his strengh. He left hospital on croutches, skinny beyond recognition. I guess he was a fighter. He never gave up. With some more help from the delegation, the new fruit and vegetables helped him tremendously. Later he came to work with us at Regional Silk. Not only he kept working. He also knew much better then us, how to take good care on himself. Abrashka used to steal from Regional-Silk oversized white linen needed to cover cocoons while they were drying out. In a restroom on the far side of the plant he wraped those sheets one by one around his skinny body and during lunchtime used to sell them for good money on the local bazaar.

As we all know human nature always demands from us more and more. So it came that after few weeks we weren't satisfied anymore with our rations and pay at Regional-Silk. All of us Russians included, we decided to go on strike. Strikes in Soviet Union were against the law, and those Russians should have warn us. But they didn't and went along. Well! We didn't win anything. The bookkeeper a Rumanian Jew,,was so scared and kept pulling his hair out. He brought Halbekov and the director in who begged us to stop. They didn't notify the NKVD, because they were afraid for their own skins. LUCKILY THE NEWS DIDN'T SPREAD. BOY! HOW FOOLISH WE WERE!

Chapter 74

Polish Citiziens in USSR!

Two different groups of Polish citiziens used to live in Soviet Union during the stretch between 1939-1946. Our group and other people like us who as refugees from German side refused Soviet citizienship, which resulted in the deportation of more then 100,000 peoples to the Siberian wilderness.

The second group were former residents of Western Ukraine, White Russia and Polish Lithuania (The Vilna district). After the annexation of those territories by Soviet Union they became Soviet Citiziens, and have been by Soviet authorities forbiten to join the first group and recive any relief help from Polish representatives in Soviet Union, even thou those Polish delegates would gladly take them in, because the head of Polish government in London general Sikorski during his negotiations with Stalin, demanded and recived a promise that those former Polish eastern territories would be returned to Poland with their former population.

After the German attack on Soviet Union all those Polish citiziens, liberated from Siberia kept converging on Soviet southern Republics from the north. The second group who fled from the quick moving German army, kept coming from north-west.

In the fall of 1941 Poles established their embassy in Moscow. When Germans made their way very close to the gates of Moscow they evacuated to Kuybishev along with other embassies and Soviet government. Afterwords Poles organized consular posts in larger Soviet cities, who in turn opened small delegations in towns, villages and kolhozes where Polish citiziens have settled. All the orders and help used to come from such cities like Tashkent, Bukhara or Samarkand. Our main delegation was located in Fergana.

Thanks to Jews in United States and some Polish organizations a trememdous relief effort took place in America under the auspices of Joint Distribution Committee to help all of us suffering in Soviet Union. All king of foods and goods, and money were donated by American business and working people and sent to Soviet Russia. If all those gifts would reach us intact we would suffer much less. Needless to say, only a fraction of this help reached us in all those small towns and villages. Lots of it was stolen by Soviet officials in ports of entry. Then the cream of what was left the heads of delegations took for themselves. In time the stuff arrived in Fergana, or Palasan or any other place the local official also took off something from the top, leaving just a small fraction to be divided among the starving masses. Ofcourse there were people who did not need help at all, like Mr. Kutcher and Mr. Zelichowski, who speculated on black market, but they never refused anything.

Many people took advantage of the gifts of summer, and even being able to work decided not to. They used to live from trees, fields and gardens, spending those hot lazy days in shadows of large trees, and slept at night just any place. Those were the people who first spread the news about the Polish army forming in nearby Margelan and expected an early announcement about our departure.

The relief help first came to Fergana in summer 1942. Our group in Achun Baybayev selected Mr. Suedwertz for a small fee to go to Fergana, register all of us and bring our gifts. He walked 60 km both ways and came with a large bag on his back with all kinds of stuff, for 22 people. He repeated this performance two or three times, but after couple of months the delegate from Fergana opened a sub-delegation in Palasan to help all those people living and working in kolhozes, in Alti-Arik and Vanovskaya.

To everybody's surprise the nomination went to Mr. Wilman who with his family spent with us the time at the Siberian settlement No.2.and at the time of the nomination lived and worked in the nearby kolhoz Kirov.

Nobody never knew how he got the job. We speculated that his wife Jadzia had something to do with it, because a Polish lieutenant in charge of administration in Margelan used to like her. Another version was that Mr. Kwapinski who was in Tashkent at that time helped Mr. Wilman out.

The fact was that there were more Polish Jews then real Poles at that time in Soviet Union. In a matter of facts a Jew was the head delegate in Fergana, and so was the man in Bukhara before we left there.

As far Mr. Wilman was concerned, he didn't know Mr. Kwapinski that well, so at the end we concluded that he got the job because just being a Pole.

Well! Mr. Wilman was lucky. The other young family who came to Palasan from Otkritiy, was the Latawiec family. Also Poles they had two small children, Being a former soldier Mr. Latawiec joined the Polish army. Ofcourse it was a great help for his family. He used to visit them on weekends bringing home lots of good stuff. I felt sorry for myself and other Jewish young people, who would also join Polish army if not for the Polish command making it very difficult for us.

Mrs. Wilman liked the Leniower girls very much. I assume that during the bad times in Siberia grandpa Abraham helped them not one time only. Thanks to Mrs. Wilman Anna got her job helping out Sick Polish people in hospital and otherwise. Later Frieda quit her job in Regional-Silk because Mrs. Wilman hired her as a delegation's secretary. I don't imagene that salary was to big, but when food and clothing arrived for distribution, they used to get double rations.

I think that Mr.&Mrs. Wilman cared, and have had good hearts, to a degree ofcourse. I am also quite sure that they cared more then their Jewish successors. Anyway as with all those other delegates greed was the primary objective.

As many times in the past my mother made sure and went to promote me to Mr. Wilman. She didn't mean nothing by her visit, just to ask him to think about me if an opportunity would present itself. Ofcourse there was nothing available, but he promised my mother to keep me in mind. I even didn't think about working there, it never crossed my mind that mother went there. So it came to us as a great shock when Anna told me later, that my mother made a statement to Wilmans, that I deserved the job more then Anna and Frieda. The whole story was a vicious lie. My mother would never in her life do such thing. On the contrary she was very happy for the girls, she liked them very much and was very happy and proud that Anna and I had a close relation. What reasons Wilmans would have to say those lies I could never figure out.

It wasn't to much later, that it came to my knowledge that not only strangers could be mean, even a real close family could get mean also. My dear aunt Rose expressed her feeling about me to Anna in rather demeaning way. She told her, that she don't understand, how come Anna could stay with me, as me being no good, and wouldn't amount to nothing in the future anyway, and as far as aunt Rose was concerned, Anna was wasting her time with me.

Well! How did you like this? And this wasn't all. Aunt Rose wasn't through yet. Few days later she told my mother, that she had enough of our togetherness. She was tired of keeping house together with us, and didn't want my mother's help anymore. Ofcourse it was a shock for us. After all thanks to uncle Ludwik we kept surviving. I am sure that he felt bad about this situation, but there was nothing he could do against nagging of his wife. We had to try harder as long our health kept functioning. Despite her attitude aunt Rose was lost without my mother. She wasn't able to do nothing by herself. She still had this idea in her head that she was the big, rich lady from Cracow, looking down on other people. Other people used to recognize her behavior after only one meeting with her.

Back at the Polish delegation in Palasan Mr. Wilman made his new friend Fredek Gross his first deputy. The Gross family hiding their Jewishness, also played big. Fredek Gross dressed-up in Polish army uniform, kept walking around Alti-Arik, Palasan and Vanovskaya, stating that freedom was just around the corner, and that all of us would be out of Soviet Union pretty soon. In a matter of facts this great news was passed from village to village from mouth to mouth.

Chapter 74 (cont)

Polish Citiziens in USSR!

An aura of anticipation continued to hang all over the area. Like all our doubts suddenly disapeared. People traveling to Margelan and Fergana and back told us stories about the new Polish army forming there, about the new Polish uniforms, who in reality were the same as worn by British soldiers.

Frieda and Anna kept working at the delegation. Frieda's job was just an office job. Anna on the other hand was all the time exposed, while spending long hours with ill people, trying to bring them little comfort in their suffering. Many times she couldn't do nothing for them. Many young people kept passing on in front of her eyes, alone without families, who probably suuffered even more from Nazis hands.

In meantime a Polish family of eight moved in to our kolhoz. They took over the place previously occupied by the Homski family from Odessa. The young Monia Homski was drafted and was sent into Red Army's Oficers school. Mrs. Homski and daughter Rachela moved to Vanovskaya, where Mrs. Homski became a seamstress. Rachela got a job, when new construction have begun on Vanovskaya. Later Monia failed the tests at the oficers school and was sent to fight Germans. He didn't last to long. He was killed shortly after arrival at the front. Rachela withheld the tragic news from her mother, and Mrs. Homski kept hoping all those years that some day her son will return.

Soon happiness, changed to gloom. New persistant rumors started to circulate that only Polish soldiers and their families will leave Soviet Union. Each day it was harder for a Jew to be accepted into Polish army. According to the rumors Stalin was against Jews leaving Soviet Union, and General Sikorski the head of Polish government in London didn't dare to protest, just making statements that Jews are no fighters. So prospect for us to leave Uzbekistan became almost null.

Only uncle Ludwik was in position to change all this by contacting his good friend Mr. Kwapinski in Moscow or Kuybishev, who I am quite sure after all those good deeds, which uncle Ludwik performed for him and his family, would be more then happy to secure our passage from Soviet Union to Iran.

But uncle Ludwik was against the whole idea for a reason not known to us. Instead one evening he told aunt Rose, that perhaps he might explore another idea. He paid a visit to our delegate Mr. Wiman and offered him many valuable gifts. We thought that once in Iran we will be able to reach Palestine, and as we found out later General Anders's Polish army was heading there anyway, by the order of British command.

Mr. Wilman after consulting with his wife, accepted uncle's offer. Among other things, still new, aunt Rose parted with her jewelry and some gold pieces. Everything was cleared by Mr. Wilman with this Polish lieutenant in Margelan who put us on the repartriation list. We even solved a problem of being declared an army family, by showing them a picture of my cousin Alexander Mondschein from Cracow, who at the start of the 1939 campaign served in then Polish army. We told them that Alexander was my parents older son, who disapeared during the fighting between Poles and Germans. On the back of the picture I wrote a sad good-by from Alexander to us and uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose, before going to war.

All this was a tremendous break for our family, but for me it was a beginning of new frustrations, because under no circumstances I wanted to part with Anna again. A thought of staying behind crossed my mind.

So you could imagene my joy and happiness when Anna told me that Mrs. Wilman sent Frieda and Ela with a letter to her lieutenant asking him to put Leniowers on the traveling list also.

I guess the lieutenant was eager to do favors for Mrs. Wilman. After a short conversation with the girls, he also accepted the Leniower family for the upcoming journey to Iran.

Our two families were very happy, but still we felt sorry for our other friends who didn't have other choices but to stay behind. Even thou they Were our friends, but deep down they hoped that something will go wrong.

We all were certain about going to Iran, when Mr. Wilman gave us the departure date, and also told us to sell the junk we want to leave behind.Going further south to even warmer country then Uzbekistan, and later planing to go to Palestine made the old already torn warm Russian clothing also in some cases infested with lice "out of style".

So our modern day miracle was just around the corner. Heniek Zimetbaum and I were still working at Regional-Silk, but we took our work rather lightly.

On this particular day, two days away from the journey, we left the work at noon, hoping not to return anymore, and even forgeting about the money, still coming to us.

After entering the house Heniek and I knew right away that something was wrong. The faces of my parents, uncle Ludwik's and aunt Rose's brought us back into the old reality. They didn't have to tell us, that our journey to freedom was off. The message from Mr. Wilman was, that Stalin insisted that Jews stay behind. Ofcourse we accepted the message, but nobody would convince us otherwise, that not Stalin, but general Sikorski and his advisers left us to rat in Soviet Union.

Wilmans being nice people gave back aunt Roses gifts, but just for their effort aunt Rose gave them some things anyway.

It was just our bad luck. Because we didn't go, nothing prevented many other Jews from paying and making sure not to be left behind. Among them was our delegate from Fergana and hundreds others. The Poles took with them the famous Rabbi from Bobov (Bobover Rebe), whose sons and grandsons preside now over a large group of followers of the old Rebe including the former uncle Josef Eisen. IN BROOKLYN

As for us, we had to start all over again (minus our torn clothing) and pick-up our fight for survival. Ofcourse our friends and neighbours, had their dream come through. We didn't leave them behind.

Mr. Wilman left some food for us, mostly dry bread, which was important under the circumstances.. To smooth the things out he also said that he made arrangements for uncle Ludwik to take over as the head of the delegation in Palasan, which turned out to be a lie. One day after Wilman's departure on the orders from Fergana Dr. Cecilia Perlberger a very shroud person took over the job. She didn't know a thing about Wilman's promise, but still offered a job to uncle Ludwik to help her out, which he categoricaly refused.

Mr. Wilman and his family left just in time. One day later local militia and NKVD arrived in his office with orders to arrest him. Already on his way to Iran he was lucky, if not he probably would never leave Soviet Union again.

The new Polish family in kolhoz also left for Iran. Their father came one day to late, working away on some job for kolhoz. But I think, that he was able to cathch-up with his family at the assembly point. If not he was left behind in Soviet Union.

Little by little the shock of not leaving, and the disapointment of uncle Ludwik of loosing his new job as soon as he got it, started to wear out.

Dr. Perlberger was a childrens doctor, from a small town of Wieliczka near Cracow. Nobody knew, where her husband was. Some thought, that he was on German side, others said that he was somewhere with Polish army. And there were those who said, that she was divorsed. with her she had an friend Eda Rosenzwieg also from Wieliczka, who helped her with the household, and as a nurse. In the beginning Eda used to work as a nurse in Alti-Arik clinic. When Dr. Perlberger took over the delegation, she also gave Eda a job there. Dr. Perlberger also had a son Richard, maybe one year older then Belek Marmur.

Anna and Frieda kept working at the delegation, for time being at least. Later Dr. Perlberger hired Shmil Zalmen Goldberg, in order to have a man around at her new job. They both made quite a couple working together. Goldberg remained on this job until the end, even after his family moved to Fergana

Chapter 75

Sikorski-Stalin Doublecross!

For a while now let us leave our personal problems behind, and concentrate on the subject, that have us stranded in the Soviet Union in summer of 1942, which let us to believe, we have been doomed to life in Soviet Union forever.

Whatever I will write in this chapter are excerpts from "White Nights"a book written by Menahem Begin (former prime minister of Israel) as he tells his story as a prisoner in Soviet Union.

Mr. Begin was a lawyer in Warsaw prior to the war of 1939, and considered by some as a leader of Betar (Jewish Revisionist Party) in Poland. To escape the Germans Mr. Begin and his wife found themselves in Vilna, where many others Betar members from Warsaw also took refuge. In 1940 after Soviet Union annexed Lithuania, Mr. Begin as a leader of an Anti-Soviet party have been followed for weeks by NKVD agents and finally arrested in September 1940. After many months of interrogation Mr. Begin was convicted and deported to Siberia.

Shortly before his departure NKVD allowed him to see his wife. It was a pleasant surprise for Mr, Begin, but he got surprised even more, when a Young good looking woman appeared in front of him. This young lady have menaged to explain to Mr. Begin that she was a member of Betar underground, and that his wife with other people was already smugled out and safely arrived in Palestine. Later during German occupation this young woman was hard at work for all kind of causes, just to help Jews to survive. Finally the Gestapo caught up with her, tortured and killed her.

Mr. Begin traveled a long time in those box cars, by foot and ships and in summer of 1941 still didn't arrive at his final destination. During this trip he met many Polish Jews, some of them members of prominent Jewish families in Warsaw who in their youth embraced communizm and later fell victims of Stalin's purges and sentenced to spent their lives in prisons and labor camps of Siberia forever. One of those men was such a devout communist, and proud of it that in the good old times in Warsaw he insisted that his domestic help eat with him at the same table in the family's elegant dining room. An other man, a Russian Jew also a devout communist, who in his days of glory held high posts in communist hierarchy. Later another victim of Stalin purges, very ill, in rags was being transfered from camp to camp until he died in Mr. Begin's arms. During those travels this man asked Mr. Begin and he obliged him with all those stories about Jewish religion and history. As a young man he knew all. Few minutes before his dead he insisted that Mr. Begin sings for him "Hatikvah" and again Mr. Begin obliged.

The news of the amnesty found Mr. Begin still on a ship to the gulag. Representatives of NKVD with other prisoners took him off the ship to the loud protests of some Russian prisoners that Begin wasn't a Pole, but just a "Zhid" (Jew).

After wandering through Soviet Union from North to South Begin finally arrived in Uzbekistan. By chance after a conversation with some people he found his sister and her family. With them was a known Jewish woman in prewar Poland Lea Vitkovski, one of the leaders of "Bund" a Jewish Socialist Party who oposed Zionism. After the war this woman testified before the United Nations and gave evidence on the labor conditions in Soviet Union. She also told Mr. Begin the story of former Bund leaders in Poland Alter and Ehrlich, who were invited to see comrade Beria the head of NKVD, and never came back from the friendly meeting. Few months later it was made known to the world that the two Bundist leaders had been executed for helping the German armies.

In his book Mr. Begin continued, that Alter and Ehrlich acctually fell victims to the Japanese attack om Pearl Harbor. The Soviet Union needed those men as long as United States did not joined the conflict in Europe. Although German columnus were halted at the gates of Moscow the plight of Soviet Union continued to be very grave.

Sikorski-Stalin Doublecross!

Soviet Union in such a serious situation, counted on Western Powers for assistance, particulary the United States. The myth of the magnificent accomplishments of the first socialist state have disapeared with the German attack. While aid from Britain have begun to arrive shortly after the outbreak of hostilities between Soviet Union and Germany, aid from United States was tardy in coming.

In her desire to increase the measure of American assistance without delay, the Soviet government sought ways of influencing the American public upinion by forming the Anti-Fascist Jewish Front, which called Jews the world over "brothers". For this purpose Beria was prepared to send the Bund leaders Alter and Ehrlich to United States together with the delegation of the Anti-Fascist Front to plead for the Soviet case.

But when on December 7 1941 the Mikado bombers sent the American Pacific Fleet to the bottom of the ocean, United States became as belligerent against Japan and Germany as Soviet Union. So Alter and Ehrlich were no longer needed and became expendable. Beria knew that Alter and Ehrlich had been opposed to communizm from the earliest days of the revolution, so the law of revenge applied to them. In addition to this they were Polish Patriots and supported Sikorski's demands, that Poland's rights to the area east of the River Bug (Western Ukraine, Western White Russia, and parts of Lithuania with the city of Vilna) should be recognized. People who were needed were allowed to live in Soviet Union even if they were dangerous, but for dangerous people who were no longer needed, there was but one law; They must disappear. When United States entered the war Alter and Ehrlich were doomed men, condemned to die as German spies, of all things.

Mr. Begin tried to join Polish army, but without success, and soon became clear to him that Jews were not wanted. Everybody knew Stalin's views as he have told Sikorski and Anders (commander in chief of Polish forces in Soviet Union) that Jews were good engineers, doctors, and good in administrative army jobs, but they did not know how to fight. Jews refused to believe those rumors. Yet the Poles kept spreading them to justify their own discrimination against the Jewish citiziens of Poland. Many years later Mr. Begin learnt that the rumor was essentialy true. He also learnt how strong anti-Jewish solidarity can be, if it can put people like Stalin and Molotov, Sikorski and Anders on one and the same side.

Genaral Anders thought That he will have to his disposal 150,000 men, but without Jews whom Stalin called bad fighters, and whom Sikorski branded as black marketeers, the number was much smaller. Both of them Stalin and Sikorski implied that Jews were deserters, and again Sikorski acknowledged that he didn't want such people in Polish army. The two Polish leaders were no doubt very pleased to get Stalin's moral confirmation for their anti-Jewish discrimination. They did not grasp the fact that Stalin will exploit their babblings in order to strike at Poland, which he did couple years later.

Few years later Stalin and Anders who resided with his army in Palestine most of the time until the end of the war, learnt that Jews did know how to fight. In Stalin's name this fact was acknowledged by political commentator of Pravda (Soviet Party Daily) who at the International Convention of Journalists in Prague spoke with wonder about the soldiers of Irgun Zvai Leumi and their deeds.

Mr. Begin was forced to leave the house of his sister in a hurry, because NKVD was looking for him again to arrest him. In the divisional HQ of Polish army in Margelan near Fergana he came across his former friend from Betar in Warsaw Mr. Sheskin, who was thanks to his influence already in the army, and personaly knew the Chief of Staff. The Chief ordered Mr. Begin to appear before the draft board again. The same doctor who rejected Begin before, not only because of his Jewishness, but also because of poor sight and poor heart, on the orders from the Chief of Staff accepted him. Because Mr. Begin was important even then, and also knew important people, he wind-up in Polish army and adventually in Palestine.Us poor souls didn't have no choice but stay put.

Chapter 76

After Poles Left!

To deny their Jewish heritage didn't help the Gross family at all. Mr. Wilman and his Polish clique left them behind anyway. Fredek Gross was furious, calling Wilman"s name with worst insults available, trying hard to regain his Jewish status among Jews.

So 1941 came to an abrupt end when Hong-Kong surrendered to Japan. In 1942 twenty six countries signed The Declaration of The United Nations, and formed a coalition against the Axis nations. On their fast march Japanese took Manila forcing General Mc.Arthur to leave Philipines and retreat to Bataan Peninsula. Japan also invaded Netherland's East Indies and took Singapore from the British. March 1942 saw the fall of Rangoon capital of Burma, and Java was taken away from Dutch, British and American forces. In April US Forces on Bataan also surrended.

On a brighter side on April 18 U.S. planes carried out their first bombing raid on Tokio. May 4-8 American claimed their first victory in the battle of the Coral Sea. Another victory came when in June Japanese planes attacked Midway Islands loosing heavily in the great air and sea battle, and General Eisenhower was appointed Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe.

On the German-Soviet front Sevastopol the main stronghold on Black Sea fell to German-Rumanian forces after 25 days siege.

In Africa General Rommel captured Tobruk, but between August 31 and November 5 British forces led by General Montgomery defeated Rommels Afrika Korps in the battle of Alan Halfa and Alamein in Egypt culminating it on November 13 by retaking Tobruk from Germans.

Some more Allied victories came when U.S. Marines landed on Guadacanal on Solomon Islands, and when British and Canadian commandos raided Dieppe on French coast of English Channel suffering heavy losses.

On November 11, 1942 Hitler took the unoccupied parts of France, but the real turnaround began when November 19-22 under the command of General Zhukov the Red Army started to push German forces under the command of Field Marshall Paulus to a retreat from Stalingrad.

Well! This was not to happy situation in 1942 and in some cases in 1943 on battlefronts of Europe and Asia. But let us not forget that behind those battlelines there was another front in Germany, Poland and other countries occupied by the Nazis. In those countries milions of Jews from all over Europe have been kept in prisons, ghettos, concentration camps, working very hard under un-human conditions, so according to Hitler's "Final Solution" they could be poisoned in so-called gas chambers and later thrown into burning ovens. German police, S.S. aided by Lithuanians, Latvians and Ukrainians and in many cases by the "Ordnung Dienst" (Jewish Ghetto Police) kept eliminating Jews in so-called "Actions"played cat and mouse games with their victims, showing increadable cruelty accompanied by wild animal-like noises and yelling. Before each such spectacle the official explanation to those poor victims was a story about them going someplace to live and work in peace in special places designated for them.

After a while when no news came from those poor people the remaining ghetto inhabitants started to suspect the worse. Their suspicions proved correct, when once in Cracow ghetto a local doctor dentist showed up in ghetto after escaping from a death train before being unloaded in Belzetz death camp.

Dr. Bachner (his name) saved himself, when the train slowly was entering the camp. As in "to be or not to be" he jumped from the then hardly moving transport when it passed a latrine, straight into the hole full of human refuse. He survived in there three days until everything quieted down after the empty train left. As soon as the noise of poisoning and burning horror subsided, he snicked out from the hole and slowly hiding all the time and walking at night made his way back to Cracow ghetto. And this was the way the Jews of Cracow ghetto found out about the fate of their friends and love ones. They knew then for sure that this will be their fate also.

Chapter 76 (cont)

After Poles Left!

Winter and spring of 1943 was disastrous for us and for Russian people as well. But our hunger, besides many people being ill and some of them have died didn't mean that much in comparison with fate of Jews in German occupied territories. This is why on previous page I tried to give you some insight of their situation.

Ofcourse some people wanted to help themselves but weren't either lucky enough or strong enough to adapt to the circumstances. Take for example Dudek Glueckman. Frieda's boyfriend in Gliniany. He came back with uncle Eisen from the camps and settled in Fergana. He got himself a job in a soap factory there. His pay wasn't big enough to live on, so like many others he took a bar of soap, hoping to sell it on bazaar. Everybody from the director down to a sweeper used to steal there. But Glueckman got caught and put in jail, and died there from some illness. Mind you; He wasn't the only one.

Because of bad economy the communist party finally realized that some changes were in order to relief the bad situation. But really they didn't do nothing to help the economy. They just pretended to satisfy their Allies by giving some meaningless freedoms to their people. First of all the government and the party stoped to harras people going to church on Sundays. Uzbeks even started to build new mosques, but they never finished them, because as soon as situation on war fronts reversed itself the harrasment went on all over again.

The Red Army for the same reason, to satisfy the Allies, changed their ranks structure, similar to ones in the west. They replaced their little red cubes with stars and added epaulets to their uniforms. Their government departments got changed from "commisariats" to ministries and replaced the "International" with a new official National Athem. Also NKVD, became MVD, and to watch over national security, they created an offspring to NKVD, called KGB.

Still Russian people loved their country dearly. Even thou most of them didn't like their leaders, they rallied behind them despite the shortages and misery and fought hard to repeal the German aggression.

After selling out most of our good clothing, a new problem became evident every day. What to wear? We even sold my last brown jacket from my brown suit from Cracow (slacks were stolen before on the way to Aldan). The clothing given to us by the Polish delegation was also exchanged for food. What was still visible from my old light jacket, were all kinds of small rags which kept it together. My mother still wore the jacket, which in Zbaraz was lined with cotton with many uncle Ludwiks watches, ofcourse in Palasan, minus watches. With a help from some woman my mother put together two outfits for me and Heniek Zimetbaum made from couple of flour bags. So each of us had a "T" shirt and pair of slacks. From my old Austrian style hat, mother made for me a pair of so-called shoes, known in Polish language as "shmatianki" (made from rags). To shield my bald head from the sun she also made from an old tie an Uzbek "dupe" (yarmulka). The problem was acute for all of us in Achun Baybayev. For some less, for others more. We tried very hard to keep ourselves clean, to avoid lice in hair and seams of our clothing.

Some Uzbek families suffered also. The old woman Tilo-Hola who owned the hut we used to live in, pretended to feed her hungry grandchild with her empty breast, while this child's mother was working in cotton fields, and her husband fought the Germans.

This was also a time when many Uzbeks used to come home with self made wounds. Many came seriously wounded, and others even crippled for life. A widow in a hut next to ours had two sons. One went to war, but came home wounded, and what mattered most alive. Her younger son didn't go to war, but was working in kolhoz driving a large "arba" (wagen pulled by horse). Once on the way home while bringing ready crops from fields to kolhoz, he got hit by a truck and killed instantly. Imagene this poor woman. Imagene her grief. She cried days and nights, as the custom of Islam required, keeping us awake all the time.

Chapter 76 (cont)

After Poles Left!

After Regional-Silk closed at the end of their season we returned to work at kolhoz Achun Baybayev. We worked as hard as before, but our pay was less and less. They replaced flour with wheat which ment to go and spent hours in a mill, and a give away of a handful of flour to the man in charge. When wheat wasn't available another kind of grain had to be sufficient. To supplement our diet we used to mix with flour so-called "Makuha"a light brown mixture of feed for cattle, but not harmful to humans. We mostly used it to bake our lepyoshki. Another important ingriedient in our diet were pits taken out from apricots. When removed from their outside shells they were ready to eat and tasted exactly like almonds. Many people including my aunt Rose collected them and later sold them on bazaar for 100 Rubles per kilogram.

The most favored way of the kolhoz leadership, was to get rid of us and sent us away to all kinds canal constructions, so we wouldn't bother them for food every evening. With us gone the responsibility to feed us shifted from kolhoz to the leaders of the construction. Ofcourse we used to make there even less then in kolhoz.. For many days we slept at the construction or in some hut on a bare ground. They paid us with a large lepyoshka for one cubic meter of dirt accumulated in form of a piramid. At the end of the day a man with a special measure used to come to measure the piramids. There was impossible to make more then one lepyoshka per day, which ment more hunger. And this was just for us working people, and what about our families at home, who starved in meantime.

But there were some people who went around the man with the measure. They had their own ideas how to get more lepyoshki. Among them was Shmil Zalmen Goldberg, before Dr. Perlberger gave him the job at the delegation. He used to bring just few "nosilki" (carriers) with dirt and spreaded it around his assigned place of work, and bilt the piramid from under it, by crowling around, and putting the dirt with a gloved hand, until he came up with the right measurment. The man with the measure was so stupid. He never was able to figure out, why there always was a large hole around Goldberg's piramid.

Anytime I went to those constructions I always ran away after few days. But not my father. He used to spent there many days, eating little and bringing those lepyoshki home. I suspect that as Goldberg he also padded those piramids.

Besides the left behind Polish citiziens, also many Russians used to live in Alti-Arik. They took over all the important jobs in town. Well! It was their priviledge. After all they were Soviet citiziens. Other families came from Riga (Latvia). Some of them were good off, but others suffered as us. One young woman with a child, whose husband was in Red Army, thought that it was waste of time to go to work. She found herself a young, rich good looking Uzbek and became his woman. At night when she was leaving the house to go to this Uzbek, she kept telling her son, that she was going to work.

The Zlotogorski family from Vilna with a Soviet passport, also didn't have problems to adjust to the circumstances. They mixed with the local community WELL and had good relations with Soviet authorities. One of the brothers was married, the younger was an actor and participated in many plays put up by the local theater circle, and their sister was a game for many Russian and Uzbek men.

But this behavior didn't hurt their reputation at all. Many years later in D.P. camps in Austria, they mixed very well with the Jewish community. The older brother became an avid Zionist, and many leaders in camps used to seek his advise. It was up to him, who goes to Israel first. And as far as the sister was concerned, she didn't have any problems to be a nice Jewish girl again.

Another Polish-Jewish family settled in Alti-Arik in winter 1943. Their behavior was suspisious since the first day, they arrived in town. Something was going on between them and MVD, but nobody knew for sure. Couple months later our suspicions proved to be correct, when new circumstances changed our lives again.

Mrs. Perlberger settled firmly at her new job, as a Polish delegate. Together with Goldberg they ran a tight ship. They needed a gimmick to show people, that they are doing something for them. Dr. Perlberger's friend Eda Rosenzweig used to cook soup everyday. People from faraway kept coming each morning to fill-up their cans.

Dr. Perlberger also moved the delegation to a more convinient building, where all the village offices and store were located. In the same building there was Dr. Perlberger's apartment, Eda's room and a room for Goldberg, after his family moved out to Fergana.

Anytime a shipment of goods was scheduled to arrive in Palasan they used to rent a wagen from kolhoz (driver included) and Goldberg with the help from his friends the Schnall brothers escorted the shipment home from Fergana. If Perlberger and Goldberg would distribute those goods as they came, probably there wouldn't be hunger at all. Instead our rations were small. An 8oz. can of kosher corned beef was divided among three people as other foods as well.

Shmil Zalmen Goldberg was always neatly dressed, in the so-called better clothing not available for the general public. Men like me used to get slacks made from blankets all colored in light navy. Goldberg while conversing with me seemed to have pleasure from touching his fabric and mine, and later declaring with some satisfaction that his pants were from much better fabric. Only once I recived from them a pretty nice overcoat, which I had a chance to wear once, before we sold it for food. On another occasion we all received new shoes, because they didn't know what to do with them. There were so many of them, but instead to give to each of us an extra pair, they probably sold them.

My mother got once an oldfashioned velvet dress. It looked more like a rag. Who would suspect that this old dress was a real winner. It turned out that Uzbek women loved velvet. Their most elegant clothing was made from velvet. One man on the bazaar gave me 500 Rubles for this rag. At the same time I was trying to sell a very good looking like new party dress given by Dr. Perlberger to aunt Rose. There were no buyers for this dress, even for 100 Rubles.

Aunt Mala, who after uncle Gabriel's death married the family friend Ferdinand Korngold, kept in touch with us all the time. Evidently she was in the money, because on few occasions she sent 2000 Rubles each time in uncle Ludwik's name, which he used to split among our two families. Korngold had important and influential friends in Polish Embassy, and because of him the Embassy sent a special letter to Dr. Perlberger to oblige uncle Ludwik with money, clothing and food, but she obliged only once. She was lucky that uncle wasn't a person to make a big deal from this situation and choose rather to forget it.

In the middle of 1943 Dr. Perlberger told Anna that because of cuts, she no longer had her job with the delegation, and that Eda Rosenzweig will take over her duties. This was a dirty trick, leaving Eda who most of the time didn't do nothing anyway. Frieda still kept her job as delegation's secretary.

There was no sense for Anna to return to work in kolhoz. She was on a lookout for another job. As always she was determent, so it didn't take to long for her to find work. She joined a plant which produced real silk. It was a hard task for Anna to learn this new profesion, and to listen to an Uzbek supervisor who didn't understand and didn't speak a word of Russian. She was forced to learn and memorize Uzbek sentences in order to learn the trade. Because of lack of modern machinery Anna learned how to operate a simple wooden stand with hands and legs simultaneously.

The government's demands for highier quotas, didn't materialize, because the kolhoz wasn't able to deliver. So the leader Nazar-Aka was removed from his post and replaced by an outsider. A man from Kirgizia. There was no secret that Uzbeks despised Kirgizian people, so it was obvious that Achun Baybayev's "kolhozniki" hated their new leader.

The Kirgiz didn't last to long. Quotas set by the government remained unfilled. At the end of harvest season, after all crops have been picked up a celebration took plaee in the field. The leadership of the kolhøz prepared all kind of Uzbek good food toped ofcourse with rice pilaf. I remember stuffing myself, even with burned rice on the bottom of the drum. For the following couple of days I felt sick from my stomach.

During the festivities suddenly I have found myself facing the largest male sheep (baran), the leader of the pack, who always took care of the smaller female sheeps. First he stood there just looking at me, and then he lowered his head and pointed those tremendously large horns at me. I began to ran, and kept running as fast as I could, and the "baran" was just behind me. I started to breath easier when this animal finally decided to stop. If God forbid he would get hold of me, I am quite sure, he would maul me to death.

In the evening the leadership distributed bonuses to deserving workers, including my father and grandpa Abraham who during summer used to guard wheat and corn fields from thiefs. And price for job well done was 20 Rubles bonus, even not enough to buy a loaf of bread.

As in 1942 kolhoz wasn't able to support us. More and more they relayed on us to go many kilometers away to built irrigation canals. I used to go out on those jobs with nothing to feed myself. There was nothing at home, I could take, so mother always gave me 5 Rubles, which I usually spent before reaching my destination. I didn't have enough will to split my lepyoshki, which I recived for my work to eat half in the evening and the other half in the morning. I couldn't sleep at night feeling half of my lepyoshki under my head. Once with the help of Schnall brothers I bought myself some buttermilk, and on another occasion I traded my glasses for small bag of cottage cheese. So to be close to home we left (only some of us) kolhoz again and went to work for Regional-Silk as in 1942. At least for couple of months we were assured about the daily ration of bread, sometimes some soup and some money twice a month. On my first day on the job I was really surprised to find there at the gate one Russian woman who a year before was one of the leaders of our unfortunate strike, with a rifle on her shoulder working as a guard.

Because Regional-Silk was not faraway from the bazaar, Shlomo Schnall and I used to walk there on our lunch hour, just for the heck of it. Once a local militiaman from Alti-Arik, kind of arrested us and told us to clean streets and canal ditches. He even wouldn't listen to us, that we were on our way to our jobs at Regional-Silk. We were also lucky that this militiaman didn't demand to see our documents, because we never carried them with us, fearing, that we might loose them. We would probably be stuck there for the rest of the day if the militiaman wouldn't start a conversation with some friend, so we escaped and kept running like crazy, until we reached Regional-Silk.

Schnall brothers and I performed another escape when kolhoz sent us to pack cotton in large heavy bags. Another very hard job away from home for little bread and wheat soup. We worked there couple of days. On the third day while waiting for the supervisor to take us to the job in front of the City Hall we decided to run again. The supervisor an Uzbek with a large belly tried to chase after us, but we were already quite a distance away , for him to catch us.

For somtime Ela had a job in kolhoz as a cleaning lady for couple of hours every day. It was convinient and not to hard to clean up the offices only, and gave her also time to do some other things. But as always human greed never ceased to stop. It was Mrs. Esterles the rich Jewish lady from Odessa who kept making demands, to give this job to her. In reality, she needed this job like a hole in her head. But what she needed for sure was a cover for her black market activities, and getting Ela's job was a perfect solution for Esterles' dilema. She kept saying that her husband was fighting the war (which was a lie according to a story she told us before she didn't have a husband). She also mentioned her age, and said that Ela being younger could work in the fields.

While Ela lost her job to Mrs. Esterles, somebody at the kolhoz came up with a briliant idea to send young women to help out witch construction of a new canal. So one of the leaders a very happy Uzbek came to Ela to tell her the great news, that she was one of the lucky ones being selected to go to work on this new construction, among with other young women, particulary with the kolhoz beauty Hatio-Hon. It was a shock for the whole family and all of us. No matter what the concequenses would be, Ela wouldn't go anyway. In order to get doctor's release from this adventure she slept all night through with her legs hanging down, to make them swell. Next morning she went to see a doctor, who in the first place was sincerly disturbed about the whole idea to send girls to digg a canal, and without hesitation gave Ela xxxxx a statement releasing her from this job.

In Faysabad a village 10 km away from Palasan on the way to Fergana used to live this Grzybowski family from Poland. They had a daughter Basia (Barbara) who maintained during all those years a very friendly relation with our girls. The Grzybowski family was a wealthy family without any worries about survival. Also they managed a friendly relationship with authorities in their village. Mr. Grzybowski didn't have to walk anyplace.Whenever he was ready to travel he enjoyed all the comforts of a donkey raid, even thou he used to look very funny sitting on the top of an ass. Basia learned quickly how to speak Uzbek language and was hired as a secretary of the local kolhoz. Later the family moved to Alti-Arik, got there a nice apartment and Basia was hired again to perform an important work. In a matter of facts, this job must have been very important and Basia's work valuable, because after the end of the war she was awarded a medal of ~~did~~ distinguish labor, ~~during~~ for the time when Soviet Union was in need. Basia and her parents left Soviet Union with us. They left the transport in Wroclaw (Breslau) and traveled to Lodz, where they settled. Basia married there and later emigrated to Israel, where she lives now with her family.

Another important family from Poland ~~was~~ IN FAYSABAD was a doctor with his son. I don't remember their names. But the good doctor helped a lot those villagers there during his stay. Ofcourse he and his son made a very good living also.

Despite the misery some humor surfaced from time to time. Mostly on days when more food was available. People used to tell old Jewish jokes and stories. Some new ones made their way to Palasan, and less humorous war stories as well. Few times we went to the local cinema. Outdoor in summer and indoor in winter. Most shows were propaganda movies. Very low quality, old ones with a terrible sound.. Once we went to a theater when local group presented an old Ukrainian play "Natafka Poltafka" (Natalie from Poltava). After this play a young NKVD officer, a Tatar good looking, joined our group, because he was impressed with the girls. There were few of them around. He was smiling a lot, singing some, talking. In one word he was very happy. I am quite sure his high spirits, came from drinking spirits.

It was funny to watch when local Uzbeks made advances to refugee girls. It was different and some girls didn't mind to go out with them. A man from our kolhoz tried to make a date with Frieda. His name was Kutchkar-Aka, a man in late thirties, good looking, with a short nice cut black beard and always well dressed in his national Uzbek clothing. He was kolhoz's main butcher. A good position in those troubled days. He always had plenty of meat and money. Anytime he saw Frieda, he always asked if she wouldn't consider to go with him to Fergana and have a good time.. Well you all know Frieda. She only laughed at him and always shook her head for "no".

During lunch breaks at canal constructions, to keep the crowds happy authorities used to bring to the side Uzbek dance groups, mostly women with a star attraction. All those Uzbeks used to form a large circle, and when the star danced and kept shaking her hips those men were getting wild. As per an old Uzbek custom, any man who wanted this girl to shake in front of him all he had to do, just spread his universal scarf in front, and the dancer obliged, WHILE THE REST OF THE CROWD ROARED.

The description of the activities at the construction side, don't indicate That Uzbek culture was like that. Maybe some day, some of you would be able to see the beautiful Uzbek old architecture going back many centuries and being constantly renovated. I wish you to see a full lenght Uzbek movie titled "Tohir and Zohira"a work of art, played out beautifuly about a love story of two young people of different backgrounds who because of ancient tradition weren't allowed to be together.

Going back from Uzbek culture I would like you to know that we tried as hard as possible to keep good relations among our 22 people group. Sometimes differences in opinions led to some misunderstandings, mostly when a touchy subject of foods distribution was coming-up. Emotions used to run rather high, when some people insisted that their rations should be highier then others. Those emotions mostly affected our elders who felt badly when their kids, according to their thoughts recived less. But at the conclusion each person got his or hers fair share.

We never fergot our High Holidays Roshhashana and Yom-Kipur. As long as uncle Josef Eisen was with us in 1942 and 1943, services were held in "kibitka" (Leniowers home) regulary. The house was full of Jewish people who came from faraway. Uzbeks knew what was going on, but we never had problems with local authorities. Uncle Eisen himself even celebrated kosher Passover, and prepared his own Passover food. The real Passover foods sent from America through the Polish delegation usualy arrived in time for Roshhashana.

It became obvious in Fall of 1943 that to continue to live in kolhoz would finish us off sooner or later. Russian Jews probably knowing their ways of life under Soviet rule could live in Uzbekistan forever, so some of our Polish Jews, managed pretty good, but needless to say not us. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose survived on their own. Heniek Zimetbaum's wages didn't help them at all.

Family Julie, who came to Palasan with Leniowers made the first move. I know for sure that they used to have some money on the side, and Mr. Julie was a baker. After looking around he found a baker's job in Fergana, and they moved. Goldberg's family who used to be from the same town in Poland as Julies also moved with them, except Shmil Zalmen who wouldn't leave the job in delegation. Few months later Goldberg's sister passed away in Fergana leaving a husband and couple of children.

The old shoemaker Reis stayed behind and so did the orphan girl from Cracow Regina Kremnitzer. Soon she became ill with a nervous breakdown, and she was in need of some help, but nobody knew what to do with her. Only our illustrious delegate knew how to proceed. She signed some papers comiting Regina to a mental institution in Kokand, a small town about 20 km away from Palasan. I guess Dr. Perlberger didn't have a slicest idea how Soviet authorities treat mentaly ill people. Regina probably would never came out alive from this place if she wouldn't help herself. Thanks to her own determination after few days she realized what was going on around her and where she was. She finally snaped out from her predicament and decided to escape. Dressed only in a white nightgown she was walking and crowling at night along the railroad tracks and hiding in the bushes or cotton fields in daytime. Worn out and tired at last she arrived in Palasan and came to the house where Leniowers and their friends used to live. The Schnalls took Regina under their wings. They dressed her up, fed her and gave her place to sleep. Under preasure Dr. Perlberger was forced to help also from delegation funds. Schnalls kept Regina with them until she was able to take care of herself. A beautiful deed of people in such difficult circumstances.

Time also came for Leniowers to try to change their situation for better. They realized then, that the knowledge of kniting could help them to survive. In those days bazaars all over Uzbekistan were loaded with American goods, which in normal circumstances would be distributed among the needy as us. But with so many thiefs around it didn't happen.

Among many gifts American Jews sent woolen "long johns" to help keep us warm during long Russian winters. As it turned out there were no long cold winters in Uzbekistan, but each of us recived one pair of long johns. Men and women alike. Since then there were thousands of long johns being sold on bazaars all over Uzbekistan. Leniowers bought some of them and turned the wool into long rolls of yarn. From those yarns Ela started to knit beautiful sweaters. First they sold them on the bazaar, but soon those Russian women with good jobs, and wives of directors, engineers and party leaders learned about Ela's skills, so new orders kept coming. Soon just walking around Alti-Arik or Vanovskaya, evidence of Ela's work was visible all over the place.

The Schnall family also kept surviving. First the kolhoz presented Shulim with an honor to be a head shepherd. Every morning he used to gather all the sheep from kolhoz and from private owners and guided them to grazing fields where he guarded them all day long. The large male sheep (baran) who once chased after me was the leader among the sheeps. He never touched Shulim. I guess he developed somekind of a respect for him.

Later Shulim was promoted to be a head stableman. A very important function in kolhoz. Shulim used to make sure that cows and bulls were in top shape, and horses ready for work all the time. Being on the spot, all day around offices, and storage places brought Shulim many benefits.

As I said before Schnalls were good and gentle people, ready to help all the time as my uncle Ludwik, who would share always his food with the less fortunate. During the real bad times, when he saw empty bags hanging from Leniowers walls, he offered to share with them half of his own flour, but with warm thanks they didn't accept.

Sunday was a bazaar day all over Soviet Union. On this day people used to come in Thousands to buy or sell products or belongings not available in stores. Bazaar almost never failed them.

Each Sunday at least one person from each family spent half a day on bazaar. Before we purchased anything we had to sell something to make money to buy food. Our main purchases concentrated on the large green raddishes, cucumbers, onions, tomatoes and carrots. When more money was available we bought a loaf of real bread (2 kilogram loaf was going for 100 Rubles). Price of rice the main Uzbek dish was to high even for us to consider. Along the way home from Alti-Arik to Palasan, many Uzbeks used to sell lamb meat after killing their own animal. Needless to say only ill people among us ate small pieces of meat.

In the afternoon when everybody was home again from the bazaar, the same disscusion took place every week. Those participating tried hard to convince each other whose food was cheaper. No matter what happened, all the time was Mr. Marmur who always beat out everybody by a fraction of a kopeyek.

Bad times continued for the kolhoz. Members again voted down the Kirgiz as their leader, and replaced him with another stranger. I think his name was Rahimov. We gave him a nickname "Mr. Rahmat" (Mr. Thank you), because he always used to thank us very nice for the work done, but hardly ever paid us off. His attitude was! Promises, promises, and even more convinced us that the time was ripe for leaving kolhoz forever.

Knowing for sure, that at the end of the day after hard work we will get nothing, we decided to pay Mr. Rahimov with nothing. We used to work 3 km away from our village, cleaning cotton fields from debris. After a while we stoped to work and instead we used to go to watermelon patches, and ate them for breakfest, when nothing else was available. We spent there in hiding half a day and in the afternoon we sneaked into the village. It didn't matter anyway. Nobody bothered even to check on us. Next spring when the combines turned over the dirt , this lefover stuff, which we didn't clean made an excelent futerlizer.

Later Mr. Rahimov tried to pay us back for the injustice, he caused us, by presentig to us a large piece of ground to plant corn on it. Needless to say it was already to late to plant corn for flour, to bake bread later.

With hunger all around, anything to fill-up our stomachs was good. We took from our field plenty of corn on cob, and for Rahimov this was a way out to explain to the party why he didn't plant on this particular field.

Two empty fields owned by couple of women also stood ~~xx~~ in the back of our hut. On the small one Heniek and I planted corn still in time to harvest the good baking corn. The larger field again produced only lots of corn of cob to cook and eat.

There was this place in the middle of the village, where after wheat harvest all the crops have been cleaned and separated from stroh. The Fall seasons have already begun, so it seemed suspicious for Anna when she walked by this place and noticed piles of wheat bundles which lay untouched on the wet ground.

At the time when few crums of bread seemed so important, so many bundles of wheat abandoned constitued a miracle. And ofcourse Anna was hero again.

So all of us, having nothing else to do went to this waste field. We used to work there for couple of weeks. We practicaly cleaned this place out. We separated seeds from straw, dried them out, then went to the mill, grinded them, and enjoyed later lepyoshki, noodles for quite some time in winter. We also managed to steal some wheat bundles during the real harvest. Few times we got caught by our supervisors but, were able to convince them to split the loot among us.

On evenings we used to pretend coming to kolhoz to collect our pay, even thou we knew we wouldn't get a gram. But piles of good corn have been stored in the middle of kolhoz-plaza. While waiting to hear the "no" answer we used to fill up our baggy pants tied-up with strings on the very bottom, and then un-noticed we had sneak out and went home.

Another way to get food, was to harvest Uzbeks private plots. We used to borrow the ~~the~~ harvesting machine from kolhoz (powered by our hands and arms only) and worked at night for wheat, corn, barley, flour and good super.

Many times we have been intervied by all kind of officials who wanted to know where we came from and about our backgrounds, but our answers most of the time left them more confused, they were before the interview have began.

In 1943 three Jewish men came to Alti-Arik and later settled in Palasan. One of them was Mr. Nisonowicz, the other Mr. Brenner, and I never knew the name of the third one. The third man was a mystery man, who traveled a lot. The other two guys seemed to be nice men and loaded. All were middleaged. Nisonowicz and Brenner never left town. I am not going to question the motives of the third man, because I don't know nothing about him. The two used to live close to Dr. Perlberger, and were often guests in her home. Nisonowicz fell in love with Eda Rosenzweig, and they been together until the end, besides her claims that she didn't like him at all. They split in Cracow when Eda left the transport to join Dr. Perlberger there. Brenner ~~xxx~~ met the young Mrs. Reis whose husband left to serve in the Red Army, and they kept consoling each other since. Many years later we found out that all three of them used to be residents of Lvov before the war, and as such they were Soviet citiziens. Hoping to leave Soviet Union with the Sikorski's army, they purchased for lots of money Polish documents and settled in quiet and out of the way Palasan, just to get stuck there together with us. Nisonowicz's real name was Weintraub.

Not to long after another man arrived in Palasan. He was a dentist and Jewish also. As a dentist he used to work in Alti-Arik clinic, and had very romantic ties with Dr. Perlberger.

At that particular time Frieda still kept in touch with Izio Messing, her friend from the settlement in Otkritiy. He also wind-up in Fergana. They used to see each other from time to time, and on an occasion Frieda invited him to come and visit in Palasan. Despite the hard times there was a nice visit, and a very nice reception (good dinner including). There was no room available in the crowded house, so Izio slept and spent most of the time with Frieda in Dr. Perlberger's house. ~~xxx~~ After this visit the relation cooled off considerably. Someone said that Izio was planing to marry another girl in Fergana, but he never did. AFTER THE WAR, HE EMIGRATED TO BRAZIL:

From time to time my old nemezis Grisha Weintraub have come to see us at Achun Baybayev. He and his family used to live in Margelan near Fergana, the town where Polish army was stationed before leaving Soviet Union. He probably still dreamed of renewing his friendship with Ela. I am quite sure that she wouldn't put up with him anymore.

Speaking of admirers, at that time Ela had another one. Shlomo the older of the Schnall brothers.. While standing near Ela his eyes were full of admiration for her. He accidentaly always kept reaching for her middle finger, and kept holding it in his hand for a while. No matter what he must to realized that he was to old for her.

The last person to come to Palasan was Victor Potasiewicz, from Czastochowa, Poland, a town with the monastery where the Black Madonna is enshrined. How he wind-up in Palasan I don't know. For a while he worked in a neighbouring kolhoz. Later after Goldberg Left Dr. Perlberger took him in to help her out, but not in matters concerning the delegation, which was then already closed by Soviet authorities. He even used to live in her house, and Eda Rosenzweig had her eyes on him, but he didn't like her. Instead he liked Frieda very much. He was all the time around her until ~~the time~~ when Soviets drafted him into the Red Army. Later they transfered him to the Polish army the one organized in Soviet Union, and with this army he took part in liberation of Poland. For a while he kept writing to Frieda, but suddenly for some reason the mail stop coming. He was the only person around who didn't like uncle Ludwik, and on few occasions called him a mean man, because uncle Ludwik during some conversation with Potasiewicz told him some truth which Potasiewicz didn't like. After the war uncle Josef Eisen came across Potasiewicz in Silezia, and then to the question about quiting writing he told uncle Eisen, that he thought that Frieda didn't want him anymore. If you ask me, I would tell you that Potasiewicz was already married then. Many years later him and his wife and his daughter came here to Kansas City from Israel. We invited them to our home, but there was no friendship anymore. Potasiewicz worked here for couple of years, and bought himself a truck, and went back to Israel with his family. His wife is a sister to Mrs. Klapholz from Kansas City, mother to Sammy Klapholz, who went to kindergarten with our Jack.

With the Polish army leaving an opportunity presented itself for many Jewish children to leave Soviet Union. We didn't know then yet, that from Iran Polish army will be transfered later to then Palestine. So many Jewish parents including my cousins Goldsteins who then resided in Samarkand had guts enough to part with their children, not knowing if they ever would see them again and register them as orphans so they would have a chance to go to Palestine and live there and be raised under the protection of The Jewish Agency of Palestine. Mala and Bumek Children of Esther and Lipe Goldstein went to Palestine, thanks to the sacrifice of their parents. At least they missed the misery of living in Soviet Uzbekistan. They grew-up in freedom and recived their Jewish education. After the war, when in 1948 the State of Israel was established Esther and Lipe after all those years of waiting traveled to Israel to be finally reunited with their beloved children.

Chapter 77

Health Problems!

Most important of all was our health. We saw many ill people around us. Many died from hunger or disease. Our group in Achun Baybayev tried our best possible to stay healthy. Needless to say we have been touched by illness, and some of us pretty hard. God kept us healthy for a while. O yes we were hungry, but living mostly on fruit and vegetables we have been strong for time being. But not for long. The bad times of 1943 and 1944 finally caught up with some of us. We all suffered with all kind od illnesses, but our dear Anna was hit most severly.

In autum of 1943 Anna and Mrs. Marmur went to Fergana to sell some valuables. People walking from Palasan to Fergana usually spent there most of the day buying and selling. To do so they went to the bazaar always crowded with thousands of people from all over the area. To drink and eat they had to stop in a teahouse and again rub shoulders with many not so clean people. They returned home late in the evening.

In the next couple of days nothing unusual happened. Then suddenly Anna felt sick and weak. Her temperature started to climb. First Dr. Perlberger Thought that Anna contacted in Fergana some kind of virus or a bad flu. Leniowers also called in the village paramedic, an older man very well educated in medicine. There were many medics like him in small towns and villages all over Soviet Union. I think that finally it was Dr. Perlberger who diagnosed Anna's illness as "Typhus". In those days it wasn't unusual in Soviet Union to be ill with typhus. Anna's typhus wasn't the one which attack human stomach, but the typhus called "Spot Typhus", which mostly attacks human mind. The disease is also called "louse fever"or European typhus. It occurs in persons who are crowded together in unsanitary conditions. This disease is spread from person to person by infected body lice, that leave their feces on a break in the skin. Mostly comes from filty people and attacks the clean ones. And this was precisly what happened to our Anna while she was in Fergana. Another name for this typhus is "Murine Typhus"widely distributed in warm climates, and in bad economic situations.

The family took Anna to hospital on a small wagen pulled by a donkey. Because of the nature of her illness in hospital they put her in isolation. We could see her and talk to her when possible, because she was unconsciuos most of the time, through a window. She was very ill, and when I saw her in hospital first time her hair was already shaved off. In the next few days, I gathered that she sensed that I was there, but her mind was only a blur. I used to come to see her after work in the evening, because then I took a new job at the new refinery construction on Vanoavskaya. After a week of touch and go Anna's condition started a steady improvement. During one of my visits, Anna told that the night before she started to feel better she had a dream, about an old Rabbi with long white beard, who came to her and told her in Yiddish."Don't worry my child, I pray for you, and soon you will recover". Until today Anna firmly believes that because of this Rabbi's prayers the break and improvement in her condition came during that night. Thanks to tender care by her parents and sisters, nourishing food and pomegranates and other sacrifices, slow but sure Anna was getting better each day, and finally recived permission from her doctors to go home. Wasn't able to walk Chaya Schnall, Frieda and grandpa Abraham carried Anna on their hands formed to a kind of a seat. It wasn't possible for her to recuparate in their hut, because of crowded conditions and look for a room for a separate bed. Dr. Perlberger was kind enough to let Anna stay and recuparate in a room in her house. It was noble of Dr. Perlberger, but to a point, when she discovered some money missing from her dror. Perlberger's friend Eda Rosenzweig took the money and put the blame on Anna, and the good doctor confronted Anna, a lousy choice especially by a doctor to accuse an innocent person trying to recover from a terrible illness. Thanks to God Anna finally was well enough to go back to her family. We all were very happy for her. She was skinny, but looked beautiful in her boy's style hairdo, which later turned to again beautiful golden blond locks.

Chapter 77 (cont)

Health Problems!

After many weeks finally the day came when Anna was herself again. And with the recovery it was back to work again.

People who didn't know her, would suspect that because of her pre-war health problems grandma Frances wouldn't hold out as well as she did. I guess the simple diet of not to much bread, fruit and vegetables was good for her. Only once, because of frustration she broke out with a hysteria attack, yelling and crying out of control. She stroke Mrs. Marmur on her head,when Mrs. Marmur tried to comfort her. But this attack also came to pass.

During the hot summer nights we used to sleep outdoors. But not grandma Frances. She always slept inside. Once she got a pretty good bite on the end of her finger from a scorpion. Sometimes those bites used to cause death, but grandma's bite wasn't to severe. She suffered with a tremendous pain, which gradually passed in few days.

On the other hand it was much harder to survive for grandpa Abraham. The man was never seriously sick in his entire life until then. His main problem was malnutrition, and lack of vitamins. He couldn't get used to hunger, and many times his face and body used to get swollen. Still he continued to work and helped out as much as possible. His health improved after the family moved to Fergana, but again got worse after we returned to Poland and later contributed a lot to the cause of his death.

As far as Frieda was concerned, she came through the bad times in kolhoz rather in good shape. She never worked as hard as Anna, and Ela as well. Her good sense of humor helped her a lot to get through this misery.

If not for malaria attacks Ela's health wouldn't be as bad as well. Malaria a disease marked by acute attacks of chills and high fever, caused by the bites of mosquitos, who used to make a mess of our bodies. Sometimes after repeated attacks, anemia develops and the liver becomes enlarged. Thanks to God nothing like that happened to Ela. Many people suffered with malaria in Uzbekistan, because of very hot weather and draining swamps. I myself contacted malaria by drinking very cold water from springs of natural water between cotton fields, nearby old swamps, aleady contaminated by malaria bacteria. It was surprising how after an attack and short high fever we were able to get up and walk and work again.

The Marmur family mostly concentrated on the well being of their little boy Belek. Mrs. Marmur was a strong woman and nothing would stop her from making sure that Belek had the best nourishment possible. But it was kind of a different story with her husband Max. Before the war he used to eat a lot and his posture still showed that he was a large person. The hunger for him was devastating and no green raddish or tomatos would keep him well. His problem as grandpa Abraham's was also malnutrition but on a a much larger scale. He even didn't know how sick he was, until Dr. Perlberger examined him and told his wife that if she wouldn't feed him better he would probably die. So Mrs. Marmur finally sold her good linens from home and bought food to feed her husband. Sometimes Marmurs bags on the wall used to be full of flour, but Mrs. Marmur wouldn't touch them, so on such occasions when Mrs. Marmur was at work grandma Frances used to take some of that flour and make lepyoshki for Mr. Marmur.

Mrs. Suedwertz and her son Srulek didn't have no worries at all. She being already in the middle sixties kept herself pretty well. I don't remember ever her being ill, and so her son as well. Srulek never worked. He always spent half a day on the bazaar, and also eating there, and his mother kept cooking those soups from all kinds of mixtures of vegetables with plenty of cooking oil, in small containers. They had plenty to live even better but choose not to show off.

The Schnall family also hold out pretty good. They all worked hard, but their health was fine, except for their mother who had a heart condition. She died instantly in summer of 1943 when her sons recived summons to report to draft board in order to join Polish army in USSR.

Health Problems!

In our family my mother as always in the past was a pillar of strengh. I know for sure that lots of times she felt bad and suffered. As I look back on those days I really never had an idea what was wrong with her. One thing was sure; Father and I used to be always first on her mind. When father became seriously ill after eating raw sugar beets and spent some time in hospital, mother gave him best of care. Feeding him with better food, and walking twice daily to see him. She withstood his moods after he came home, even thou some of those moods weren't pleasant at all.

Besides some little problems once mother became very ill with terrible pains. I don't remember in what parts of her body. Once before mother had pains like that back home in Cracow in 1937. Her leg was swollen then and a black lump appeared above her ankle. She recovered then.

As it turned out it was a long evening for mother and us. Pains persisted so I went after Dr. Perlberger who came to our hut, gave mother a shot (pain killer) which helped her considerably. In September 1945 those pains came back. Her leg got swollen again, and she went to hospital in Alti-Arik. After few days she came home, but her pains returned. I took her to hospital on Vanovskaya, where I was working then. It seemed that after few days her heaith improved, but it didn't last to long. My dear mother passed away September 12 1945 after only one day of tremendous suffering. I firmly believe that those pains which started in 1937 were a prelude and reason of her death.

As far as I was concerned my health was basicaly fine if not for malaria and bad eating and drinking habits, which caused me three serious cases of diarrhea, of which two turned into dysentery. All three times I was taken to hospital in bad shape. Once in hospital on Vanovskaya I thought after few days that I recovered, but back home after few days I went to hospital again this time in Alti-Arik. And again as in case of my father's mother took care on me the best way possible. On another occasion mother took me to see a doctor in Alti-Arik, when I could hardly walk. This doctor told me then that I was suffering from pellagra, a vitamin deficiency disease, caused by lack of nicotinic acid, a member of vitamin "B"complex, which occurs where corn formed the major part of human diet, and which was exactly in my case. And again I recovered thanks to my mother's tender care.

As my mother, her brother uncle Ludwik was another pillar of our family. In his quiet way he was making many things happen even in some impossible situations. Then I didn't like those ways of his, but now I realize how right he always was. As Mrs. Suedwertz he was already in middle sixties. He kept busy all the time, and his health practically never failed him.

Opposite to him was his wife aunt Rose. She was a nagging all the time, and was full of complains. Her only problem was constipation, and as far as hunger was concerned she could live better then all of us if she wouldn't be so stingy, and eat better food then those apricot pits, which only contributed more to her constipation.

Once she developed a small growth on her behind. It was nothing dangerous, but when Dr. Perlberger was cutting out this growth aunt Rose kept yelling like somebody would stand there with a knife trying to cut her throat.

Aunt Rose's and uncle Ludwik's nephew Heniek Zimetbaum was a slow and easy going fellow. He knew that uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose would do all the best for him, so work didn't bother him at all, as much he tried hard not to work at all. Besides some diarrhea cases he was fine. But his main problem used to be his feet. I don't have an idea from where it came, but the skin on his feet was always split, broken. There was no real bleeding, but blood was visible under it. A doctor finally found an ointment to heel Heniek's feet, but Heniek learned how to control those wounds. How to open them when necessary and how to close them. Anytime something came up not convinient for him, or when calls came to report to draft board, he kept very easy those wounds open. The key was to keep them clean, and bandaged all the time.

Chapter 78

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising!

Soviet press and radio haven't beem to much concerned with plight of Jewish people all over Europe in 1943. They didn't give a hood about their own Soviet Jews being slaughterd in occupied territories with the help of Ukrainians and Lithuanians collaborateours. In Poland small groups of Polish freedom fighters at least made some effort to help Jews, but some other Polish fighters used to seek out Jews and reported them to Germans.

In Warsaw the Gestapo systematically rounded up Jews in the city and its suburbs into compulsory ghetto, which was carved out from the old Jewish district and sealed off tight with high brick walls and was heavily guarded. On November 15 1939 the round-up operation was declared officially completed.

A population count at that time showed there were 433,000 men, women and children concentrated in the small area of the ghetto.

From the early beginning, disease resulting from overcrowding and hunger organized along well known German scientific lines was used as the first deadly weapons of extermination.

When in July 1942 first deportations have begun to the death camps, a proclamation was posted on street corners in the ghetto ordering all Jews, except those working in war plants to register for immediate and happier resettlement in another part of the country. Few suspected the true nature of their destination. Not until later they found out about the great deception.

To counter this deception a groundwork for an up-rising has been quietly laid by various groups of Jewish militant youth. It was neither despair nor hunger for martyrdom which led them to prepare for this up-rising. At first because of sharp political and religious differences the groups failed to unite their forces to carry out a coordinated underground effort. But when the early bloody accounts of the wholesale exterminations of Jews in the death camps were brought to the ghetto by Polish and Jewish underground fighters they had a sobering as well a unifying effect on the bickering combat units. They held a hurried conference and chose Mordecai Anielewicz as their commander-in-chief, and started to make preparations for the rebelion.

The first clash occured January 18 1943, when several companies of Nazi S.S. troops marched into the ghetto to enforce the second deportation action. By that time it had become common knowledge among the Warsaw Jews that the so-called "labor camps" in Lublin were in reality the extermination camps of Maydanek and Tremblinka. This bit of news turned the Warsaw ghetto into an emotional inferno.

Therefore this day as S.S. companies were proceeding through the streets of ghetto, they were ambushed by Jewish combat units. For three days street battles raged. So determined and reckless were the attackers that the Germans were forced to retreat from ghetto for the time being. Still the deportations continued, because the Jewish fighting units were not yet ready for the final showdown.

A shot on Nalewki street at 6am on April 19 1943 was the signal for revolt. Drawn up on one side were unlimited panzered might of the German army, the Gestapo and the Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian police pitted against the remnants of Warsaw's starving Jews. 40,000 of them emaciated, phisically exhausted civilians led by the Jewish Fighting Organization made up of only several Thousand hungry men and women. Confined in a small area within the ghetto, they were un-able to manuver. Nevertheless they held the Nazis at bay for forty two days. Although most of them perished, they brought down with them in death some 5,000 of the hated enemy.

On May 16 1943 Germans proudly reported to their superiors, that this day at 20:16 that there was a Jewish section, which no longer exists. Still for weeks thereafter small suiside groups calling themselves "Rubble Fighters" savagely battled the Nazis from behind the debris and wreckage, which was all what remained of what only few years before stood as the principal center of Jewish life in Europe.

Chapter 79

Changes in Soviet-Polish Relations!

On the war fronts in Europe and Asia in 1943, marked a complete turn-around in favor of the Allies. Roosevelt and Churchill met again first in Casablanka then in Cairo. In February Soviets won the battle of Stalingrad and took Marshall Von Paulus prisoner. In Asia Japan started to loose heavily, and Allies won final victory in Africa.

In Soviet Union, we didn't wait to long for Sikorski's blunder to backfire on him. Stalin and the Soviet government didn't take to kindly the fact,that Sikorski took out his army from Soviet Union, instead to fight side by side the Red Army. Few months later in mysterious circumstances Sikorski lost his life on a flight over the Mediterrenians. The mystery became even greater after it came out that the pilot of the plane survived. Ofcourse everybody assumed that it was Soviet secret police who finished off Sikorski.

Not only Sikorski lost his life, but the Polish government in exile in London lost Poland forever. Not wasting any time, Soviets broke off diplomatic relations with the London based Polish government, called to life in Moscow Polish National Liberation Committee under the leadership of a well known leftist author from Lvov Wanda Wasilewska. In another bold move they incorporated all former citiziens of Poland in so-called Union of Polish Patriots. They close all Polish delegations all over Soviet Union, even arrested some former delegates, like our delegate in Fergana who disapeared without trace, leaving behind his wife and son.

In another important move Stalin promoted an unknown colonel from pre-war Polish army to the rank of general and made him a Commander in Chief of the new Polish armed forces in Soviet Union. From that moment on a call went to all Polish citiziens in Soviet Union, and Poles who never saw Poland in their lives as well, who were Soviet citiziens to join the Polish army and to fight and defeat the common enemy, the Nazi Germany on the side of the Red Army. Really it wasn't a true Polish army. The new soldiers in their pledge of allegiance, declared first the allegiance to Soviet Union and then to Poland.

With the new order, Dr. Perlberger was out as the delegate of the Alti-Arik region. She was very lucky that NKVD didn't arrest her. A different man in Fergana was chosen by the new authorities to head the Union of Polish Patriots in the Fergana district. With the new leadership uncle Ludwik got an idea to join the new band wagon. So I went with him to Fergana to meet our new leader. Former uncle Ludwik's acquaintance from Siberia introduced us to this man. He was very nice, but as it turned out the post for Alti-Arik region was already filled. The person in charge for our area was one Mrs. Mantel and her brother in law a petro-industry engineer Rosenkranz, both from Drohobycz in Eastern Poland, a former Polish oil industry center. Mrs. Mantel's husband served in the Red Army. It became obvious to us that the new posts were filled by former Polish citiziens from former Polish territories in the east who after Soviet invasion in 1939 became Soviet citiziens. Still the new man in Fergana recognized how sincere uncle Ludwik was, so he gave him a post in Palasan and the town of Alti-Arik, under Mrs. Mantel's supervision. Ofcourse uncle Ludwik accepted and made me his secretary. It was only for a short time, because all those jobs were without pay, and I couldn't effort to work for nothing.

Shortly before the fall of Polish delegation in Palasan, NKVD called in Frieda and wanted her to report on whatever was going on at the delegation. Really Frieda was a hero then, refusing the NKVD's request. It was foolish and dangerous. For two nights in a row she resisted those people, and finally when they let her go without results, she bluntly requested a militiaman to escort her home, because of night, and they obliged. It was a horrible ordeal for Lenowers and friends in their hut. I wasn't aware of this, until much later.

With closing of the delegation Frieda lost her job, and Goldberg joined his family in Fergana. NKVD confiscated lots of food and clothing. Local NKVD workers used to eat and get dressed in stuff which rightfully belonged to us if Dr. Perlberger and Goldberg would distributed to us as they should.

Chapter 79 (cont)

Changes in Soviet-Polish Relations!

Internal Passport (ID) was and still is a very important document IN SOVIET UNION. A person without passport is a "no" person. Nobody could travel or move around Soviet Union without a passport. Besides the passport people going from one destination to another, need documents to show details about the holders, and so-called "comandirovka" (traveling papers) from militia or from a company the holder of the passport is employed by, showing that he or she travels on company's business.

A Soviet citizien in good standing carries a 5 years passport. But many other citizien of Soviet Union carry so-called restricted passports for much less then 5 years (minimum 6 months), and could live only in designated areas by the government.

After the amnesty in Siberia NKVD gave us documents (Udostovierenia) stating that we were Polish citiziens, and showing our destination, where we were allowed to travel.

To loose a passport or any other official document in Soviet Union in our days was considered a crime. People used to be afraid to report to militia Lost ~~stolen~~ documents because of heavy penalties. So rather to be penalized, they used to report stolen documents free of penalty. It took a long time to get a replacement for a stolen passport. A thourough investigation was conducted, and in meantime the investigated person was kind of "grounded" carrying only a piece of paper with somebodys signature and often even without official stamp.

Once uncle Ludwik lost his "Udostovierenia" and reported it stolen to Militia. As I described above, he just got a piece of paper in return, for time being he thought that he was stuck in Soviet Union forever. He never told aunt Rose about this incident, because she would get histerical, and never would stop to nag him.

After terminating their relations with Polish government in London, Soviet authorities declared our "Udostovierenia" not valid, and directed all of us to register with local NKVD offices in order to recive passports as Soviet citiziens.

It was a tragic blow to all of us. Until then we still kept hoping that one day after the war we will return to our homes in Poland. The bad news made believers of all of us that we will live the rest of our lives in Palasan.

Soon articles and Soviet press and news on radio told the Soviet people about former Polish citiziens who by Thousands standing in lines in front of NKVD offices to obtain their passports and become Soviet citiziens. But the naked truth was that we all were herded to NKVD offices by militia and after refusal to apply for passports we all were arrested, and not let go until we agreed under preasure to take their passport. The whole action was illegal even by Soviet standarts. We were ignorant and didn't have an idea, that by Soviet law we were hold against our wiil and were not obliged to take their passports. The Soviet authorities should have furnished us with so-called passpots for foreigners. It was to late for most of us, after this information became available to us. Only few people came out from jails with this foreign passport and Goldberg was one of them.

In Palasan Dr. Perlberger was called in first. She took her Soviet passport without any opposition. She knew that sooner or later everybody will take the passport anyway. On the other hand she wouldn't leave her son Richard alone, and her friend Eda Rosenzweig also became Soviet citizien as one of the firsts. As far as Dr. Perlberger was concerned there was no sense for anybody to stay in prison, which she was 100% right, but she was a doctor with no financial problems. Her old job as childrens doctor was waiting for her in Alti-Arik hospital.

Our women recived their summons first. they all went; My mother, grandma Frances, Ela, Frieda, Anna, aunt Rose and others. They didn't call ~~Chaya~~ CHAJA SCHNALL Schnall ~~and her mother and Mrs.~~ MRS Suedwertz. First there was an interview with NKVD and militia officials. Each one of them refused to take the Soviet passport, and all were locked-up in one room (not a real cell).

Later at night a NKVD officer called for Frieda. They kept her quite a while out not leting her go back to her cell. Being out Frieda didn't know that at the same time NKVD called in Anna and kept her in a different room. Another officer walked in and told Anna that her sister Frieda agreed to take the Soviet passport and there was no reason for her to hold out any longer. Anna not suspecting at all that NKVD played a dirty trick on her, agreed and recived on the spot a brand new Soviet passport valid for six months. She went home thinking that Frieda was already there. In meantime Frieda returned to her cell, discovered that Anna wasn't there, which gave her and grandma Frances plenty to worry until the next morning, when they finally found out about Anna taking the passport.

Getting back home in Palasan it was Anna's turn to discover NKVD's trick. Frieda was still in jail, and Anna's story made grandpa Abraham furious. He sent Anna back to town hoping that she would be able to return the un-wanted passport. It was so silly even to imagene that NKVD would take the passport back.

Very quietly Anna was able to approach a low level cell's window, knock on it and explain to grandma Frances and Frieda what really happened. As it turned out Anna was the first one to become Soviet citizien. Unwillingly, but at least she didn't have to endure many days and nights on the dirty floor of a stinky cell. Ten days later after many interrogations and arms twisting we all became citiziens of the great Soviet Union.

It was very wrong of grandpa Abraham to be mad with Anna and sent her back at night to face the NKVD again. But he was frustrated and couldn't imagene anybody of his family to carry a Soviet passport. Even thou he always regreted what happened this particular night, few days later he also was a proud holder of a six months passport.

The following evening militia came after us; Men. And so we went! I, Heniek Zimetbaum and my father. Uncle Ludwik was the only one left behind. They didn't touch him because they knew about his lost document, so he couldn't run anyplace, which he wouldn't anyway. From the other hut they took grandpa Abraham, Max Marmur, both Schnall brothers and Srulek Suedwertz. So little Belek Marmur was left alone with two old ladies; Mrs. Suedwertz and Mrs. Schnall.

At the NKVD building in Alti-Arik we discovered already the speculator Kutcher, his brother and their friend Mr. Zelichowski, Schmil Zalmen Goldberg and another youngman who with his family used to live by the road between Palasan and Alti-Arik.

Single one after another we have been ushered to a very nice furnished room. At the top end of the table was sitting a high ranking militia officer, who told us that he was Jewish and whenever he wished he even spoke Yiddish to us. He used some choice Yiddish words (not the nice ones) when each one of us kept telling him, that we didn't have a slicest idea why the NKVD called us in. In a lenghty speech carefuly worded he tried to explain that passports were are about to recive were for indetification purposes only, and as soon as the war will be over we will return to our homes in Poland. As preposterous this man's speech sounded, he was telling us the truth, but under the circumstances none of us would believe it.

After those eye to eye talks with the Jewish militia man, we still have single talks with the head of the local NKVD, who also kept giving us assurances about returning back to Poland. Yet on our part we kept repeating our standard answer. "We are Polish citiziens, and as such we have the legal right not to accept Soviet passports".

So our all night's deliberation with the high eshelon of Alti-Arik NKVD turned out to be pointless. One by one finally we found ourselves locked-up in the same cell. It was not a small room, with concrete walls and high celling. It was nothing there, just an empty room with a bucket in the corner for human refuse. Before entering the guards took away our possessions like; sharp objects, belts (mine was last remembrance from Cracow), shoe laces, and left us each of us with a spoon only.

It was almost morning before we settled in our spaces on the floor. Father Heniek and I took places in a corner next to the door. From time to time people we knew, came to visit us, at least in spirit, just standing in front of the building and ~~just~~ staring. Some of them used to walk back and forth, giving us all kind of signals, or making silly movements, which we didn't understand at all. Once Eda Rosenzweig came along, yelling to keep our heads high, and not to give in. It was easy for her to talk. She already had her passport, and thanks to Dr. Perlberger survival was no problem for her. On another occasion, she paraded again saying something, that all is well, because big Richard was still alive. And again nobody knew what she ment. Richard was the name of Dr. Perlberger's son. But he was just a little boy not big at all.

Sometimes Mrs. Suedwertz have showed-up, crying aloud on behalf of her son Srulek. The guards inside didn't pay any attention to her. She was just walking back and forth saying in Yiddish; "Isruel! Vi bist du? Eh bin so alein, and du zitst in camer. Fer vus kimst du nisht a heim?" (Israel! Where are you? I am so alone, and you are locked-up. Why don't you come home?) As she repeated this scene few times Srulek Suedwertz used to claim the wall, until he reached the window with others people help and yelled back at his mother "Mame! gey shoyn a heim!" (Mother go home). All of us used to claim the wall to have few words with people on the outside. Once I had a conversation like that with Anna and asked her to bring me a clean shirt on her next visit. All this was tragic, but sometimes on a funny side.

Inside, besides interrogations, we had all kind of conversations and discussions. We talked a lot about our predicament and about war and political situation at large. The two speculators Kutcher and Zelichowski used to have all kinds of arguments. When Kutcher got mad at Zelichowski or vise-versa, they turned their backs at each other, and kept arguing anyway, not looking in each others eyes. Once a day we walked around the prison yard, and every day another person was emptying the refuse bucket. Once during our stay in prison we went to take a bath in the town's bathouse, under prison guards holding their guns in ready to shoot position. Some people of Alti-Arik, among them Russian Jews, and some Polish Jews with Soviet passports (family Zlotogorski) stood along the street, making fun of us and yelling some not so kind words (dirty) at us. Back in prison during some nights on the order of NKVD guards kept trucks engines running, keeping us from sleeping, so we would get the impression, that they were getting ready to transfer us from Alti-Arik. A well known NKVD's trick, to make people submit to their demands.

And again as in many crucial situations before it was my dear Anna, who showed us, how much she cared. She went and impressed upon Dr. Perlberger, that it was still ~~was~~ her responsibility to help all of us inside the prison. There still was some food left at the former delegation, which NKVD missed. Anna made Perlberger to give her this food, so she could cook soup for all of us in prison every day.

Since then each day as long we were locked-up, Anna cooked, and later with help of uncle Ludwik and little Belek used to bring us soup or, cream of wheat for lunch. It was an unforgetable help, to suplement the mieger portion of bread and tea or hot water, and was also a tramendous sacrifice, risks of arrests, and constant arguments with prison guards. Uncle Ludwik used to help Anna to carry this stuff, but being afraid never came too close to the building, and little Belek helped Anna to distribute the meal to all of us and our ladies as well.

Interviews and interrogations continued constantly. In some degree we were lucky, because these interrogators let us sleep at night, when those truck engines were ~~not~~ running. Another man was put in our cell. He was Jewish, and I wrote before about him and his family, that people suspected him of being an informer. They put him with us to pretend that he also was a "refusnik," they gave him away, by giving him more food and bread. Like on a command all conversations ceased in his presence.

Chapter 79 (cont)

Changes in Soviet-Polish Relations!

Shortly after arrival of this new man, in our cell, things began to change. During an interrogation session, the older of the Schnall brothers, didn't exactly understand question put to him by the interrogator, and therefore he suggested to this officer if he wouldn't mind to call me in, so I could translate those questions. Ofcourse the interrogator refused. But when next morning the same interrogator talked to me, he casually droped a bomb on me with a statement that I was the leader of our entire pack, if they trust me that much as even to translate for them. Ofcourse I denied the accusation, but I was scared to death. All kind of thoughts have rushed through my mind, and I started to imagene myself in a faraway Siberian labor camp. Back in the cell I had a terrible argument with Shlomo Schnall for puting me in such predicament.

At my next session with the interrogator I still insisted on my rights to be a Polish citizien, but this man kept pressing on me still this notion that I was the leader. Little by little my resistance vanished, and I asked the man if I could talk over the situation with my parents? Soon my father came in and then my mother. She didn't look good to me at all, after those few days in prison. We spoke in Polish, but the interrogator understood every word we said.When we mentioned, talking in whisper, what our friends would think of us if we give in, this guy interrupted our conversation, by telling us not worry about our friends, because all of them will follow us shortly. There was no doubt about it. He was right.

So our decision have been made. We felt like somebody was puting a rope over our necks as we were thinking, that it was our good-by to Poland.

We recived our new Soviet passports. At least we ceased to be "Makscheins" as the NKVD in Aldan made us, and became "Mondscheins" again. With this passport we also ceased to be Poles. The Soviets refused to write in the space for "Nationality" "Polish" and instead wrote "Yevrey" (Jewish), which was right, but not really right under the circumstances, because our chances ever to return to Poland diminished even more.

Our passports were restricted, for six months only. The secretary, who wrote wore clothing confiscated from Polish delegation. Clothing which rightfuly, belonged to us, and which we didn't recive because of Perlberger's and Goldberg's greed. So as poor and ragged as we appeared, we returned to our mud hut in Palasan. We came back practically to nothing. Uncle Ludwik greeted us warmly. We told him our story, and also told him to expect aunt Rose and Heniek anytime.

I was very anxious to see my dear Anna, so I went to her hut as soon as possible. We set on the bench outside, holding hands, and discussing our overall situation, when grandma Frances walked in through the yard gate. She told us that after we left sudenly everything changed. Grandma was taken to appear before a real court. The judge informed her straight out, that she would get 2 years in prison if she won't change her mind and take the passport. Grandma pretended, that she didn't know what they were talking about, so the judge got hold of somebody who understood Polish, and quickly helped grandma to change her mind.. So another victim of Soviet trickery grandma Frances came home with a new six months Soviet passport.

Later in the evening aunt Rose and Heniek came home with passports, and by daybreak the rest of the group was back, all carrying the new passports. The others who haven't been arrested went to NKVD to pick them up. Uncle Ludwik could stop worry about his lost "Udostovierenya".

Everybody came back from jail, except Shmil Zalmen Goldberg. He resisted and got the two years sentence. NKVD transferd him to Fergana, where he proved to them, that the law was on his side, and that he was entitled to a passport for foreigners. So Goldberg was released with his new passport, which really didn't matter. Adventually despite our fears we all returned to Poland.

Chapter 80

War and the Homefront!

On the battle fields, luck finally swtched to the Allied side. July 9-10 1943 Allied forces under overall comand of General Eisehower invaded Sicily. By the end of July Mussolini resigned as Italian premier and was replaced by Marshall Pietro Badoglio. August have begun by bombing of Romanian oil fields in Ploesti by U.S. Liberator planes and by the end of the month the conquest of Sicily was completed. In the beginning of September Allies invaded southern Italy, forcing complete surrender of Italian armies. In meantime Germans seized Rome from Italians, but Italian navy was turned over to the Allies. In October U.S. Fifth Army captured Naples and Italy declared war on Germany.

In November Americans landed on Salomon Islands, and on anniversary of their revolution Soviets recaptured Kiev from Germans. November 20 Americans landed on Gilbert Islands, and couple of days after Roosevelt and Churchill met Chang - Kai-Shek in Cairo, they met with Stalin in Teheran. By the end of the year after Eisenhower took over as the Supreme Commander of all Allied forces, British navy finished 1943 on a happy note by sinking German battleship Scharnhorst just off coast of North Cape.

With all those victories, the war situation was for the first time much better for the Allies since the war began in September 1939. But as far as our future was concerned, 1944 didn't promise any changes for better.

After loosing her job at the Polish delegation, with some help by Dr. Perlberger Frieda got a job as night clerk in Alti-Arik hospital. Dr. Perlberger maybe bothered by guilty conscience, performed a good deed for all of us released from jail. She convinced the food supply authorities in Alti-Arik to give us bread for all those days we spent in Jail. The other part of the deal was an agreement for us to recive bread cards and obtain the 400 grams ration every day from then on. We weren't reciving bread rations before, because as members of kolhoz we weren't entitled to it. How Dr. Perlberger accomplished all this I don't know. Something like this was unheard in those days. Unless! 400 grams per person wasn't to much, but was better then nothing. After all kolhoz didn't pay us anyway. Working or not working.

Frieda didn't work to hard at the hospital. She entertained herself during those lonely nights as much as she possible could. On one occasion she ate few pounds of grapes, a ration for the entire family. On another occasion she ate lots of apricots, after she picked them up in a large fruit garden she happened to pass on her way to town. After she was finished with the apricots she broke the pits and ate all those like almond looking nuts after she took them out from the pits.

As I said before some days used to be bad, some so-so and some, very seldom good. One of those good days happened to come Frieda's way when one early morning she was walking home from work in hospital. An Uzbek woman stood in front of her house and desperatly tried to start conversation with Frieda. The problem was that Frieda didn't know what this woman was talking about, and the woman didn't know what Frieda was talking about. Finally after few "bilmeyde" (Uzbek word for I don't understand) Frieda started to feel like this famous scientist who after discovering something said "Eureka". At last she realized that this woman was inviting her to the house to eat breakfest with her. All kind of goodies prepared by this women were ready to eat. Ofcourse Frieda didn't hesitate. This food standing there in front of her was just saying: "Eat me, eat me". So Frieda kept eating, but she still didn't know why! But then while eating she made another discovery. This Uzbek woman was all the time repeating two words: "Alma and lepioshky". It dawned on Frieda that Alma was a clerk in the village food store, responsible for distributing bread. She looked a little like Frieda, and this woman took Frieda for Alma and as such asked her to give her lots of bread when she would come to the store to pick-up her ration. So Frieda just kept eating and nodding her head. She didn't say a word. When she left the Uzbek woman was convinced that next time when she will come to the store, she will get lots of bread. I would like to see this woman's face when she came to the store and discovered that Alma was a different person.

Looking for ways to fight hunger, we used to seek out places where food was available. Besides jobs in private Uzbek homes other way to beat hunger, was to know in advance knews about up-coming marriages, births, and as far as we were concerned a surprise "party" when somebody passed away. On any of those occasions in every Uzbek home rich or poor there used to be a big shyndik going on for few days and nights. An Uzbek word "Toy" covered all those occasions. There was only one difference between weddings, an births and deaths. At weddings and births everybody was happy. After a funeral women used to cry day and night without stoping for a month.

All those Uzbek delicacies have been laid out on the ground. Outside in summer and inside in winter. It didn't make no difference. The ground outside was made from mud and the floors inside were muddy also. Everybody was sitting on the ground eating rice pilaf, shurpa (soup made from fat, meat, and vegetables, plenty of lepioshky, blintzes filled with meat, vegetables and fruit, and drinking hot tea with dry fruits. Besides eating Uzbek men and women talked a lot and used to smoke hashish and opium, or hold under their tongues some kind of tobacco called "nosovoy". They all ate with hands and drank tea or soup from small cups. Some Uzbeks who knew Russian customs provided us with wooden spoons.

Few days after a feast like that our stomachs felt much better. Those Uzbeks most of the time were aware of our problems. When the time came to leave the party they always asked the same question;"Kursak polniy?" (Is your stomach full?)

Even with our new bread ration cards, lots of times bread wasn't available at the store for many days in a row. But we always recived our missing rations back. Until today an incident stays in my mind after Frieda's look alike Alma was replaced by a new clark, who was an Uzbek man. His name was Dalimov and shortly after he took over, there was an interruption in bread deliveries. After a week or so Dalimov brought to the store a large load of bread to distribute among a large crowd which was waiting for him in the front of the store. While waiting we noticed that his behavior wasn't normal. It was easy to assume that he was stone drunk. He gave out bread without paying attention to ration cards. Some people recived more, others less. Obviously Dalimov didn't know what he was doing, and it wasn't us but his friends Uzbeks who were first to take an advantage of him running back and forth with those unused ration cards to get from Dalimov as much bread as possible. Seeing all this we just couldn't let such an opportunity to xxxxxx pass us by. We also went back two or maybe three times and accumulated some bread for few days to come. After few days Dalimov figured out what had happen and told us about it, but the damege had been done. Besides Dalimov himself was "hot" because he never gave us the honest weight of bread, so he kept quiet.

In spring 1944 grandpa Abraham and I went to Fergana together to sell some clothing we had leftover from Polish delegation. We spent couple of nights in the Julie family home. As you already know Julies moved out to Fergana from Palasan maybe half year before. Mr. Julie used to work in bakery there, and their son Leo as in Otkritiy used to pretend working, selling from time to time a piece of soap. Julies relatives a Weinberg family also used to live in Fergana. Mrs. Weinberg was Mrs. Julie's sister who because of war in 1939 got "stuck" in New York while visiting the New York World Fair. Her husband and children wind-up in Soviet Union. One of the Weinberg's daughter married later grandma's Frances cousin Monek Metzger.. They all live now in New York.

After selling some things on bazaar I finally was able to pay back Leo Julie the 30 Rubles I borrowed from him couple of years before when I firat arrived in Palasan. I was very happy to get this load of my mind.

Julies had been good friends to us. Not only we slept in their home, they also fed us, and mind you they ate much better then all of us in Palasan. Before going back home Mr. Julie gave us couple of loafs of bread, and made arrangements for grandpa and me to travel on a truck going on business for the bakery to Vanovskaya.

Chapter 81

Vanovskaya!

The truck's business on Vanonskaya was to pick-up and fill-up three barrels of crude oil to heat bakery's ovens. As for everything in those days there was a catch to pay for the free ride, and it wasn't as simple as it sounded. First of all those barrels on the truck weren't fastened jumping freely all over the truck's floor. Grandpa Abraham and I have had quite a rough ride just to try to hold these barrels in place. The second chore was to help the driver to fill-up the barrels with this crude. And this wasn't easy either because one of us had to carry the buckets full of oil from the pump to the truck, and then lift it to the other, who kept pouring this liquid into the barrel spilling it all over the place. After we were through we had plenty of oil spots all over our so-called best clothing.

Vanovskaya in those days was a small community with a small railroad station. But the place was important because of an oil refinery located there. 30 km. away there was oil wells in a locality called "Chemion", not faraway from the Soviet-Afghan border. The refinery on Vanovskaya used to purify the crude oil from Chemion, flowing through a pipeline bilt along the highway between Chemion and Vanovskaya. During the war after Soviet Union lost refineries in Ukraine to the Germans, Vanovskaya became very important. Long tanker trains used to haul crude from oil wells of Caucasus. There was hardly enough rail tracks to accomodate all those tankers. Only one track remained free to let through other trains. Another problem was the small refinery. That why the Soviet government decided to bilt another new refinery next to the old one.

The construction began early in 1943, and the small Vanovskaya located near Fergana on an important line between Tashkent and Frunze (Capital of Soviet Kirgizia) became famous. All kind of dignitaries from Soviet oil industry had come there from all over the country. The plant was declared a "Voyenniy zavod" (war plant) and any person working there was automatically free from service in the Red Army. Still on many occasions as everything in Soviet Union rules have been broken. In their first move authorities drafted thousands of Uzbek farmers from nearby collective farms to begin the preliminary work for this new project. Engineers and specialists arrived from other oil centers, and all kind of workers from the area and even other faraway places used to seek and found employment there, and among them many Polish Jews.

In Palasan we still fought hard to keep above, but it was getting harder and harder. But a small incident finally made up my mind to leave kolhoz and look for employment someplace else.

I mentioned before that in order to keep our stoves burning we needed "Mazut" (crude oil) to mix with dried out cotton sticks. In order to obtain "mazut" we carried two buckets on a thick stick all the way to Vanovskaya and a small can full of holes. There used to be many small puddles around oil storages on Vanovskaya with crude flowing all the time on the top. With our cans with holes we used to sepatrate crude from water and fill-up our buckets with "mazut" and then carried them home. It took always an hour to fill-up one large bucket, which lasted for two or three days. It was much easier when on certain occasions pipes along the Vanovskaya road burst, and the crude accumulated in trenches near the road. In cases like that we always made few trips daily in order to store some crude to last us for a longer period of time.

Now going back to the effort to make my life better, once going with Heniek to Vanovskaya to find some crude, from far we noticed military police standing on the bridge and checking war documents. Ofcourse we didn't have any, and it was obvious they were looking for draft dodgers. We forgot all about the crude and to avoid arrest we ran back as fast as possible. Back home we left our buckets and immediatly went to Alti-Arik to register and to get our "War Books". We didn't have any photos so they fingerprinted our thumbs. So from then on we were subject to draft anytime, and be ready to appear before draft boards.

My father who at this time was already 52 years old, also went to register, because it was easier to move around with some kind of a military document. But they wouldn't issue him a book. Instead they gave him just a piece of paper, even without official stamp. Heniek and I were the only men from our group to register for draft.

With my new war book in my pocket I no longer could effort to fool around kolhoz, and I was forced to look for other employment to prevent my being drafted. Mrs. Esterles' 18 year old Sania (the rich Russian Jewish lady from Odessa) to save himself from draft took a job at the new refinery construction on Vanovskaya as a scaffolder student. His instructor was a Soviet Jew Bornstein from someplace in the Ukraine. Bornstein's younger son also was learning scaffolding, and his older son was already in the Red Army. Later I learned to know Mr. Bornstein much better and for a while considered him my friend. This man worked himself up to become a very important man at the construction, and was accepted as member of communist party.

It seemed at the time as a right thing to do, so I followed in Sania's footsteps. I also joined there a scaffolding brigade, but my instructor was a different man. In the beginning I regreted that it wasn't Bornstein, but as it turned out my man wasn't bad at all.

Besides being protected from draft I recived there 700 grams of bread daily, which with the 800 grams for mother and father in Palasan made it much easier in our food situation. I also recived ration cards for soup and other entries when available at the construction's diner, and cards for goods like clothing, shoes and underwear and fabrics, which I only recived once but not from the store, but from our company's storage. Many times mother used to come to Vanovskaya during lunch hour, when I was able to get extra bowls of soup to take them home and prepare from them a better supper for all of us.

The employment office sent me to a brigade of Russian men and one Polish Jew a no good son of.... who I am quite sure was an informer. One of those men like the ones who under German occupation used to help the Nazis.

The name of my boss was Khrenov. I was a student and as such I worked only eight hours, while the entire construction was required to work ten hours daily and many times on Sundays. This Khrenov was a good man. He didn't know how to read and write, but he knew his trade. In his younger years he was many times in trouble with the Soviet law, and spent many years in prisons and labor camps, and some people who knew him used to claim that he even served time for murder. He was a top man at the Vanovskaya construction. He was married, and his wife was working at the company's laundry. Imagene her washing by hands all this dirty laundry; Sheets, pillow cases and blankets from all the dormitories on Vanovskaya.

Little by little I learned my new trade. I tried to stretch my time as a student as long as possible. Imagene me a scaffolder, digging deep into the ground to slip there long posts, using large, heavy hammer and long nails to put a scaffold together often inside a very narrow tower. Besides scaffolds we used to build forms for concrete fundations.. Not like nowa-day workers pour concrete in ready iron forms. In those days in Soviet Union we made them from wood. I also used to do some roofing, covering roofs with boards before another brigade put tar rools over.

This also a very difficult time for me, Anna's family and for all of us in Palasan when Anna was so seriously ill with typhus. We all were thankfull to God for her recovery after tender loving care by her family.

I didn't make any new friends on Vanovskaya. I was only friendly with a young man who with his family used to live on the road to Alti-Arik. He slept next to me while we were in jail before we got our passports. His job at the constructior was to mix paint in a tremendous ditch using a very long stick. There was no paint in cans in Soviet Union. They used to bring on trucks to the construction paint stones from underground caves in Chemion (where the oil was). By a special process this man and his helpers crushed those stones, dumped them into this tremendous ditch filled all up with water and mixing all the time made them into white paint.

Chapter 82

Going to War!

Having bread and soup,, was a big help but still not enough. Many Uzbeks mostly the poor ones pointed out to us many eatable leafs, growing wild along some fields and roads. They remained us and tasted like spinch or broccoli. We used to pick them and mother cooked a vegetable soup with a touch of onions, flour and a drop of cooking oil. Soup like that tasted good, but those leafs had a strong content of iron, so after eating them even our teeths felt stiff, not talking about the rest of mouth.

Allied forces on all the fronts turned around Germans previous advantages into their advantages. The Red Army was firmly on the march west reclaiming from Germans their lost territory. The closer they kept coming to former Polish borders, the more we suspected the possibility of being drafted to the new Soviet supported Polish army.

I often discussed with my mother, what would happen if I would be drafted. Besides the dangers of war we used to talk in terms, that such move would improve our family's living conditions. Soviet government took a good care on their soldiers families, giving them many benefits. I always thought, that because of my bad vision I would serve behind front lines. We also talked about me marrying Anna, so her situation could be improved. Ofcourse my mother didn't have any objections to all of that.

In meantime Soviet military authorities kept close check on all their citiziens eligible for draft. Many times at night un-noticed they showed up at the Palasan's village Soviet and by runners used to round up as many as possible young people. I wasn't afraid to go because my book was marked "employed by a war plant". But Heniek, uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose worried a lot. So before going to the village Soviet, just in case Heniek always kept opening those scars under his feet to show these people that he wasn't able to walk. But nothing ever happened to us during those checks. Only once we all together with the Palasan Uzbek population recived summons to appear before the draft board. I was so sure about myself and my eye, and I even didn't dream that I could be drafted. We all went through medical examination, and later still naked we paraded in front of the draft board, with many women in the audience. They were sitting there with their eyes popping out. We answered few questions and got back our war books. To my large surprise I recived my book back with a stamp "stroyevoy" (able to serve on frontlines). I was shocked, but there was nothing I could do about it. It seemed that Soviet authorities still were desparate.

On another occasion, Sunday afternoon after people were leaving Alti-Arik bazaar, military police surrounded the whole area for another round-up. I showed them my book and they let me go. My father was afraid to go through with his piece of paper without stamp. so he snicked through a hole in the wall on the opposite side of the market.

To culminate all our expectations the real blow came few weeks later. All our men except uncle Ludwik, my father, grandpa Abraham, UNCLE EISEN and me recived summons to report to the draft board in Alti-Arik. This particular time the call came to volunteer for the new Polish army. I was the only one of the youngs not asked to report, because of my job on Vanovskaya. To find out what will happen I decided to report on my own. In truth I was the only real volunteer. The draft board assembled at night. The chairman told us to write "zayavas"(permission) to join as volunteers to serve in Polish army. Most of those men didn't know how to write Russian, so I wrote for them. All they did just signed the patition. If they only wouldn't be scared to death, they all would say "no".

With the summons, a tragedy came to the Schnall family. Their MOTHER who had a bad heart condition, seeing the summons for both of her sons, got a coronary and passed away on the spot. Yes she died instantly. It was a terrible blow for the boys and their sister Chaya. They were a very close family and they loved their mother dearly. It was also a terrible blow for all of us. We liked Mrs. Schnall. The lady knew how to live with others in cramped conditions. She and her children were always ready to share what they had with others, even thou they alone didn't have enough.

Mrs. Schnall's funeral took place the following morning. It was a beautiful sunny spring day. Many of our people came from all over, even from far away to attend. I don't know how, but news about her death spreaded fast. Many of our young people died before after amnesty from camps from hunger and hard labor. Mrs. Schnall's death was a first one which touched all of us personally. We burried her at the local Moslem cementary, in a corner put aside for Jews, already occupied by some Russian Jews who passed away previously. All this happened before all of us were scheduled to appear before the draft board.

The appearance before the draft board was rather short. The chairman of the board, the commandant of the local NKVD told us that we were being drafted into the Polish army, and ofcourse that we were volunteers. What stroke me as unusual about this whole procedure was a lack of medical examination, like somebody would stage just a farce for the sake of propaganda. And as it turned out later it was just a propaganda to show the world how much the new Polish Liberation Committee in Soviet Union had been supported by Polish citiziens in Soviet Union.

Next day in the morning I went to Vanovskaya to tell them in the office, that I was drafted. I recived my money due for my work and one extra ration of bread. At home everybody took for granted, that we will not see each other for a long time. Mother and aunt Rose kept crying, but father and uncle Ludwik stayed rather cool. Uncle Ludwik gave Heniek and me 100 Rubles each. As far as clothing was concerned there was nothing left to take. After all we would get new army uniforms. So we took with us some bread, fruit and raw vegetables said the painful good-by and went to Alti-Arik.

Still the same afternoon I went to see my dear Anna, who was still in bed recuperating from her typhus in Dr. Perlberger's home. At that point I was short of words and really I didn't know what to say. It was very hard for me. Anna always was and still is a very sensetive person, so she also didn't say to much. We just kept staring at each other and finally said good-by. I was very much upset inside, that I even fergot to kiss Anna good-by. As for her, she told me later, that at that moment she thought that she will never see me again.

Before we left we also said good-by to our friends. Grandma Frances was very emotional and couldn't stop crying. As we were leaving our families and friends in a strange and different country, then any other country in the world, except Nazi Germany, chances of our seeing each other again were not to promising.

We reported in Alti-Aril as told. In the evening Ela came to say another farewell and then I gave her a short and more personal letter to Anna.

Night was worm, so we slept outside. Early in the morning a capitain on a horse have awaken us and told us to wash at the nearby fountain, and get fast ready to move out. The horse and the capitain moved very slow, and we were following. We knew the way very good anyway. After all it wasn't first time we have walked this route to Fergana. At half a way we stop for a short rest. We ate sat on the ground and after 20 minutes started to walk again. Our Palasan group kept together, and as before we thought that Max Marmur will be our leader. We conversed a little, but our thoughts were faraway, trying to guess what our future will be.

It took us over three hours to reach Fergana and the Red Army's assembly Building. Our capitain and his horse disapeared for a while, and we entered a large hall. Like a gym, filled with hundreds young men, all waiting for their reassignments. Our capitain came back and told us to make ourselves comfortable in the nearby corner and wait for further instructions. Sitting under a wall, everybody was quiet for a change, and the Schnall brothers standing in the corner facing east were saying their "Kadish". After all the "Minyan" was available. Our group, far more then 10 men was entirly Jewish.

In fifteen minutes or sooner our capitain came back, and to our tremendous surprise, without any coments told us to get our things together and go home. For one long minute we stood there in silence. His words still didn't settle in our minds. We gazed at each other and started to laugh and hug. It was an outburst of a real happiness and relief.

Chapter 83

Coming Home!

After the initial shock, it came to our minds that Blessed Memory Mrs. Schnall died in vain. Except feeling sad, there was nothing that could be done about it. We lived in strange times in a country whose government ruled in strange ways.

As I mentioned before, our going to the army was just a charade, a propaganda stunt. It was clear once again, that Stalin didn't want Jews even in the Soviet supported Polish army.

So going back home was good news. Or was it really? From the economic standpoint for me it would be better if I would be drafted and accepted. Maybe the Allmighty wanted to keep me alive, and not to see all the horrors of war. From that moment on I quit dreaming and made up my mind to concentrate only on the situation at hand.

The war kept going better and better for the Allies. But still millions of innocent people have been murdered in Europe and millions others were starving in Soviet Union.

After leaving the assembly building in Fergana the problem was, how to get home before nightfall. Heniek and others from Palasan didn't take any chances and immediatly started to walk back. I and my friend the paint man from Vanovskaya went to bazaar hoping to find a ride on a truck either from construction or refinery. Because of an accident at the construction day before, a man was electrocuted, and was near death, so they transported him to Fergana, where he died almost immediatly. And this was the truck my buddy and I caught in Fergana. It wasn't pleasant to see the naked, uncovered body of a death man throughout the ride home, but it served our purpose and got us home without walking another 30 km the same day.

I got off the truck on the crossroads from Vanovskaya to Palasan. From there was much closer to Dr. Perlberger's home, where Anna was resting, so there it was where I was heading. I wanted Anna to know first that I was back. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Anna's ideas about me not coming back to her were wrong. Even if the army would take me, and if I survived I would be back with her no matter what. I didn't ask her to many questions then. She was still not well enough after her illness, but until today I am hoping that she was glad and pleased to see me back.

Because of the ride I was first back. On my way home I stop in "kibitka" and told the people there that their love ones are on the way back. Mrs. Marmur and Belek, Mrs. Suedwertz and Chaya Schnall were happy and excited, but as I think now about those days I am strongly convinced that all of them took my news like they were sure, that we weren't going anyplace, like they expected us home any moment.

As I left "kibitka" I noticed my father from far standing in front of the house, like he was waiting there for me to show-up very soon.

As always mother was very happy to see her son back. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose also were pleased to know that Heniek will be back shortly.

So our real war experience finished even faster as it have begun.

A good night sleep helped a lot, Next morning marked a new beginning in our fight on the survival front all over again.

Few days later Sanya Esterless came to say good-by to us. He was then 18 years old and as such ready to become Red Army's newest draftee. But his mother being somewhat wealthy and having some influence in some circles enrolled her son in an engineering school in Kokand, a small town not far from Vanovskaya. With Sanya also went his friend Bornstein son of the scaffolder instructor from Vanovskaya, who already had a son fighting the war. Only the other lady from Odessa Mrs. Homski lost her son, because she didn't have ways to protect him.

With summer approaching I decided, that it would be better for me at that time not to return to Vanovskaya. With this move we lost 300 grams of bread from our ration, because not working on the construction I got only 400 grams instead of 700. But as in previous years we would live better anyway for few months from fields. With low wages from Vanovskaya it would be hard to buy on bazaar fruits and vegatables, which we would pick from fields and gardens for nothing.

Coming Home!

Anna slowly was getting stronger after her long illness. At last she left Dr. Perlberger's home, with thanks for her "hospitality". It was a real pleasure each evening to see her, when she met us on the outskirts of the village on our way from work. She was real,pretty then with her boy's haircut,still on a skinny side, but rounder every day. As before her illness we have spent our evenings together. Couple times we went to Alti-Arik to see a dull movie or drink tea in the local teahouse.

Summer was passing faster then ever before, since our being in Palasan, because of those good news from all the fronts. As always everybody was working hard trying to accumulate food and produce for winter. We all wanted to see our bags full of flour, corn or wheat hanging on the walls. It wasn't easy, but stealing help some. To steal food was our main pre-occupation. Stealing in those days wasn't a shame. Everybody was stealing, Us, Russians, Uzbeks, kids and grown-ups. Anybody who stole more was better off, and have had lots respect from others, who were afraid to steal.

Shoemakers of that era used to live like millioners. They kept buying or whenever possible stealing old tires and tent fabrics. From those discards they made all kind of shoes. For ladies, men, boots, working shoes and even dress shoes. Two shoemakers lived and worked in a shack on the road between Palasan and Alti-Arik. One was a pole from Vilna, and the other was an Ukrainian. They both were first class"schlepers", but had plenty of everything. After the war was over the Pole went to Poland to meet his wife who survived the war there. He went home like a "schleper", without a ruble in his pocket, after all those years making so much money. On the train Jews collected money for him and fed him. The Ukrainian chose to stay with his girlfriend in Uzbekistan.

The Greenberg brothers were shoemakers also. Both were married to two sisters. Only one of them had a small child. They worked together, made lots of money together, and constantly argued with each other. Their main business was to make boots for Uzbeks. Finally time came for them to part, because they couldn't stand each other anymore. One of them remained in Palasan and the older settled on Vanovskaya. At the end they finally made up and went to Poland together. Two brothers who even in the war when half of the world was burning, had everything, while their families were perishing in Poland couldn't live in peace with each other.

Shortly after returning from home back from the "war"my friend from the paint brigade was transfered from Vanovskaya to Leninsk to do the same job at another construction. He left his wife and child behind in Alti-Arik with her family. While in Leninsk he was drafted again. On the way to the army he stop at home to say good-by. Since then his wife never saw or heard from him again. Military authorities Soviet and Polish as well didn't have any information about him. His wife kept searching for him after the war in Poland, without results. The man simply disapeared in thin air. My theory was, that he probably deserted, and his wife knew, where he was hiding, just waiting for the opportunity to join him.

In searching for people to send to their "Trudovoy Front" (working batalions) again in Alti-Arik militia rounded-up and locked-up some older men in the courtyard of NKVD. On this particular day grandpa Abraham found himself among those men. It took the girls most of the day to find him. They all particulary grandma Frances worried to death. Finally knowing his whereabouts grandma went to the same lady doctor who helped Ela to get out from digging canals. Grandma presented the doctor with a crystal perfume container, which by evening assured grandpa's release.

Almost at the same time Soviets drafted Srulek Suedwertz into the army again. Even thou he could hardly seee they sent him someplace in Caucasus. They kept him there one week and again sent him back home. So Mrs. Suedwertz was happy having her son back. She was really anxious to see him back, because while Srulek was away, papers arrived from Moscow giving them permission to emigrate to United States.

Chapter 84

War!-And the Last Ghetto in Poland!

Slowly but sure, day after day Allied armed forces continued to chase Germans out from the conquered territories. It was already 1944 and according to German reports, all ghettos in Poland had been long liquidated, and the territory declared "Judenfrei" (free of Jews). Still all over Europe many of Jews were around, either in hiding or exposed to Nazi brutality.

Long after the Warsaw and Cracow ghettos were destroyed, the ghetto of the city of Lodz, was still functional. During the spring of 1944 Germans began demanding that 150 Jews be shipped daily out of the ghetto for special assignments. And so in April 1944 new "Aktions" began. By August 1944 everything was over, and most of the inhabitants were taken to various concentration camps to work or to die. But a small portion of the ghetto remained active until the liberation by the Red Army early in 1945.

Most of the remarks in this chapter I took from the book "Growing up in the Holocaust" by Ben Edelbaum, a resident of Kansas City, and former resident of the Lodz ghetto and inmate of some concentration camps in Germany.

Overhelming majority of Lodz ghetto, and for that matter of any ghetto used to be very poor people. But some of them even thou is hard to believe were considered wealthy. The whole population was distinguishable typically between two groups of people; The"haves" and "havenots". The "havenots" were the common folks who made up the main bulk of the ghetto population. Those were the ones who didn't have any"pull", who didn't have any friends or relatives in high places. These were the people whose existance depended on their meager food rations, and they had to work hard to obtain them. They wore old dirty loose fitting garments, oversized and infested with lice. Anything in the war of headgear was acceptable, as long as it kept the person warm. Because there was not caloric heat provided from within the body, even during summer "havenots" felt chilled and needed additional cover to maintain the normal degree of body heat. They wore wooden shoes so-called "treppes" which would not give in to the natural feet movements, when walking and caused great strain on calves, knees and lower back. Only some wore old leather shoes, which in most cases were filled with paper or rags to plug up large holes in the soles. Pieces of string and wire subtituted for shoelaces. Many people wore burlap sacks and paper tied around their feet also with wire and string. This type of covering was by sight worst of all, because the rags stayed on feet permanently, for the reason that they were to difficult to remove at night and to put them back on in the morning.

The "havenots" usually carried with them a thin plate or a quart-size pot and s spoon attached with a piece of wire in a small linen bag, or attached to a belt made of string or wire. (In Soviet Union we also carried a spoon plate or can in a linen bag all the time).

In the ghetto the living person's face was like a face of a corpse. It was almost triangular with a seemingly large cranial area. The eyes were sunken above the cheekbones and had a glassy look. The cheekbones seemed unsually high, without the fleshy tissues to fill them out. These people used to be called "Klepsydres" (Death Notice) or "Obituary", because a look at their faces said that they were ready for graves.

The "haves" were the ones who held their reins on the rest of the ghetto population. They used to be called "Szyszki"(Big Shots). They worked at food supply depots, or had friends or relatives working there, who never hesitated to throw extra scoopful or kilogram or handful their way. The "haves" had connections in all the high places and were able to recive special allotments on food, fuel, clothing and services at the expence of the "havenots".

Social and moral standarts were very low among these people. Their thoughts and actions focused on the ultimate accomplishment: "Live and live better and live Longer". Justice was the word not invented yet, and the Germans didn't care at all. As far as they were concerned, mutual annihilation within the ghetto confines and among the Jewish population suited them just fine. The "haves" knew that and took full advantage of it. Their women used sex to achieve their goals and improve their lot. The rest of the population had to tolerate them as part of the system.

The dress-code of "haves" was a light colored sun-visor type hats, dark three-quarter-length well tailored jackets with wide lapels and a waist-band in the back. Gray colored riding britches and well polished black military boots, reaching up to just under the knee.

Most of the "have" women wore excessive make-up and were dressed almost like men, except of riding britches they wore dark crisp looking knee-high skirts. Their three-quarter-length jackets were designed along more feminine lines.

"Haves" style of dress was so drastically different from the "havenots" that it clearly reflected the social system within the ghetto. The Germans, Poles, and other "Arians" who had acces to ghetto, would gaze upon these people and say; "Look at those Jews! One is brimming with life, and is fat like a pig, and the others is so skinny, and looks like he is going to die right away".

In those early days of 1944 it became obvious that the war will be over pretty soon. Still the main question persisted: How soon? It was nothing else to do, just to endure little longer, and listen to the good news from all the fronts.

In January 1944 American and British troops landed behing German lines at Anzio, Italy. In February the Red Army after 900 days of German encirclement of Leningrad, finally broke the blockade, and launched an offensive to push Germans out from Estonia and Latvia. At the same time U.S.Marines captured Roi-Namur and five days later Kwajalein Island. In Japan Hideki Tojo chief of the general staff declared himself military dictator.

In March Nazi forces invaded Hungary to meet threat from the Balkans, and right away started on their plan to exterminate Hungarian Jews. Many Jews perished the same way as in the rest of Europe, but many survived thanks to Swedish diplomat Raul Walenberg.

In April General De Gaulle became the head of French Provisional Government in London, and in Asia General McArthur landed in New Guinea Netherlands.

Many importand Allied victories took place in May. Red Army recaptured their naval base of Sevastopol on Black Sea. Nazis evacuated Monte Cassino monastery, ending three months of bloody siege. By the end of the months Allies unleashed an offensive from Anzio's beachhead, and as a result of this offensive Germans yielded entire coastline from Anzio to Terrachina.

June also was a very busy month for the Allies. Anglo-American troops took Rome, and the D-Day invasion of the coats of France under the supreme command of General Eisenhower the Allies invaded Normandy for long planed offensive against Hitler's "Fortress Europe". First German V-1 rockets attacked England, and General De Gaulle returned to France, first time in four years. U.S. Super fortresses made first raids on Japan, and carrier borne U.S. aircraft attacked Japanese fleet in the battle of Philippine Sea. June ended with German withdrawal from the French port city of Cherbourg.

In July American forces continued their victories in Asia. British second army broke through German lines in France. But the highlight of the war came on July 20, when Hitler escaped an bomb attempt on his miserable life in Ratenburg, East Prussia. There was a tremendous battle going on at that time nearby, where thousands of Soviet soldiers got killed by an excellent German defense. Many years later a Jewish man here in Kansas City told me about his experience while he was waiting with his unit there to be send to frontlines, just couple kilometers from the raging battle. Him and some other Jewish young men in this unit came across a high ranking Soviet officer who was also Jewish. This man held back for hours those young Jews, and didn't send them to battle until the situation stabilized in this particular sector., There was no doubt about it, that if not for this officer some of those Jewish men would not survive.

By the end of July U.S. Marines and infantry established beachheads at Guam and completed the conquest of Guam by August 10. Meanwhile Americans also made a breakthrough in western France. In Asia they took Marinas, and Red Army penetrated borders of Latvia and Estonia.

Chapter 85

Rays of Hope!

Our own front in kolhoz Achun Baybayev was many kilometers away from battle fronts, but in a way they both have been connected. The Red Army was closing on places like Zbaraz, Tarnopol, Gliniany and Lvov. Those towns from which NKVD took us to Siberian labor camps.

Shortly after returning home from Polish Army, news reached us, that the First Polish Division was put to a test during a large battle between Soviet and German armies at a place called Lenino in White Russia near the former Polish-Soviet border. When the soldiers of the Red Army weren't able to break through Germans lines, the Polish Division was the one to do the breaking through with a tremendous amount of casulties. It made us all feel glad, that we came home. It gave us also an idea of things in store for this Polish Army.

When Red Army finally took Zbaraz, Gliniany and all those other known to us places in Western Ukraine, our family recived official papers from Zbaraz to come back and settle there. Ofcourse we refused. We had enough of the Soviet rule and prefered to wait until liberation of Poland. But on another hand our cousins Roman and Zosia Kahane accepted the invitation and left their residence someplace in Ural Mountains and traveled to Zbaraz, and later from there to Cracow. The Soviet system of keeping detailed files on their citizien, made possible for town authorities in Zbaraz to find our places of residence in Uzbekistan.

In meantime struggle in Palasan went on. By the end of summer we have been sent to fields again to pick the crops of Sugar beets. In those days sugar beets (the white ones) were important because of sugar shortages. Our main job was to clean them. We used to sit around a large fire, and while cleaning them we also baked them and ate them. Ofcourse those beats were delicious. My father even ate them raw, which later made him very ill and he spent some time in hospital.

After Anna's recovery from typhus, life came to normal again in Leniowers household. She was really beautiful then. Her blond hair changed from a cute boy's style to impressive curls. Because of eating better she also gained some weight. But one thing was bothering me, because I sensed that someting was going on inside of Leniower clan, but I wasn't able to figure out what was it.

Much later I found out that the family planed to move to Fergana. At that time they were trying to find rooms to live and jobs. Still for time being everything remained as it was before. Frieda was clerking in hospital, Ela kept making sweaters and Anna went back to weaving. Grandpa Abraham continued to work at odd jobs at kolhoz, and Grandma Frances kept the house.

Only uncle Josef Eisen didn't do nothing except of praying. Nothing wrong with that. At least someone didn't abandon the old ways. Besides praying he kept walking around the village, having countless discussions with Uzbeks, about religion, war, mostly with Uzbeks returning home wounded or disabled.

Uncle Ludwik, because of age recived from local authorities 25 rubles per month old age pension. 25 rubles a price of a quarter of a loaf of bread. My father also tried for a disability pension, because of kidney problems, but was turned down.

After serving one week with the Red Army, Srulek Suedwertz came home to a large surprise. He thought that very soon him and his mother would be on the way to New York. He even offered to take one of the Leniower girls as his "wife". What he ment was a marriage of convinience just to help Leniowers out. Ofcourse Leniowers were thankful for this offer, but not wanting to split, they declined.

It wouldn't matter anyway. The journey to the "Goldene Medina" never materialized. NKVD kept a close watch on Suedwertz. A man who never worked a minute in Uzbekistan. NKVD called him in many times and asked him lots of tricky questions, so finally Srulek got convinced, that they would never let him go. Maybe they would let go his mother because of her age, but Mrs. Suedwertz would never leave her son. Srulek was afraid that anytime day or night NKVD will come after him, so once during those friendly interrogations, he told the man in charge to forget it, because he decided to stay in Soviet Union until the end of the war.

Chapter 85 (cont)

Rays of Hope!

Despite hope being just around the corner, some developments concerning us and our friends, made once again believers from all of us, that the road to the light at the end of the tunel was still very much a rocky one.

The Fenichel family from Jasło, and the Scheinmans who spent 1940-1941 with us at the settlement in Siberia used to live few kilometers away from Palasan in another village. We saw them from time to time mostly during Sunday bazaars in Alti-Arik.

One one hot summer day we got a message from the Fenichel family, that their father passed away and that they needed a "minyan" to help to burry him. Ofcourse Scheinmans were there, but only four men. So grandpa Abraham, Marmur, Schmall brothers, Suedwertz, Eisen, Heniek, uncle Ludwik, my father and I went to Mr. Fenichels'funeral. He left behind his wife and three daughters. We burried Mr. Fenichel, said the necessary prayers. Mrs. Fenichel and the daughters cried a little, and after the funeral in the house they treated us to a good lunch, the kind which was hard to come-by in those days. Mr. Fenichel was already an old man then. He was the one who helped to build our latrine in the settlement, and Bronia one of his daughters the math profesor was the one who once on a warm winter day while digging trenches in snow striped off her warm clothing because she felt to warm.

Few weeks later the Scheinmans the other family in the same village, went through a traumatic experience, but of another nature. The Soviets drafted Mr. Scheinman and his two older sons into the Red Army, leaving Mrs. Scheinman home with their youngest son. We took the news calm, but with thoughts that if it happened to Scheinmans it could happen to us. Time passed and we didn't hear at all from Mrs. Scheinman and what happened to her family. We assumed, they were far from Alti-Arik. After the whole affair was already fergaten, someone told us that Scheinmans all three of them un-noticed walked away from the draft center in Fergana and went into a temporary hideout. They spent there few weeks, coming out only at night to visit their wife,mother and brother. Their neighbours the Fenichels were in on this secret all the time. Scheinmans obtained new indentity papers with an assumed new name, and together with Fenichels moved to Kuva-Say quite few kilometers away from Fergana. Kuva-Say was known in the area as a cement production center. I used to go there many times with trucks to pick up cement for the construction. The Scheinman family was lucky. No one but us never found out about their adventures. Later under this assumed name they left Soviet Union when time came to go back to Poland. Many years later I saw them in Salzburg, Austria. Their oldest son was then already in Israel fighting the Arabs. In the first Arab-Israeli war he was taken prisoner by the Egyptians. I am quite sure that later he was released and that his family joined him in Israel. As far as Fenichels were concerned only Mrs. Fenichel and daughter Hanka survived, The other two daughters Bronia and Mania passed away in Kuva-Say.

Our hopes were put on hold again, when we were called-up for the third time to appear before another draft board. At the time when war was winding-down it seemed unusual. I guess they still wanted to keep us ready, just in case. That time around I told the doctors about my blind eye, hoping for un-conditional release. But not such luck. They changed my classification from "able to serve" to "Nye goden ku sluzhbye ve army-Goden ku fizytcheskomu trudu" (not fit to serve in the army, but fit to labor). Those labor batalions were even worse then the army, becuse of terrible working conditions, lack of decent lodging and food. To avoid being taken there I didn't have no other choice but to return to work at the refinery construction on Vanovskaya. The construction as a "war plant" would shield me from the labor batalions. So my second time around on Vanovskaya was just to begin.

Chapter 86

Vanovskaya-Second Time Around!

I went again to "Oddel Kadrov" (employment office) of company No.5, which was main overall construction company. The same lady who was heading this department when I left was still there. She agreed to sent me to the same job as scaffolder student. She was Jewish, and a wife of a man who was in complete charge of the food supply department for the entire construction. He was also Jewish, with the best job, anybody would dream to have in those troubled times.

And again I went to personel office to register. The same Stasia Markovna was in charge there as before. A nauseous woman, who acted like if she owned the place. She was also Jewish. Her husband in Red Army, she had with her a little girl and shared an apartment, with a man who was a refugee from Poland like us and worked as an assistant-bookkeeper. This lady was also company's cashier. Yes! The one who used to pay us twice a month. When I arrived in her office she asked me all kinds of questions, which really weren't her business. First of all she wanted to know, how come I didn't come back to work after I was released from the army, so I told her that I was ill. She gave me all kinds of documents, including my ration cards and a union card, which really didn't mean anything. All Soviet workers were and are Union members, but don't have anything to say even in matters concerning them.

I was assigned to work at section No.2. First time around I worked at section No.1, which was refinery construction. Section No.2 was outside refinery walls, and on the other side of railroad tracks. There the company bilt houses for big shots only, and some refinery buildings scheduled to be constructed outside the walls.

The head of this section was engineer Tishchenko, from someplace in the Ukraine, and his wife was draftswoman. His assistant was "Pro-Rab" (supervisor) Konov, a man without degree but knowledgeable in construction. My new instructor was Bronikov, married with two small children. He was a good friend with a man who was "Hozyastveniy Dziesiatnik" (Section's supply man), and also a friend of a man called Lukyanov.

With Bronikov I was learning mostly how to make forms for concrete fundations. Many times because of shortage of workers we used to pour concrete by ourselves. Our second job was fitting window frames in new buildings.

The Lukyanovs was a terrible family. I guess they were worst people from from anybody I knew in Soviet Union. They had few Children, among them a beautiful daughter, and besides their attitude and their way of life, they tried very hard to protect her from vise. They used to live in an old dirty shack. They were dressed in rags, and took them a long time from one wash to another. Their shack was standing in the back of the company's diner, so you could find Mrs. Lukyanovv digging all the time in garbage barrels. But the most disgusting thing was seeing her in bright daylight standing there in front of her shack with [illegible] legs doing her restroom personal chores.

Lukyanov was a guard, guarding most of the time the main warehouse. In his free time he was reporting on people to NKVD.

While I was working for Bronikov, he used to give to me all kind of wares and my mother used to sell them among the village Uzbeks. It never occured to me that all that stuff might be a stolen property. Yes Bronikov and his supply man friend had access to many storage places when Lukyanov was on duty. I finally found out about Bronikov and his friend's activities, when one night they made a large hole in the main warehouse's wall and stole some valuable merchandise. Couple of weeks later they were arrested, and later convicted, but their friend Lukyanov came out un-touched. I still think, that he was the one who reported them.

I left Bronikov even before his arrest. I flunk my test as a scaffolder in the office of the head engineer of company No.5. I even wasn't able to answer some basic questions. I didn't like this kind of work anyway so I made an Appointment with the company's director Mr. Sobolev (another Jew) and got his permission to join the transportation department.

Mr. Tishchenko the head of section 2, didn't like my leaving, his territory, because I went behind his back. At the transport my work was simple. I loaded and un-loaded trucks. It also ment crossing the gates all the time into the section 1, inside the refinery construction. Therefore the refinery security issued a pass with my photo to me, with permission to move freely at the heavy guarded refinery.

A lot have changed since my first time on Vanovskaya. The construction slowed down considerably. Many have been transfered to other locations, all over Soviet Union, and many Uzbek farmers from the area returned to their collective farms. The head of Section No.1 Mr. Biedzik (also Jewish) took a new assignment at another construction, and was replaced by Pro-rab. Pavlov, who like Konov from section 2 was without a degree, but knew everything necessary about refineries construction. The scaffolder Bornstein was still there, and one Semion Moysieyevich Mixon (another Jew) who later played important role in my advancement at construction, who at the time was building equipment supervisor was also one of the leaders at that time. He was an old bachelor, living with his mother. His older brother Gregory Mixon was a head bookkeeper, and an important person at the company No.5.

At the transportation company I reported to the head dispatcher Mr. Batovski (a Jew from Moscow). But the real head of the department was Mr. Goldberg. I don't really have to tell you that he was Jewish also. His assistant was a Russian man Nyehristov, a funny man, who not always was getting along with Goldberg, with tight connections with NKVD. Both Goldberg and Nyehristov were responsible for trucks and their maintnance, with large service shops, lots of equipment and many mechanics. One of them was Freiman, a man from Lodz, who married a Russian girl, and had a child with her. This department was like a goldmine for certain people. Batovski, as a dispatcher assigned and re-assigned truck drivers to their jobs. He always put extra names of their traveling orders, so while working they were able to take passengers aboard, and make money on the side, which they later split with Batovski. With travel restrictions all over Soviet Union people have thought of other ways to move around the country.

While I was working there we operated with many trucks, which ran on old Ford engines. To start the engine a driver had to crank it with a handle. There was a rare occasion when they could start a truck with a starter. We used to have three tons trucks, one and a half tons called in Russian "poluterkas". They used those machines until they collapsed, falled apart, and they still kept repairing them. It was very hard in those days to obtain new trucks. A waiting line was very long. The things got better after General Motors (Jameses) and Studabecker trucks started coming from United States.

Drivers in Soviet Union didn't do nothing else but drive their vehicles. Each driver in Soviet Union by law, was a certified mechanic (classes 1,2 or 3) required to be able to repair or just temporary fix his vehicle in emergency. Each truck have three assigned workers 'grushtchyky' (men or women who load or unload).

The first driver I worked for was Ilyin, a very smart but nervous man. My coworkers were Uzbek Tishibayev and a Russian refugee woman Tyeplakova who's husband was in the Red Army fighting the war. There was a long time since she recived last letter from him. She had a little boy with her, and in meantime she tried to forget her troubles with Ilyin and other men. Both of them were very good workers, and our group was an envy of other drivers, who wanted us on their trucks in order to fill their quotas, Yet we stuck with Ilyin. Our main job was to deliver to the construction, all kinds of building materials. Our small group was getting better all the time, even getting over the quotas. For our good performance Batovski gave us many times long distance assignments, like for example going to Fergana after food supplies. Ilyin like the other drivers liked most the long distance drives. On runs like that, he made lots of money, picking up passengers along the road for 100 rubles per person. Tyeplakova was sitting always in the cabin, and us on the top used to collect money from passengers.

We knew for sure, that Ilyin was giving money to Tyeplakova. Him as the other drivers never shared their profits with their workers voluntary. But if asked they never refused. I guess all this was like an un-written law. They (those drivers), just wanted to be asked. All this first was degrading, but in bad times on our hands, and hard work on our shoulders we didn't mind. We swallowed our pride, and simply just asked for the money, like in a form of a loan. Those drivers used to give to us, any amount we asked for, and they knew, that they will never get their loans back. We did our part for them. We collected the money, we loaded and un-loaded their trucks, helping them to reach highier quotas, so it would be a shame to let them get away. There were thousands of rubles involved on a long distance run.

Another factor to boost and speed-up the construction was the availaability of slave labor, similar to the one we performed in Siberia. This time was something different and invdved Soviet citiziens of German ancestry. As you probably know from history Russian czarine Catherine the second also called Catheine the Great was a German princess. Her husband czar Peter the third was a stupid and wicked man. Catherine have him killed and became empress from 1762 until her death in 1796. She was no good either but very skillful. During her reign she urged GERMAN to come and settle in Russia, and many of them did so. They came and settled on the banks of Volga River near Nizhniy Novogrod (todays Gorkiy). They prospered and became an important part of Russian life and history. After the revolution they adapted to Soviet way of life. But during the last war, when Germans encircled Stalingrad Soviet government became suspisious and stoped trusting them. There really wasn't any evidence of any wrong doing on the part of Volga's Germans. Still Soviets deported them to the east and south of Volga River. So making a long story short, it happened even before my time on Vanovskaya. Hundreds of young and middle aged German women have been brought by NKVD to Alti-Arik and Vanovskaya,. All members of families of German ancestry. As always NKVD split many families, taking wives from husbands and daughters from their parents. NKVD put them to work at the construction and gave them quarters in dormitories in Alti-Arik and Vanovskaya. They all were very hard working women. They learned to perform hard labor, and also learned other skills, like brick laying for example and others. With time going by the leadership even put them in supervisory positions, paying them lower wages, as paid to low skilled workers.

These German women were a large source of income for the local speculator Kutcher. His approach was simple. Even thou he hated the Germans, but in his cheating ways, he had one bright spot in his heart for those women. They used laugh off his coniving methods, when he called on them with his merchandise, with a smiling "Guten Morgen Herr Deutche"(Good morning Mr. German), forgeting completely that he was talking to women, and should use the word "Frau or Fräulein" (Miss or Mrs.) They have bought many things from Kutcher, because he was the only source available for certain products.

And again, when I came to Vanovskaya second time, the large group of those German women dwingled almost to nothing. As other people they were transfered to other constructions elsewhere.

My first day at work on a truck, Batovski paired me with two German girls. I was still rusty in this kind of work, loading and un-loading trucks, so those girls weren't satisfied with my performance, and spoke about me in German among themselves. Ofcourse I understood every word of their conversation, and told them about it. At first they felt a little embarassed, and later became more friendly. Most of them used to be good people. Some of them tried their best at work. Other followed other means of making better living, by being lovers of some wealthy young Uzbeks. Young Russians wouldn't allow themselves to be seen with them, and members of the party, and comsomol (young communists) were warned in advance not to associate with those girls.

Once a train with German prisoners of war made a stop on Vanovskaya. Ofcourse people came running from all over the place to get a glimpse of them.

German womens dormitory on Vanovskaya was across railroad tracks, next to the bazaar. They also came out to see, what the comotion was all about. Some of them approached the train and discovered German soldiers inside. I was wondering what went through their minds at that particular moment. After all those men on this train were their brothers, besides the fact that ancestors of those girls came to Russia over century and a half before. And even thou, most of them still spoke a perfect German.

At one point, their attention have focused on a young German officer standing next to the window. Also nearby a high ranking NKVD officer closely watched this particular prisoner. Evidently the German officer was important, if he deserved a high NKVD escort. I stood on the side, just observing. This young German speaking in German was begging those girls for a piece of bread, and he didn't have any idea, that those girls understood every word he said. On another hand the NKVD officer speaking in Russian, urged the girls not to listen to the German, using exactly following words. "Nye slushaytie, chto on skazal. On yest vash vrag, kotoriy zabil mnogo vashyh bratey" (Don't listen, what he is saying. He is your enemy, who killed many of your brothers).

Those girls just stood there mute, speechless, and the NKVD officer didn't have a fogest idea, that he just spoke to Germans.

We used to work ten hours per day. We worked hard, but it was fun riding the truck. At least we rested while going from destination to destination. On the way to pick-up sand or graver somewhere in Palasan we used to take on passengers who wanted to go to Alti-Arik. For short trips like that drivers charged only 5 rubles per person, and never shared this money with us workers. We used to take them to so-called "povorot" (crossing). Some passengers disembarked and we took others on.

The worst were the short rides to storage places on the other side of the tracks to load cement, bricks, and other bricks made of mud AND STRAW on the banks of the Fergana canal. Many times we used to work on Sundays (without pay) to help the war effort. Sundays were drivers paradise, who made lots of money taking people to Alti-Arik and back to and from Sunday bazaar.

Back in Palasan nothing changed to much, except for Ela who gained many customers from Vanovskaya, who happened to like her sweaters very much. The men from our group mostly the older ones, still kept performing some rather small jobs for the kolhoz. Only Shulim Schnall had a steady job, minding the stables.

This was also the time when Max Marmur became seriously ill. He was all swollen, and Dr. Perlberger warned Mrs. Marmur to feed her husband better, if she wants him alive.

Grandma Francis and other women performed their chores around the huts, so on the outside everything seemed like "business as usual". But in reality it wasn't. The breezes of forthcoming freedom, kept blowing all around us, and suddenly one after another many important changes started to happen in our small group.

First surprise, as far as I was concerned came, when I found out from Anna, that the possibility of them to move to Fergana, turned into reality.

I was shocked. I expected, that this day would come sooner or later, but I brushed those thoughts away, hoping in my mind, that it will never happen. Ofcourse I wished Anna and her family the best, but being alone, without her in Palasan was for me very difficult to accept. After all those years being together, and after following Anna to Palasan, and learning loving her more and more, I began having nightmares about our separation, and a possibility of never seeing her again. But there was nothing I could do about it.

Frieda and Anna quit their jobs. The family packed and put on a wagen, whatever they owned and left the bitter memories of Palasan behind. Anna stayed behind for one more evening, which we spent together as always before. Next morning Anna and I walked together to Vanovskaya, where she caught a train to Fergana. At the station we promised each other to keep in touch, and see each other as soon as possible. After that, my mind was wondering all day long, I felt empty and lonesome facing the evening and many more without Anna in Palasan.

Helping Leniowers move to Fergana was Mr. Schwarz, whom grandpa Abraham met in Siberia. Even there Schwarz was rich and influential. The same man helped uncle Ludwik to meet the man who was in charge of Union of Polish Patriots in Fergana, which later made uncle Ludwik the head of circles in Palasan and Alti-Arik.

Mr. Schwarz who was an engineer was employed in some important capacity in Fergana's Institute of Physical and Medical Treatment. The Institute had an opening for a supply man. Schwarz knew that grandpa Abraham would be perfect for this job, so he recomended him, and grandpa was accepted.

The Institute was located on one of the main streets of Fergana. It was a nice building in garden-like surroundings, and believe it or not with a large swimming pool. A small stream was flowing through the garden and farther under a concrete back wall. Next to this wall, and not far away from the stream was a two-room house, in which Leniowers used to live for two years, until they left for Poland. Ofcourse a big improvement from the crowded mud hut in Palasan.

The pleasant side street with the entrance to the house was called Datchna street (Resort street). There were trees and gardens on boths sides of this street, and a little farther the SAME STREAM next to Leniowers house was crossing the Datchna street. As in many other similar situations, there was no bridge for pedestrians to cross the stream. Instead people needed to be very carefull to keep their balance while crossing on a thick iron pipe.

There was a small bazaar nearby, and a little farther up the street was the main industry of Fergana the "Maslo-Zavod" (Oil products and soap factory).

Thousands of people used to make living from this factory, some legaly, but most of them not legaly. Everybody there was crooked, including the high brass to the janitor and guards. On all the bazaars of Fergana people kept selling oil and soap at black market prices. The trick was to buy soap inside, and then to take it out and sell with profit outside. There WERE plenty sources who specialized in those activities. The whole town knew about it, but if somebody got caught, penalties were severe. Such was the fate of Dudek Glickman former Frieda's boyfriend, who stole a piece of soap, got caught, convicted, and later died in prison, after surviving a year in a hard labor camp. Frieda used to work at this place as a nurse in malaria dispansery. Uncle Eisen was buying soap and oil for re-sale from outside sources. Our friend Leon Julie carried soap in a school totenbag, with some school books in his hands, pretending that he was a student.

After moving to Fergana Ela continued to make sweaters. As in Palasan she kept buying wool long johns. First people who saw her work, were really amazed with the quality of her work, so soon more started to come, and with them new orders for sweaters.

Anna also didn't wait to long to get a new job. A man with a government contract, made silk fabrics for the government. But the stipulation in his contract required him to make those silks himself without hiring any help. To make some extra money he used to make fabrics for himself at night, and he hired Anna to do the job for him. Besides the hard work, the worst part of this job was working nights.

Grandma Frances kept the house as before. And as before uncle Eisen was taking it easy. As in Palasan, he walked around, meeting all kind of people, discussing religion and politics. At least there was a synagogue in Fergana, where he attended Sabath services every week. That was the time, when because of war religion wasn't prosecuted in Soviet Union. Eisen used to carry his "talith" bag under his overcoat. Once a militiaman stoped him because he thought Eisen was carrying soap. Well! Uncle Eisen outmanuvered this militiaman, when he told him that this was his praying showl, and that he was going to synagogue. In the future this militiaman never stoped Eisen again, even thou many times he carried soap.

The family made many new friends in Fergana, and as before these new people liked them, Polish Jews and Russians as well.

Julies were the old friends, but their brother in law with his two daughters and son were new friends. They were stuck in Fergana because of war, but their mother, Mrs. Julie's sister was in New York due to circumstances also created by war. Monek Metzger grandma Frances' cousin was also there. He married later one of those Mrs. Julie's nieces. Once even Mrs. Julie's nephew was hiding out in Leniowers house, because he thought that militia was looking for him. Why? I don't know. Couple of Uncle Eisen's nieces used to live in Fergana. The same two girls who spent winter of 1940-1941 in Siberia with us. One of them got married in Fergana, and was with her husband an often guest in Leniowers home.

Ela and Frieda enjoyed in Fergana very nice social life, which existed among the Polish-Jewish community. Ofcourse Anna didn't go out because of the night work, and I imagene because of our relation. Frieda's boyfriend was a nice young man, son of a Polish delegate in Fergana, who was arrested by NKVD, and never returned. I guess his wife and son left Soviet Union without him. Ela's boyfriend another nice young man, was there with his mother only. Another split family because of the war. Some other boys kept hanging around like flies, ready to go out with them, on a wink of a small finger.

Many people from Alti-Arik, Vanovskaya and Palasan used to stop to see Leniowers in their new home. Most of them came on business, to sell something or to buy something. Some of them like Max Marmur spent many nights. He not only slept there, but mostly arrived at night, bought his soap and carried it back to Palasan in his large boots, later to be sold on the bazaar in Alti-Arik with help from his little boy Belek. Militia didn't pay to much attention to little boys.

Eda Rosenzweig, the friend of Doctor Perlberger, spent some time with Leniowers, after she underwent an apendix removal operation. After what she did to have done to Anna while she was recuperating in Perlberger's house I would kick her out from the house to go and rest someplace else. Becuse of the shortage of medications, doctors performed this operation on Eda without anescetics.

The family also became friendly with the Tepper family. As Leniowers they also had three girls Tosia, Luba and Sala. They owned and operated close to Fergana's main bazaar, a teahouse. In certain situations private ownership was allowed in Soviet Union, if the owners agreed to heavy taxation. Teppers place was very popular among Polish refugees. Our girls developed a very close friendship with Tepper girls. One of them Tosia married still in Fergana. The other Luba married much later in Palestine, and Sala married even much later, after we met them once again in Salzburg.

The refugee community in Fergana had a very good soccer team, who played constantly all summer long against Russian teams with mixed success.

As many other people Leniowers established themselves pretty well in Fergana. A far cry from the miserable existance in Palasan.

Fergana offered more opportunities even in close controled circumstances. People used to make money on black market, and some others like the Teppers profited by doing business legaly. The same way at least in parts operated Anna's boss, and so another family Weinberg from Jasło. In their case a niece married her uncle. They used to bake cookies, and later sold them in their cookie stand, on Fergana's busy streets.. They didn't have no worries at all. The cookie business was blooming.

In Palasan we strove at least for a partial end to our struggle. Work on Vanovskaya helped a little, but still it wasn't enough. My mother and father had hardly anything decent to wear. Clothing began to deteriorate and shoes were falling apart also. There was no other way, for my father to go also to Vanovskaya and apply for a job there. There was no problem at all. Employment office of company No.5 assigned him to communal department, who was responsible for dormitories, furnishing, bedding and workers living there. Another responsibility of this department was security outside the refinery.

Mr. Matchinsky came to Vanovskaya few months after the German attack on Soviet Union. His family evacuated from Ukraine was already there. He lost his left arm in first few weeks of the war. He arrived on Vanovskaya just in time as the new construction began, and as a wounded war veteran got his cushy job.

Matchinski became "Natchalnik" (director) of communal department. He used to run a tight ship, and he was a mean man. But despite his bad temper, he took a liking to my father, from the first time he saw him and gave him a job in security. Father was just a plain watchman. He worked mostly nights, seldom in daytime.. He had a space in the dormitory, because many times he didn't get a chance to come home for few days. Watchmen jobs were held exclusive by older men. Besides father there was another watchman Freiman, Uncle to the mechanic Freiman also from Poland. This man never left Soviet Union after marrying a widow with a son from Besarabia. Another watchman was a Jew from Riga (Latvia) whose wife was cheating on him with another man. He considered himself as an intelectual, who also knew how to make money on the side, but for some reason people thought that he was crazy. Rounding up the watchmen team was the NKVD informer Lukyanov, and two old Russian men, who spent many years in exile in Siberia, just for being rich before the bolshevik revolution. Stalin's leniency act transferd them to Vanovskaya to spent there rest of their lives. Still one of those old men once told me that he will go to his old home pretty soon, thanks to efforts by his son, who was coming to take him. I don't know If this man ever went home, because we left Vanovskaya before his son's arrival.

With watchman's job also came more bread, lunch, and extra ticket for supper because father's work was mostly at night. He also recived some warm clothing and was able to buy material for mother so she could make herself some dresses.

As I mentioned many times before Uncle Ludwik's situation wasn't as bad as ours, so Heniek was walking around kolhoz doing nothing. A young man like Heniek without job in those days, and being visible all the time, was in danger of being drafted or being sent to labor batalions. If something like this would happen it would practicaly kill aunt Rose, Having this in mind they forced their nephew also to go to Vanovskaya and apply for employment. They hired him in company No.4, which was responsible for building new roads, inside construction, and 10 km radius outside construction. Heniek worked at their small transportation department, helping mechanics to repair trucks. He used to come home all covered with oil which dripped on him, while he was making repairs under the trucks. In those days the main man in this company was the same man, who was the bookkeeper at the "Regional Silk, at the time we went on strike.

95% of those young people building roads on Vanovskaya were Jews from Poland. It was a hard job to sit while kneeling on their legs. There was no equipment, except small short shovels, and short heavy hammers.. Those roads weren't paved but bilt from large stones called "bulyga" the kinds you can find on banks of mountain rivers, and were transported to Vanovskaya by trains from faraway. Thanks to these people we didn't have to walk in mudd anymore. A grueling work 10 hours a day, most of the year under a hot sun.

Two other companies played an important role in building the new refinery. One was an electrical company, and the other was joining those enormous pipes with each other in deep trenches.

I was doing pretty good working on trucks. Sometimes when trucks broke down I didn't have to work at all. Also few times I skipped work without doctor's permission, and had a very hard time to convince the girl in charge, not to report me. She didn't, but in case she would I would be called to court and sentenced to week in jail, or to pay 25% of my salary.

Before the war Vanovskaya was like many other small places in Soviet Union un-known, except for her small refinery, located there because of oil in mountains of the nearby Tchemion. The war changed all this.

The most important person on Vanovskaya was Mr. Lekseshov, director of the old refinery, who lived there with his family for many years in a nice home on the grounds of the refinery.

Vanovskaya was like a compact village, With a small railroad station, refinery bazaar, teahouse on one side of the tracks. Oil storage tanks, village hall, barber shop, and mud huts on the other side. From there wide muddy road, lead south to Alti-Arik crossing, over a large wooden bridge over the Fergana canal.

A cloud of prosperity had hang over Vanovskaya since the construction of new refinery began, Not everybody was able to participate in this new development. Some were able to pick-up crums, which was a progress for them, but the main recipients of the prosperity, were thpuse who came from all over Soviet Union to build the new refinery. Nothing changed, as before the leadership continued to be prosperous, and some lucky, selected people kept licking their bomes.

The refugee community of Vanovskaya, also left their mark, and contributed substantialy to construction of this important project. Side by side with local Uzbeks, and Russians, many other Russians, Jews, Poles, and people from Besarabia (territory annexed by Soviet Union from ROmania) worked there. Most of them worked very hard for every rubel they made, also trying hard to make few rubels on the side, still some of them established themselves not just well, but terrific. There was this man Perkanski, a refugee from Besarabia. He worked there since the construction have begun. His first job was to show exactly those truck drivers where to unload their deliveries (building materials) In those early days there was pretty hectic around the construction side. And wherever your eyes could see, there was mudd and more mudd. Truckers used to fight for good and early unloading places, and Perkanski was the man to come to. They paid him for early unloadings, and better unloading places, because there was no such thing as a good unloading place.

Perkanski worked himself up as a purchasing agent for certain building su--pplies, and later became director of the purchasing department, and as such he acctually was the boss of all truck drivers assigned to him. When on assignment he was sitting with the driver in his cabin, and he collected all the money from passangers. He always took his half share from the top, but the driver wasn't so lucky. From his share, he had to pay off Batovski the dispatcher, and give some money to us the workers, which we called peanuts. Many times we returned home empty handed. It came to a point that many drivers later refused to go on those long distance runs with Perkanski. There was no doubt about Perkanski made a fortune. By the end of the war he was forced to relinquish his director's job to a younger war hero, and the leadership gave him his agent's job back. But not to worry, Perkanski still kept making his easy money. In a matter of facts instead to go home back to Besarabia after the liberation, he brought his wife and children to Vanovskaya,

Polish-Jewish families made good also. To mention just few I would have to mention the Scherer family. He was a tailor, but to see him walking around the place, you would think he was a doctor. He was shrewd. The entire Vanovskaya elite were his customers. He was so sure of himself, by doing to these people whatever he wanted to. He kept their clothing for months, before working on it, or giving it back to them un-touched. In some cases he even fergat to give it back to them. I remember an incident, when one day before leaving Vanovskaya my boss Pro-rab Pavlov, asked me to go to Scherer's house and bring the coat back, which Pavlov left with Scheree one year before. But then I didn't care anymore, and I didn't go. Scherer probably sold it a long time ago.

Scherer's good looking young son was a personal driver to director Lekseshov. He lost his job, after they caught him doing something wrong, and assigned him to the road building brigade. But even there he was lucky. All the workers elected him their food purchase man. Scherer spent most of his time either in store or the local diner.

Another family who was doing well was the Piasek family. He was a good honest watchmaker. Small man with a hunch-back, and good looking wife and a young brother, also a polite and nice young man.

Former friends of Wilman the Grosses also moved to Vanovskaya. The young Miss Gross speculated on black market. Since the loss of her baby, she acted strange. Her brother former assistant to Wilman worked there as auto-mechanic. Later he married a Russian girl truck-driver and took her to Poland.

A family Wilner from Łódż, was a perfect example, how to get wealthy just with ~~wisn~~ minimum effort. Wilners didn't have a father, and like many of us were poor-poor, with nothing to show. They probably were some of those Jewish people who struggled in Łodż, even before the war.

There were four of them; Mother, two daughters and son. As it turned out war and Vanovskaya was their "salvation". It brought them luck and small fortune by a simpliest of ways; Working. The young Wilner learned how to drive a truck. As I said before it wasn't ~~a~~ easy to become a truck driver in Soviet Union. Besides being away from home for a certain long period of time, authorities there instead to help, tried their best to discourage those young people. Ofcourse the company which sent Wilner to this school in Fergana was helping somewhat with food and money. There was not just driving to learn. Every truck driver was also required to learn skills of a good mechanic, capable to repair the vehicle in emergency. Well! The young Wilner learned all this. As months went by, he became an excellent driver. The best in his company No.4 where Heniek Zimetbaum used to work. Since his arrival back from school the best assignments and long distance trips used to go to Wilner. No wonder that money was coming easy, and the life of the entire Wilner family wasn't just good at present, but also kept looking brighter and brighter, even looking beyond the return to Poland. Besides all this prosperity the so-called human greed didn't stop Mrs. Wilner from running every day the 3 kilometers and back from Vanovskaya to Palasan to collect Dr. Perlberger's soup. It wouldn't hurt her at all to leave the four plates for somebody really needdy.

The young Wilner himself became a toast of the village. Everybody on Vanovskaya wanted to be Wilner's friend. Yet the awarness of a possibility of being watched by the NKVD, kept him and the family in check not to show off. I am quite sure that many big shots on Vanovskaya were shareholders in Wilners wealth. Wilner's girlfriend was one best looking girl on Vanovskaya. She was a nurse in the local hospital. Many young men,,found it hard to suppress their envy of Wilner's success in life and love. They were so obvious showing their discontent in public. One of them a young Tatar after a troups performance in the local Social Hall, made his way to the stage and started to sing a song about "Ruskoye goluboye glaza, smotriat tolkko v Zhidovskoye usta". (Russian blue eyes stare only at Jewish mouth).

A rather dangerous driving accident, cut short the happy life of the Wilner family. Their fortune remained untouched. In contrary it helped them to get out of an unpleasant and threatning situation. Wilner away on assignment out of town, drove to fast on a small country road and didn't notice a low hanging wire stretched over the road. Wilner's carelessness cost a life of an Uzbek who was his passanger standing on the platform in the back. The sharp wire cut off the Uzbek's head. Wilner also seriously injured, was hospitalized and later recovered. His money helped him to pay off the court officials, and this Uzbek's family. He was ~~permitted~~ permitted by the authorities to leave for Poland, then only partially liberated.

Together with Wilner left his friend, who all those years on Vanovskaya used to deliver water to the population. There was only one water pump in the whole village, and this happy fellow riding on the top of his donkey, who in turn ~~pulled~~ pulled the barrel always made sure that by noon the whole Vanovskaya was supplied with water. This way he used to have plenty of time to make money on the side. He was also an actor, which was very good for Vanovskaya standards.

Wilner and family later reunited in Łodż. His mother and sisters left Soviet Union on the same transport with us.

Some people tried to follow into Wilner's steps, but without success. One of them was Ayzikovich, also from Łodż. His motto was; "Not to work at all". Good for you if you know what you doing. In 1942 he was one of those who lived from nature, eating that summer just fruits and vegetables and sleeping most of the time, hoping that Poles would take him out with their army to Iran. After this thing finished with a fiasco, Ayzikovich, short of other alternatives, went to work on Vanovskaya as a laborer.

At that time nothing else wouldn't fascinate Ayzikovich as much, as the success of truck drivers. He kept talking about them constantly, trying to convice himself of the idea that; If they could do it, Ayzikovich could do it too. One thing thou Ayzikovich never took into consideration, that he was a "klotz" who moved with a speed of a turtle.

Before I go any farther, let me explain to you my friends. Don't think, that I haven't thought about the same idea. But considering Soviet standards, because of my eye sight, they never would give me a drivers licence. If possible they sooner would give me a rifle, and sent me to the front, as they indicated classifying me as "ready for frontline duty". And another draw back was that I would never learn how to be even half decent mechanic.

So Ayzikovich got himself transfered to transportation department. He found himself a friendly truck driver Leontiev, who even helped him financially. As I he loaded and un-loaded those trucks, and little by little learned secrets of driving and mechanics. On certain occassions Leontiev even let him drive the truck, on a quiet country road. Also with Leontiev's help Ayzikovich got himself assigned to driving school in Fergana, and passed as a third class driver.

Leontiev, was one of those men, who didn't care about the big money. He never requested the long distance duties, just being happy with short runs to Alti-Arik, Palasan and other nearby villages, happy with the 5 rubles fees he collected from the locals taking them around the area. The farthest he ever went was to Fergana.

At last when the long awaited day finally came, Leontiev went to lunch and sent Ayzikovich with his truck to pick-up a load of mudd bricks, made on the high banks of Fergana canal on the other side of the tracks. At this point the banks were rather tall, because the water level at that time was low. Anyway Ayzikovich manuvered the truck into a loading position. Workers loaded-up the bricks, and Ayzikovich, started to manuver the truck to enter a narrow country road. And then the disaster strocke. Instead to change the gear to drive position, in excitment Ayzikovich left it in reverse, and let the truck go. In a matter of seconds, he and his truck, Ayzikovich was on the bottom of the canal. Luckily for him as I said before, water wasn't to deep. He came out easy. But to get the truck out they needed a tractor. Ofcourse the truck was a ~~xxxx~~ total loss. Leontiev lost lots of those 5 rubles, because after the accident he was assigned to the shop to help mechanics to repair this truck, which they finally did. In a way Ayzikovich was very lucky, that they didn't prosecute him. He got another job with a brigade smearing roofs with ~~with~~ tar. (Black tops)Since then he was always dirty and smell. Still he was lucky in love. Him and his shoemaker friend got involved with two sisters from Besarabia, who made money selling things on bazaar. Those women lost their husbands and had children on their own. Ayzikovich and his shoemaker friend assumed that their wives and children perished in holoucast and married those two sisters. They both had babies with them and the two ladies took a very good care on Ayzikovich and his friend.

Another sensation on Vanovskaya was when a young Jewish bookkeeper from Ukraine married one of those German girls. Ofcourse they got permission from NKVD to do so.. They had couple of kids. I always have wondered whatever happened to them after the war.

Many times I was forced to work at night. Once we went south to Tchemion to pick-up some bricks. It was still early afternoon. On the way truck broke down, and we were forced to spent the night there sleeping under a tree. Nobody paid any attention to us. Our driver even didn't bother to find us something to eat, Ofcourse, ~~xx~~ he the driver was an Uzbek, who had plenty of friends in Tchemion, plenty of food and good time. Uzbeks, mostly the ones who came wounded home from battle fronts, managed to get jobs as truck drivers.

Some nights we worked, because building materials were needed next day at the construction. Only young drivers worked at night. They used to bring with them their friends boys and girls on those nightshifts. They had plenty of good time singing, dancing, while us the slaves kept digging in the dark for graver, sand and other stuff. It was dark even at the construction, while we unloaded.

The preasure and ordeal eased-up a little following our working on Vanovskaya. Mother was still helping with odd jobs in Palasan, or with polishing Uzbeks boots with our self-made polishing shoe-cream, a mixture of ashes, crude oil and milk. Uzbeks liked very much their shoes polished, especially when we told them that their footwear was polished by the best American shoe polish. The price was 10 rubles for one shine, but sometimes they paid with glass of milk, piece of bread or other food available. Sometimes when mother wasn't around aunt Rose polished the boots, collected money, but never told mother about. She didn't have to. Uzbeks involved, later used to ask mother if aunt Rose paid her at least part of the money they paid her for the shine.

Good work, performed by me, finally paid off for me and our family. Siemion Mixon, who was the equipment and building material manager, resigned to take over as head of the employment office, recommended me for his old job. I was accepted by Sobolev (head of the construction). Yes! There was lots of responsibility coming with the new job, but it was all worthed. Better pay, better rations, but not better living conditions.

My trying out period I spent few weeks, checking all the trucks entering the construction for the right weight and measurments. Each driver was obliged to deliver a full load to the construction. But it wasn't so. Loads were never full and correct. Workers never bother to fill-up the trucks and drivers never made them. I ought to know. I was one of them. And Mixon knew it too, because accepting those loads was his job. Actually Mixon and I could stop as many trucks we wanted, and not sign drivers traveling documents, but such action was against the old Soviet motto. "You wash my hand and, and I will wash yours". Those drivers thought me how to live in Soviet Union, while working and survive. We all became friends in need. Some of us made a lot, some not that much, and some like me, just a litlle, but enough to feed ourselves better. It wasn't easy as I thought in the beginning. Deals like that created shortages and I was forced to learn, how to cover those shortages.

The salary for my new job was 600 Rubles per month. And right there the management took advantage of me. Because of my beginners status they paid me only 400 rubles, and they never gave me a raise, during my almost two years on this job. It wasn't fair but far more better then I ever made in Soviet Union.

I took over from Mixon a small hut in the middle of the construction. Inside was a small office and small storage areas, with boarded up windows, because vandals kept breaking glass all the time trying to get inside and steal things.

Because of the nature of my work I spent most of the time outside. On the end of each month I worked couple of days in my office to prepare my monthly reports. I took over from Mixon all kind of tools (hammers, crowbars, shovels and so on). All kinds of building material: Lumber, bricks, paints, cement and much more stored in the open, all around the construction. There was stuff stored there worthed hundreds of thousands of rubles. Lots of all sizes of nails, roofing material, ladders, brushes, and special expensive bricks used only in large ovens construction, a kind which never burn. I needed eyes in boths sides of my body. Stealing was going all around me, like one section supervisor was stealing from the other, who in private live might had been his best friend. My supervisor Pavlov kept aggraveting me with orders to give things to his friends, without an official permission or signature. He probably had regrets later when before leaving for Poland I made him sign papers for all those giveaways. Everybody around was living through their teeths. They fought for the stuff they had stollen, and if necessary they would hurt me without hesitation. Just seeing a guy yielding a crowbar over my head made me realize, just to forget all those stealing incidents.

Cement one very important and expensive building material was required to be covered up all the time, especially in winter. Workers like brick layers, cement mixers, and finishers never cared. It was their responsibility to keep this stuff covered, but they never did. After a rainy night hundreds of kilograms of cement got hardened, and not fit to use anymore. Ofcourse I learned all this the hard way. It was nothing else left, but to do it myself.

Another problem I was facing, was when I had been called away from the construction side either on business or personal reasons. Any deliveries made during my absence used to be dumped any place, never at the right location causing me later much problems and headaches. Mostly responsible for such acts were women drivers, who always had troubles to manuver those large three ton trucks in small areas. Ofcourse I never was and I am not against women drivers.

In early 1945 high oil authorities from Moscow after inspecting the progress at the new construction, decided to add to our laging transport 50-one ton and a half trucks to help to speed the construction. All those trucks were driven by young women, and all of them lousy drivers. They arrived on Vanovskaya with a big bang. They operated under the name "Auto column" with a young army capitain at the helm, who had love affairs with all those girls, while taking them on many long distance trips. Each time ofcourse a different driver. He was looking for easy money and for way to cover his expensive trips on the books of his column. He made me many propositions, to pay me for signing documents for deliveries of stuff, which never took place. I always refused, because I was really scared. All this was over my head. Somebody else in my position wouldn't hesitate. I probably could leave Soviet Union a rich man, if I would go along with this capitain.

Anyway those girls made not only a big mess from their trucks, but also cost much pain the whole construction. After few months of fooling around, all those trucks were so broken down, that railroad plarforms were necessery to move them out from Vanovskaya. Only one mechanic, a young Jewish boy from Warsaw remained behind, taking a job with the old refinery. One of those girls drivers also stayed behind to marry Fredek Gross (former deputy delegate), who later took her with him to Poland.

Because of slowdown at the construction, many previously mobilized Uzbeks, went back home to their collective farms. The ones who kept working were laborers, bricklayers and truck workers. But the girls from the German brigade were the best in loading and unloading trucks. I used to have under my supervission eight, three person groups who worked the trucks. One person, whose name I rather wouldn't mention for some unknown reason tried to paint me in very bad colors to Anna, while telling on me, that I was running around and associating with those German girls. Ofcourse I was appalled and hurt. I kept wondering why this person was doing this to me, as much as a thought like that never crossed my mind. This person wasn't nice at all. Anna who was living then in Fergana, was terribly upset, and rightly so. I was devasted, because the thought of being without Anna after all those years was unbearable. It took me a long time ans lots of talking, before convincing Anna, that all this was a vicious lie.

After I left the truck inspector's job, a young Uzbek replaced me. His name was Arbakulov. He was married and had few children. His other job was the one, of a political instructor. During lunch hour he used to instruct all Uzbeks working there in communist political science. All this was going on in a teahouse. He spoke in their Uzbek language, and kept indoctrinating them about the glory of Soviet state, and communizm and how much they care for them. The irony of this story was, that the young man was a very poor soul, living in a mudd hut with nothing in it. Empty-period. Him and his family, were hungry most of the time, and without money to buy food and clothing.

Other Uzbeks working at the construction, even mobilized, at least they were members of collective farms, and owned small pieces of fertile grounds. Most of them were lazy and tried to work as little as possible. After all communizm wasn't their piece of pie. During the war time many of them came through the construction, but only one of them distinguished himself as a worker and patriot, who later was richly awarded for his efforts.

Murzabayev (his name), when first arrived on Vanovskaya was a very poor laborer. He didn't know how to read or write. But he kept working hard and long hours, and adventualy was promoted to the head of a brigade.

Communist authorities noticed Murzabayev, mostly after he became seriously ill, becuse of the hard labor. He would die if not for the best medical CARE possible given to him by the government. After he recovered he became candidate for the party membership and then accepted. The party taught him how to read and write. They also taught him the history of Russia, Uzbekistan and most of all the communist ideology, and the struggle of the working class all over the world. Few weeks before the end of the war the party invited Murzabayev to come to Moscow to meet Stalin, who awarded him the highest honor of Soviet Union the "Order of Lenin" Murzabayev continued to work on Vanovskaya, but many of his former Uzbek friends kept avoiding his company, and many in open conversations warned others better to keep quiet in Murzabayev's presence.

There were two other Uzbek brigades, still working on Vanovskaya in 1944-45. in the last two years before war ended Russians dominated the work force, performing with help of those German women. Bricklayers were mostly needed, followed by concrete mixers and finishers who used to smooth up the walls outside with cement.

Abraham Presseisen the very sick boy of 1942 who almost died, was one of those bricklayers and a good one. Another young man with whom I was on friendly terms was Moshe Vlodavski, also from Lodz. By trade he was a tailor, but the refinery building industry taught him some sensetive mechanical operation needed only in refineries construction. In a matter of facts he was so good in it, that they used to sent him on special assignments as far as to refineries in Caucasus. He never overworked himself. On Vanovskaya he was Lekseshov's (director of the old refinery) family tailor. He kept Vlodavski in his home sewing clothing for his entire family.

The other two important departments were carpentry,and electro-mechanical. Heads of those departments were two Greenbergs (no relation). Greenberg from the carpentry was one of the first to leave for other assignments. The Greenberg from electro-mechanics remained on his job, and once was charged with stealing government property. He spent a long time in jail, even before his case came to trail. But during the trail, which took place in the tea-house in kolhoz Achun Baybaye¥ he categoricaly denied any involvement and guilt, Thank to intervention of a group of prominent Jewish citiziens, court released him into their custody, and sent him back to his old job.

In the middle of 1944, because of a slow-down the original construction heads were transfered for assignments in other parts of Soviet Union. Gone was Sobolev the head man of the project, so went Goldberg the transport head, head bookkeeper Mixon and others. The head of the construction became Novosielov former head engineer, whom I once watched sliping into a hole of dirty crude oil. Tishchenko the head of section No.2, became Novosielov's assistant and his wife went back home to Ukraine. Her place as a draftsman took engineer Silber a Polish Jew from Warsaw. Nyechristov NKVD's friend took over for Goldberg in Transport. Batovski the dispatcher from Moscow, remained for a while at his job, with his helper Papierovich a Jew from Lodz. To keep gasoline storage tanks full, was Papierovich's responsibility. Thanks to Batovski the man was making pretty good living on Vanovskaya also.

Oil and gasoline were just around the corner in the old refinery, but to bring it to our transportation department wasn't easy at all. There was no pipe conection between the old refinery and our transport, and there were no tankers available to transport gas or oil. To keep our trucks going Papierovich needed truck or two with many barrels and few workers to go to the refinery, to fill-up the barrels using buckets, then come back to our transportation department and empty them into our holding tankers. Operation like that took two to three days. The worst of it was to empty one barrel at the time into a bucket, and to hand it to a person on a ladder to claim a tall storage tanker and empty the buckets again one by one.

Batovski the dispatcher was a very smart man. He knew how to run his business to his own advantage. His family used to live in Moscow, and his wife visited him from time to time, but this didn't stop him from having a girlfriend.

Batovski left Vanovskaya for Moscow, about half a year before the end of the war. leaving his good job to another Jewish man Lipszyc. A man with an entire different character then Batovski. This guy was so reckless in his actions, that people close to him always wondered, how could he possible do things, he didn't suppose to do under watchful eyes of NKVD spies (Nyechristov) and get away with it. He already served a term in prison for some irregularities on his previous job. He had a good looking wife and two children. He was a habitual drunk, and never refused truck driver's hospitality.

In meantime picture of Vanovskaya's population was rapidly changing. After the liberation of large parts of Soviet Union many Russians left Vanovskaya for their old homes. Old workers kept leaving and new Arriving. Some of them former soldiers, others transfered from other constructions, and former convicts who finished their sentences in labor camps, and came to Vanovskaya to continue their sentences in internal exile. (So-called freedom, only in the Fergana district).

I tried to visit Anna in Fergana as much as possible. When a truck was available going to Fergana I used to leave Saturday morning. On such occasion I always made all kind of excuses to get permission to leave. My permissions had to be cleared by Novosielov, the head of the construction. Few times I even told him that I was going to Fergana to get married. Close, but not quite that close. Believe me I wouldn't mind to be married to Anna, even to be separated during the week because of my job. I usualy stayed in Fergana until Sundays afternoon, Then together with Anna we walked to the bazaar hoping to find a truck from Vanovkaya. If truck wasn't present I was forced to walk the 30 km. back home.

Lots of times we even couldn't spent to much time together, because Saturday morning when I came in Anna was still resting after her night work. In the evening I walked her to work again, and Sunday morning she needed to rest again.

On Vanovskaya the head man at the general warehouse was Mr. Ran, a Jew from Riga, Latvia. Another smart man, who knew how to live under the Soviet rule. His warehouse was like a goldmine, full of building materials, tools, clothing for workers, bedding for dormitories, and much more of valuable merchandise. I was depending on him for deliveries of building materials and other important items to the construction side. Ofcourse he delivered the stuff as ordered but always in smaller quantities, so in case of discrepancies, he would be covered. We followed a certain procedure, which started with me writing a requisition order. After I signed the order, the section supervisor Pavlov approved the requisition, which was finally Ok-d by Novosielov, the head of the company. With my requisition approved I used to go to Ran, who wasn't bashful at all and cheated, right in front of my eyes. For example when I ordered 1 kilogram nails, Ran always gave me 100 grams less. Still he was mine's and my father's friend. Ran used to give me many extra things, which later I could sell to my Uzbek friends. Ran also used to give my father cans full of kerosene to sell, ofcourse later to split profit with him. Once when my father carried the can home all filled up, the chief of NKVD on Vanovskaya stoped him and without saying a word took the can away from my father. He probably sold it later and took the money for himself. My father was scared, but never heard again from this guy, even thou in a small place like Vanovskaya, he passed him on the street many times.

Shortly before Ran was getting ready to go back to Riga, Novosielov approached him and ordered him to close the warehouse, and supervise a column of trucks going to a place called Kuva-Say to pick-up loads of cement, so much needed at the construction. Mr. Ran refused and suggested that I should go. But Novosielov insisted, and the argument was getting blown out of proportions. Ran refused until Novosielov threatened him with a charge of counter-revolution, which was the same as treason., punishable most of the time by death. Mr. Ran didn't argue anymore. He left his Uzbek assistant in charge, and went to Kuva-Say, very quiet. I think he was lucky enough, that Novosielov, didn't stop him later from leaving for Riga. Another more energetic director, probably would do just that.

Mr. Ran was also buying bread for all the supervising personel. We trusted him with our bread cards, and then picked-up bread at his warehouse. He always managed to have bread leftovers for himself.

After Ran left another Russian Jew took over his job. Zvyaginsky was a military man, released from service. He later changed his name to Zvyagintsov, to sound more Russian. He was also a party man. People used to be very carefull and think twice, before saying anything in any kind of conversation.

My new job also brought some other benefits for me. For a low price I recived from the warehouse a pair of shoes (not leather), a summer Soviet style suit, and a warm fufaykakk (cotton lined jacket), and a piece of fabric, from which mother made a shirt for me.

Then I met shoemaker Przytycki from some small town somewhere in Poland. The man used to buy worn out old tires, and second hand tents fabrics. From those two discarded products Przytycki started to make shoes, called in Soviet Union "tapki" similar to today's loafers. All made by hands while customers were waiting. Przytycki was able to make 20-25 pairs of those shoes daily for 120 rubles each. His brother helped him in this work. I bought some of those shoes for our family, but still we were poorly dressed especially mother and father. We still didn't have enough money to buy decent clothing for all of us.

While working at Uzbeks home mother was able to listen to conversations among Uzbek women. But most of the time, she didn't know what they were talking about, even thou she thought that she knew.

Once she came home with such a misunderstood story, and later got in hot water with one Uzbek family. In the same court-yard, where we used to live a young Uzbek woman had a hut, and lived there with a small child. Her husband was in the army, and presumed dead, because there was no news from him for many years. I don't know how, but after listening to couple of old women, mother got an idea that Robo-Hon's husband (the young woman in our court-yard) was alive, and was coming home very soon. She repeated this conversation to other Uzbek women, and the story became popular all over Palasan. To make a long story short, some elders from the dead man's family came to Palasan from a faraway village, and questioned my mother about the story. They were nice and polite, but it took lots of explaining, on our part, that mother did not understand Uzbek language, and that those women misunderstood her. There was quite a commotion in the village for few days.

On Vanovskaya the curious cashier Stasia Markovna, also left for her old home at the Ukraine., leaving her boyfriend behind. Her place took over a Tatar young woman, a sister to one of my truck drivers. Greenberg the head of carpentry also left Vanovskaya, and was replaced by Khrenov, my boss first time around on Vanovskaya. Khrenov who was an excellent carpenter couldn't write or read, so the management assigned to him a German girl to write and read for him and to make monthly reports.

Truck drivers were nice to me, and they always obliged, when I signed for them their road documents, after making side trips. When we shared in a larger adventure, more people were involved. It was dangerous, but necessary. Once a new agent, who arrived on Vanovskaya after serving a term in labor camp, spoted and wanted to report us, but drivers concivced him otherwise. Drivers made sure that he kept quiet even in the future. He learned the ropes.

Another example how far corruption was going, was a militiaman on duty on outskirts of Fergana. He also wanted a share of drivers profits. When trucks were loaded with passengers he used to stop them, and took their licences away. only to give ~~give~~ it back to them on their next trip, after they paid him off.

I also had another Uzbek friend Ahmedkulov, who used to buy from me some small stuff. Once he wanted to buy a large log of lumber, but later decided to back off, because it was to dangerous. The man who used to make bricks and paint in Tchemion also needed my signatures on requisitions, but always paid with couple of kilograms of dried apricots. I stoped to do it for him, because he wasn't worthed my effort.

I will always remember Tchemion, as a place I liked to come to. Not because it was different from other Uzbek villages. As a worker on the truck loading paint stones I hated it, because of intense burning in my eyes from the paint dust. Later after I became a supervisor, coming to collect there our bricks I used to love to watch those faraway tall mountains, because on the other side of them was real freedom. Yes! A brave enough person could cross those mountains and find itself in the country of Afghanistan, which in those days was free and peaceful.

In comparison with some other refugees, even with some extra income, we still were poor. Nothing changed as far as our living conditions were concerned. What we had were just "peanuts" enough to improve our eating habits, which was so important in those days.

To be a truck driver, not only on Vanovskaya, but all over Soviet Union, ment prosperity not only for the driver, but also for people involved with the driver. Consider the following example. One of the department heads at the construction get's an out of town assignment. Ofcourse to take care of his business, he needs a truck. The company assigns a driver to him, The big shot informs the driver, that the truck is in his custody, and the driver can't do nothing about it.

Next morning they leave Vanovskaya, lets say on the way to Fergana 30 km away. The truck goes couple of miles and comes to the Vanovskaya-Alti-Arik-Fergana crossing. Because of travel restrictions in Soviet Union, at this crossing anytime day and night people used to wait for accidental transportation, which would take them at least as close as possible to their destination.

Our truck takes on at least twenty passengers going to Fergana, and all these people know that the ride to Fergana costs 100 rubles. At the halfway of the journey instead to continue on the highway, the driver takes a side road, away from traffic and militia control, which was passing 5 km stretch of desert. In the middle of this desert, after making sure, that nobody is watching, the truck stops, and the big shot jumps out to collect the money. All the 2000 rubles The big shot knows, that he can't have it all. He has to split the money with the driver, but still he wants to be first to touch this stuff. After taking care on his business in Fergana, the big shot and the driver repeated the same procedure on the way back home.

When I was working as a laborer on the truck, one good memory stayed with me for a long time. As always passengers surrounded our truck. They didn't know, that we were on a local run. Our drver drove for couple of kilometers and later dumped them all at the roadside. I recognized among these passengers one well dressed man and a young woman, who was my schoolmate from Cracow Monek Trachtenberg. He didn't recognized me, because in my rages I was different. I told him who I was. He was suprised. We greeted each other warmly., but we did not have time to talk. I even wasn't able to find out where he was coming from, but judging from his and his girl's appearance the life was good to them even in Soviet Union.

My life in Palasan and on Vanovskaya was very lonely, since Anna left. Because we always spent our evenings after work together, those evenings were the worst to overcome.

I will always remember my first visit to Fergana. I even didn't have an extra clean shirt to wear. Friday, before leaving work I made sure that a truck was going from Vanovskaya to Fergana next day. Mother washed my shirt for me, and I put it on still wet. It dried on the way, from the heat of my body. I arrived in Fergana about 10am, and I found Datchna street without problems. As always I was greeted warmly by the Leniower family.

Being with Anna in Fergana was like a ray of sunshine in my dull life. The time was always short, but still, we used to go for long walks, or spent time in the garden of the Health Institute. Couple of times we went to the movies, either in winter theater or outdoor theater. Either way the sound was always terrible. Those were the best days I ever had in Soviet Union. Besides all this I was eating like a king. There wasn't hard anymore for Leniowers to cook good meals.

Chapter 86 (cont)

Vanovskaya-Second Time Around!

In summer of 1945, when I was already firmly established on my job, many times I took advantage, when some big wheel used to travel to Fergana just for couple of hours on business. On such occasions I was droping in on Anna unexpected on working days to be with her if only for a short time.

Once or twice on my weekend visits I took it upon myself to lenghten my stay until Monday afternoon, having later plenty problems to explain my absence all day Monday. Usually I was getting out of my predicament, by telling a story about a package arriving for me from overseas, which was ready and waiting for me to pick it up for quite a while, at Fergana's main post office. I also was telling my supervisors, that it was much easier for me to sell the content of this package in Fergana, because of better prices, which really wasn't unusual in those days.

Some Jewish families from Poland on Vanovskaya didn't keep close company with the rest of Polish community. They were older people, all seemed well to do, and with some aristocratic background. One of those families had a son my age, who held a very important job, as an assistant head bookkeeper at the old refinery. Another example how money was talking even during the war, in so-called workers paradise.

Another family was the family of profesor Zamura. A very nice and inteligent people. Before the war profesor Zamura taught in gimnazium someplace in Eastern Poland, and as such became a Soviet citizien after Soviet invasion of 1939. Him and his wife were parents of a little girl. On Vanovskaya he was just a teacher in a small school. Profesor Zamura and his family, have chosen not to return to Poland and retained their Soviet citizienship. There is a possibility, that after the war they returned to their hometown in Western Ukraine.

The last of this group were engineer Rosenberg, his wife and his sister in law Mrs. Mantel, who was the leader of the "Union of Polish Patriots" on Vanovskaya. They were from Polish oil center of Drohobycz in Southern Ukraine, which was also taken over by Soviet Union. Mr. Rosenberg was an important personality at the old refinery, but nobody new them at the times of Polish delegations. I guess before the new arrangement they were comited to their Soviet citizienship.

As the leadership at the construction changed, officers also changed. The only ones who remained from the old staff were, the assiatant bookkeeper Bronson and his wife, who was company's secretary, who kept her job. Bronson took over as head bookkeeper.

The most neglected group of people on Vanovskaya were so-called "besprizorniki" (homeless people). Among them were prostitutes, drunks, and all kinds of bums. As in United States, many young and older people used to run loose all over Soviet Union. Teenagers without parents and close families, who even didn't know, where they came from. From time to time government agencies, mostly militia used to round them up, and relocated them to places like Vanovskaya, where an important develepment or construction was in progress, hoping that they would become useful citiziens. Leadership put them in dormitories not to close with other people. They gave them some clothing and ofcourse jobs. Some of them stayed and later learned some trades, but most of them escaped back to their old lives. Young boys especially learned to be mechanics, electrical mechanics, and one a young Tatar boy Mustafa even learned to be a truck driver. His young friend whom people have called "Nyemoy" (mute), became a very good mechanic.

So this bring us to the Soviet National Motto; "Khto nye rabotayet,etot nye kushayet" (Who don't work, don't eat). The only problem was, that most of the Russian workers, even thou they kept working very hard, they didn't eat enough. They kept looking for other ways to help themselves. The small not important worker didn't have a chance at all, so his answer to authorities was summarized in a popular counter slogan; "Rabochiy class polozhyl huy na vas"; which ment: "Your working class f--k you".

The communist elite had all the privileges of a ruling class, even thou Soviet Union was and still is working men's country. Those leaders and all party members enjoyed first class special stores, clubs, restaurants, homes and datchas (country homes).

But Vanovskaya was only one in so many small places, where privileges for the leadership were smaller then in those other important places. Still they had all the travel privileges and all priorities in company's diner, store, and never stood in lines. In store they shoped from behind the counter, browsing, while the poor workers stood in lines for hours. At the diner they used to pick up their food through the back door,which was prepared much better then our food.

I was there just a small pawn, but when I got my new job I recived an additional ration card for supers.

The wife of my immediate supervisor Mrs. Pavlova was the head of the diner. Their family was very well fed. Many times I saw them carry large buckets of food. Pavlov in those days was a big man at the construction. He was big, but not to smart and many times was compeled to use the advise of the scaffolder Bornstein. Bornstein himself became a wheel on Vanovskaya. He was one of those types who even by Soviet standards was nothing special before the war in his hometown someplace in Ukraine. But the war made a "mench" out of him. He was inducted into the party. Him and his wife lived in a nice apartment in Alti-Arik. I have reasons to believe that he was a friend of mine. His younger son attended school for privilaged kids someplace away from Vanovskaya. His older son fought the war against the Germans and advanced to be a high ranking officer in the Red Army. When Soviet forces finally took Germany, this man kept sending all the time high class goods taken from German homes and factories. So life was good to certain people in those days.

The local party secretary, used to walk around the place, and saw the activity. When not walking he observed some peoples movement through the window in his office located in the center of company's complex. From time to time he have issued warnings. Sometimes he was really mad, but the guilty ones knew how to keep him quiet. I guess he also was full of weaknesses. If by any chance he would decide to clean up the mess, 75% of the staff would be removed, arrested and prosecuted.

As all over the world, in capitalist countries as well, nobody paid any attention to the real poor and hungry. An middle aged Uzbek used to work for me at the stable. He was so poor, that even I felt sorry for him. He was worse off, then so many of our refugees. He was always hungry. Was wearing rags instead of clothing, and on coldest days of the year in wintertime walked around barefoot.

So it was the same in the Uzbek society. Many of them were rich, but ignored their poor.They used to live up, like any other rich people in any nation. A rich Uzbek once invited me to his home on the occasion of "brith" for his newborn son. (Uzbeks circumcise their boys like Jews). For awhile I didn't believe my own eyes, that during a bloody war, when millions of people died every day on battlefronts and behind the lines, that such a "toy" (party) with all that food was possible in a faraway Uzbekistan.

Still most of the people just tried hard to help themselves, a little. But the worst were the greedy ones, without intention to stop ever. They pulled those thin strings as long as they could. The best example of human greed, was the woman manager of the Vanovskaya store. During her years there she accumulated much wealth, thanks to greed. When her time came ~~for her~~ to go back home in the Ukraine, authorities started to suspect, that something wrong was going on. Or maybe they knew all along, and were just waiting for the right moment. NKVD let her leave, but continued with their investigation. Convinced of her guilt, after few days they took her off her train, many kilometwrs away, and brought her back to Vanovskaya to face prosecution.

As now-a-day all over the world, gangs of young hoodlums soared all over Soviet Union.

Fergana, Alti-Arik and Vanovskaya were no exception from young "patzans" (teen-agers). Once on bazaar grandma Frances got her coat pockets cut out, and some money stolen. On another occasion, a boy wanted to steal money from Anna, but she caught up with him, took her money back and gave him few good shots over the head. Girls and women who wouldn't mess around with people like "patzans" and other hoodlums, ~~they~~ used to be called in Soviet Union "Boyovaya Zhenshtchyna" (A fighting woman). So as you x can see your grandma Anna, was a fighting woman.

On Vanovskaya was an international gang of a little older then "patzans". YOUNGMEN By international I mean Russians, Tatars and Uzbeks. They worked in daytime, and attacked inocent people evenings and at night. Couple of those boys spent time in prisons for their activities, but after completing their terms, returned to Vanovskaya, joined back their gang, and continued with their old tricks. Their girlfriends used to be their helpers and untouchable. Their main aim was extortion and beating up people. They always snicked-up on people in the dark. When close by, they used to look over their victims, If their leader decided not to harm people involved, he always said an Uzbek word "tigma" (don't touch), but if he didn't say that word, it ment, that the gang was allowed to proceed, and do the job. It was also understood, and was an common knowledge, that in many cases, gangs and patzans on bazaars had tight connections with militia and NKVD.

Work on the new construction was very slow. There was no progress, and since the start in 1942, none of the important buildings were completed. The finished objects were the not important ones, like the wall around the project, security and fire station, and the bathhouse, with a terrific x shower. The whole construction lacked the necessary machinery, and the important pipes weren't even in place, because of lack of trenches. It seemed that authorities sudenly gave up on this project, anticipating a victory over the Germans.

The construction slowdown was most visible at the diner during "obyedniy pereriv" (lunch hour). There were no lines at the windows, and plenty places available to sit and eat.

A weekend in the middle of summer 1945 I put aside for a trip to Fergana to see my dear Anna. But before that it came to my attention that authorities mobilized hundreds of farmers from nearby collective farms to dig trenches, so finally the large pipes could be put in place. We didn't even have that many shovels available to accomodate all these farmers. One day before the work have begun we recived the new shovels. Our people afixed wooden handles on them, and we were ready for the big push.

The head of the pipe brigade was a older Russian, separated from his wife and two sons because of war. They spent the war years in some other place in Soviet Union, and the man in meantime shared his quarters and life with other much younger woman. Still ~~when~~ the time finally came, WHEN his wife and the two boys ~~finally~~ arrived on Vanovskaya. The wife was Jewish. She moved into the apartment, and the young woman moved out. Not a big deal, and the whole family was reunited and happy again.

I was determent not to give up my weekend with Anna, so once again I told my director, that I was going to Fergana to get married.

When I was leaving Saturday morning I saw those Uzbeks arriving to dig the trenches. They supposed to work Saturday and Sunday. But when I came to work Monday morning I was told that after working hardly half a day , most of the shovels broke down. Not the wooden handles, but the iron necks to which handles had been attached. Ofcourse the work wasn't completed at that time, and also wasn't completed even at the time when I was leaving Vanovskaya and Soviet Union for that matter. Because of the agreement with the collective farms, they had the upper hand. By the end of the summer our workers went to cotton fields to help in picking the finished cotton crop.

Behind the bazaar in a very small room, was living Mankita family from Warsaw. He was in charge of all those bricks being stored along the railroad tracks

Mankita was always ready to participate in some kind of a deal, but preferred to stay behind in case of trouble, so he wouldn't be blamed or responsible. Anyway problems developed on his job, and Mankita was replaced, by one of the girls from German brigade.

In the middle of Vanovkaya was standing a very nice social building, with rooms for meetings, elections and celebrations of important holidays and events. The main hall served also as theater and cinema. Pictures appeared once or twice a week. Mostly patriotic. Heroics of communists and workers during the 1917 revolution. High on the agenda were also pictures about the struggle of Red Army and Soviet people during the patriotic war against Nazi Germany. Only once a pretty good singing and dancing show performed on Vanovskaya, with a tremendous successs. They played for two days, and the entire population of Vanovskaya saw them boths days.

During the friendship years with United States few American motion pictures were shown. Still stays in my mind a movie with Franchot Tone and Deana Durbin, about a sister of Mr. Tone's butler arriving from Russia, and with whom Mr.Tone a millioner fell in love, and married her for a very happy ending. Other picture I remember was the old version of Hurricane.

Big meetings took place in Vanovskaya's social hall during the pre-election campaign when we choose the candidates for the elections. Most of the time no matter how faraway the district was from Moscow, we kept choosing comrade Stalin. Always two candidates were presented to us for consideration, representing the block of communists and independendents. There were no other choices. These two people later appeared on the ballot and both were elected by overwhelming majority of 99.9%. The pre-election meeting was just a formality. We all raised our hands in approval. There was nobody against, and nobody abstained.

Before the elections long lists of registered voters appeared in front of the social hall, even thou nobody bothered to register. The whole thing was just a farce. I voted in one ~~ek~~ election only. I didn't vote in the last elections, because they removed my name from the register. It happened shortly before we left for Poland.

I attended once an important meeting of our Trade Union. One important worker stood up and accused the head of the union for wrong doings he commited against the members. The gathering turned into shouting match. I didn't understand at all, what these people were arguing about. The head of the union was an important party man, but his job was just a title. Union never helped workers in Soviet Union. The meeting finished with arrest of the accuser, for disturbing the peace. Ofcourse he was released after few hours. But nothing ever happened to the head of the union.

While on Vanovskaya, I was once again in hospital ill again with dysentery. Also a short time before the end of the war, I was called again to appear before the draft board. Then I was almost sure that because of the war ending I would get an unconditional release from the army. But it didn't happen. I said couple of words to the head of the commission, which he reprimended me for talking out of order. I think that this was the reason, that they changed my status from "labor batalions" to "service behind frontlines". Another man I knew, whose eyes were much better then mine, just because he wore glasses, they gave him an unconditional release.

Anyway it didn't matter anymore. War was coming to an end, and this was most important. We just needed still to press a little harder to survive. It never occured to me then, that shortly I will loose forever a person dearest to my heart during the 25 years of my life. I think my dearest mother was very brave all these years but ~~xxxxxxx~~ wasn't able to fight off a deadly illness, WHICH PROBABLY WAS IN HER BODY A LONG TIME.

Chapter 87

Union of Polish Patriots!

Union of Polish Patriots was an organization, put to life by the Polish Committee of National Liberation, sponsored by the government of Soviet Union, after breaking off relations with the Polish government in exile in London.

Union of Polish Patriots replaced the old Polish Delegations all over Soviet Union. But it wasn't the same. Union of Polish Patriots was rather a political organization, opposite to former delegations , who used to be more relief organizations. Even thou not perfect, Polish delegations helped not only with food and clothing, but also tried to help sick people in need, and keep up the morale of Polish citiziens. While visiting a Polish delegation you always found there other Polish people. For time being, that was the place where people met, talk, dreamed about the past and kept hoping about a be--tter future, but most about a speedy end of the war, and liberation.

We used to talk how those Polish armies would come from somewhere, and restore the country's independence again. We dreamed about heros like Pilsudski, heros from our youth, not realizing that those days were over forever. It never entered our minds, how those Polish armies would get there? from where? From Northern Africa? After all those ups and downs, finally came to us, that the only "liberation"will come from Soviet Union, and we will be forced to live under socializm or communizm.

So this was the main task Of Union of Polish Patriots to educate, and prepare us to life, similar to this in Soviet Union. In our minds, for this we didn't need any preparations.Everyday living in Soviet Union for last five years prepared us enough.

Under Mrs. Mantel we had few such preparatory meetings, always attended by Russians, members of communist party. Mrs. Mantel also organized two social events, when people with some artistic talents performed in a very nice variety show. Half year before leaving Vanovskaya, we had a farewell evening from Vanovskaya. On both occasions our artists performed old pre-war Polish and Jewish pieces, and a small local orchestra, whose members were from Poland, Romania and Latvia, played all those popular before the war capitalist tunes. We also had a lottery, and uncle Ludwik was in charge of it. I remember it well, because I lost hard earned 120 rubles, and won only a box of matches.

And again the whole ecperience was very dull for me, because Anna wasn't with me. Half of the population of Vanovskaya, attended the farewell evening, including some local wheels from the government and construction. From Alti-Arik also came the chief of NKVD, who then was a very good educated in Russian, modern Uzbek communist. This guy enjoyed himself enormously. Most people present seek out his company, including the young brother of the speculator Kutcher, who kept the chief's glass filled up with vodka all the time, and to my suprise Anna's, Frieda's and Ela's friend Basia Grzybowski, who kept with him company all the time. There weren't many people like the Grzybowski family. Smart and resourcefull, who managed to have first friendly relations with Dr. Perlberger and then with Mrs. Mantel. With all that money, they never turned down help from Polish delegation and from Union of Polish Patriots. Not that Union of Polish Patriots gave us to much. Only once they distributed among us some clothing confiscated by NKVD from the old delegation. On this occasion I recived a G-man's pair of slacks with a deep long pocket for a modified machine-gun. As a special gift from comrade Stalin we recived some packages of pressed peas.

Uncle Ludwik was happy with his job as a head of the Alti-Arik and Palasan circles of the Patriots Union. After I registered the people involved I left the organizztion because of it's voluntary nature. I couldn't effort to work without pay. Anyway uncle Ludwik, didn't like my work because I marked all the families registered as military families, in hope that they would recive some better rations in the future.

At that time Eda Rosenzweig finally broke off with Dr. Perlberger and moved in with her boyfriend Nisonovich.

The count-down for the Allied up-coming final victory had begun. Newspapers and radio continued to bring victorious news from all over the world.

Chapter 88

Breezes of Freedom!

In the second half of 1944, we kept counting days, dreaming of the day, when Poland will be free again. Our imagination had run wild, and we were foolish enough to believe, that we will find life in Poland as we left it. We thought that Jews in Europe and especially in Poland would be greeted with open arms and treated as special people, after all those cruelties they have been subjected to, during the war. It never entered our minds, that a great democratic country like United States, President Roosevelt and his government hardly winked their fingers in an effort to help Jews in Europe.

It still didn't settled in our heads, that Soviet system was the only system in Poland's future, and that the whole world was heading for tremendous structual and political changes.

All what was important in those days, was the fact, that the Red Army was on the move again, chasing Germans from all those dear to our hearts familiar places in Western Ukraine. Cities and towns, like Lvov, Tarnopol, Gliniany, Zloczow, Zbaraz and Lanovce fell into Soviet hands again. Little did we realize, that will be almost two more years before we will see Poland. Who knows? Maybe if we would taken the invitation from Zbaraz in 1945 to return there, maybe mother would survive, and made her dream to see Cracow again would come through. At least took us few months longer, to find out the details of the tragedy of Jewish people during the German occupation of Europe. The tragedy of "Holocost".

In August of 1944 Soviet and Polish troops combined took from German, Lublin an important Polish city, where the first Polish Provisional Government was brought to life, with the help of Soviet Union, and preparations for Warsaw's liberation have began. This first Polish government on Polish soil since 1939 was represented by all segments of Poland's population, Jews included.

The situation on all the war fronts all over the world, indicated that Germany, Japan and their Allies were finished. The only question remained; How soon?

The victories in August 1944 continued. Americans took Florence in Italy, and invaded Southern France. Romania surrendered to Soviet Union and joined the Allies. Between 23-25 of the months, Paris was liberated. General De Gaule was first from the high command to enter the city, followed by Generals Eisenhower and Bradley.

In September British took Brussels, capital of Belgium. Finland and Soviet Union declared armistice, and Bulgaria also surrendered to Soviet Union. Still Germams wouldn't give up and landed their first V-2 rocket in London. Roosevelt and Churchill met for the 9th time since the war began in Quebec, Canada on September 10. Later in the month Red Army made deep advances into Czechoslovakia from Poland.

October 3 marked the surrender of Polish Resistance Army under the command of General Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski (father of Frieda Komorowski our friend at the camps in Siberia), to Germans after two months of struggle. The Polish Government in London Have hoped, that the uprising would secure Warsaw for them. making sure, that no Soviet supported Government would rule Poland. Needless to say the Red Army, and controled by them Polish Army was waiting on the opposite bank of Vistula River, under personal orders from Stalin to halt the offensive for two months and give Germans a chance to destroy the London supported Poles, and by doing so, prevented them from taking over Warsaw. My cousin Tolo Speiser from Gliniany was a member of this Polish Resistance Army and lost his life in fighting.

Also in October U.S. landed in central Philippines. Japanese took heavy losses in the battle of Leyte Gulf, but sank U.S. carrier Princeton. Stalin renounced neutrality pact with Japan. President Roosevelt was elected to a fourth term. Royal Air Force sank another German battleship, and B-29s bombed Tokyo. U.S. Forces stood their ground and stop last German offensive known as the Battle of Bulge, with help from the Allies attacking from the south,

Christmas-Hanukah of 1944, came and went as others in previous years, but the New Year of 1945 was the first one in many years, when Soviet Union and other European countries including liberated parts of Poland celebrated free from German tyrany.

Meanwhile heavy fighting continued, on all fronts. In February 1945 U.S troops finally entered Manila, the capital of Philippines.

On January 17, after holding their offensive for long time Red Army captured Warsaw, and next day January 18 my hometown Cracow was liberated. Between January 20 - 27 the new government of Hungary signed the armistice with the Allies, and Soviet Union gained control over whole Lithuania.

On February 4-11 Roosevelt and Churchill and Stalin hold Yalta conference, where they agreed on the plan of occupation of Germany, and under Stalin's preasure also agreed to leave all Eastern European countries under Soviet influence sphere, believing Stalin, that he would hold free elections in those countries. They sealed the future of eastern part of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, without giving a chance their people to have a voice in their destiny. As a compensation, Poland recived territories taken away from Germany.

February 19 U.S. Marines landed on Iwo Jima, and didn't take it until March 26 after heavy fighting. Also in February Finland declared the war on Germany postdating it to September 15 1944.

On March 7, after crossing the Ludendorff bridge on the Rhine, U.S. First Army and Allies took the city of Cologne, and began the real march through Germany, and didn't stop until American and Soviet armies met in a ceremonial juncture near Torgau on the Elbe River April 25, 1945.

March 9 biggest B-29 bombing of Tokyo, flattened 16 square miles of the city and killed 100,000 people. April 1 American forces invaded Okinava, and ended the bloody battle there with victory on June 21.

Begining in April 1945 many important occurences just about sealed the end of the evil German empire. First of all Japanese also forseeing their defeat near shook-up their government, making many important changes. On April 12 President Roosevelt died, and was succeeded bt Harry S. Truman. On April 28 the leader of Italy Mussolini, his mistress and 16 fascist henchmen were assassinated, and finally on April 30 Adolf Hitler and his closest friends and advisers and his mistress Eva Braun committed suiside in a bunker underneath the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. On the same day the Soviet Red Flag was raised on German Reichstag in Berlin, and Americans freed 33,000 inmates of Dachau concentration camp.

On May 2 Red Army took all of Berlin, and German troops in Northern Italy surrendered. On May 3 Rangoon in Burma was taken by the British and finally on May 7 Germany surrendered unconditionally to Allies and Soviet Union at Rheims, France. May 8 (V-E) "Victory in Europe" was celebrated by United States and Allied nations. On May 9 ratification of surrender was signed in Berlin by Marshal Zhukov for Soviet Union and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel for Germany. The final defeat of Germany was sealed at last on June 5 when United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France, signed a declaration of German defeat and assumed supreme power in Germany.

June 26 1945, representatives of 50 nations in San Francisco signed World's Security Charter establishing United Nations Organization.

Philippines were liberated July 4 1945, On July 5 Churchill was defeated in general election in Britain and succeeded by Clement Attlee and his Labour Party. In mid-July first atom bomb was tested successfully in New Mexico. July 17 the Potsdam conference attented by Truman, Stalin and Churchill later replaced by Attlee. The conference ended with a declaration imposing hard peace conditions on Germany. August 8 Soviet Union invaded Manchuria, right after August 6 atom bomb wiped out Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which forced Japan to surrender unconditionally September 2 and agree to terms signed on the board of U.S.S. Missouri.

Chapter 89

Aftermath of the Disaster!

And in deed disaster it was. Countries and nations destroyed. Their ecomies in ruin. Most of Europe devastated, and people wandering from country to country in search for lost families, and hoping to begin new life somewhere. Mass graves, gas chambers and creamatoria, became monuments of legacy, of maniac's desire to rule the world,

Our suffering in Soviet Union were just a fraction of sufferings of Jews and other nations under Hitler's rule. Still with reservations we own our thanks to comrade Stalin, who un-willingly saved our lives from being murdered, even if he himself murdered hundreds of thousands of his own countrymen, if he only thought that they were against him. But most of all we give thanks to the "Allmighty God" for stearing Stalin's mind in right direction and our minds to register to return to our former homes.

We were spared a nightmare. Really we even didn't know enough, about the magnitude of events under German occupation. Soviet press wasn't interested in crimes against humanity committed by Nazis against Jewish population. During their offensive in Poland Red Army liberated such camps like Maydanek, Tremblinka, Belzec and Auschwitz, but never mentioned in their reports details of their findings in those camps. We even didn't know enough after our return to Poland, not until the real picture of atrocities have been presented to us by Jewish leaders after we came to the West.

May 8 1945 news about the end of the war hit Vanovskaya, like a thunder. People were hugging on the streets, shaking hands and congratulating each other. We got off work this day, and everybody was singing, yelling and ofcourse drinking. People kept stoping each other with saying old Russian sentence for such an occasion "Z! Prazhnikom, Z! Pobyedoy" (Let celebrate our victory).

My only regret was, that I wasn't with my Anna on this important occasion. There was no transportation to Fergana on this very important holiday. I understand, that people were dancing on Fergana's streets, AS WELL.

On Vanovskaya Mrs. Mantel and the Union of Polish Patriots, also hold a victory celebration, with a speech by Mrs. Mantel and and other remarks by Russian party leaders.

May 9, next day after the victory celebration, while the thought that war was over still didn't setled completely in our minds, the order of the working day didn't change. There were no let-ups, and the official propaganda changed slightly, from helping the war effort to helping the rebuilding efforts.

Soviet people entertained among themselves high hopes connected with defeating Germany. They thought about more food, more and better clothing and better living conditions. It was obvious that most of the country suffered from hunger, and Stalin wasn't prepared yet to change it to fast. His idea was that Soviet people would work harder to achieve (his) not their goals.

Right after the war the communist party and Soviet government, confident, after such tremendous victory, went back to their old tricks. Labor camps got filled with hundred thousands Soviet prisoners of war, who returned home from one hell to another, because they permited themselves a luxury of being captured. If they would die, they would be remembered as heros. So there was back to building heavy industry, arnaments, but not food industry. All this to make Soviet Union strong and ready to defend against capitalist imperializm. And Soviet people obliged, like during the war, because of deep love for their country (Mother Russia), they kept following their leaders.

Yes I saw and noticed all of this. Basic shortages remained as they were. Rationong was still in effect, and long lines in front of food and clothing stores continued.

Even quality of food served at the diner was much to be desired. Once I was served a so-called meat soup, with all inner parts of the animal left intact in the soup, and not cleaned up properly. Chunks of bull's s--t were swimming in my bowl. When I showed this soup to the lady in charge, she shook her head, like saying; What would you like me to do about it? You can be sure she wouldn't serve a soup like that for herself.

Another result of Soviet victory, surfaced in increased so-called show-trails, when government punished and charged with treason many guilty ones, and the not guilty as well.

Perfect example of such trails came to public attention, when shortly before the end of the war, Soviet command invited a group of Polish partizans to come to Moscow, and be honored for their bravery, while fighting the Germans. Soviet inteligence directed them to a secret meeting place, and transported them to Moscow on a military plane.

But what a surprise awaited these brave fighters on arrival. Instead of being honored NKVD arrested them, and later tried for treason against Soviet state. There were twenty one of them, charged with phony charges fabricated by Soviet prosecutors, The long trail was widely publicized in the Soviet press. Under viscious interrogations and beating 20 men broke down, and were sentenced to many years of hard labor. Who knows, maybe they never saw Poland again. But their leader never gave in. Defying his accusers, he went through a hell. He denied all those phony charges against him, even under torture, and at the end he was the only one who force the Soviet court to aquit him. He was able to return to Poland, and emigrated to United States. He was able later to tell his story, which was shown on American television.

Members of United States Armed Forces and their supreme Commander General Eisenhower, saw first hand and revealed the shocking accounts of the Nazi death camps, and reported them as soon as Allied occupied them.

A broadcast from Buchenwald on the liberation by CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow described the horrors he found there, and the half death inmates blessing the name of President Roosevelt, which for so long was a full measure of their hopes.

As the war was winding-up it became obvious, that with some effort on the part of Western leaders, some of those poor victims could have been saved, but evidently they choose not to do so. All those who perished were martyrs, and the only solace for their martyrdom was the emergence of the State of Israel in 1948.

We remained in Soviet Union for another year. It seemed like an eternity, and we began to doubt, that we will ever leave. Life in Palasan didn't change at all. It was important at that stage not to loose cool, even thou strengh and patience were running out. Mother wasn't well at all, but kept pushing. Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose were doing pretty good, as far as I could see. After the victory uncle quit listening to the propaganda radio. After all, there was no reason for it anymore. Schnalls were the only ones still working in kolhoz. Mrs, Marmurs kept working on Vanovskaya as a maid in workers dormitory. Her husband continued to make his nightly trips to Fergana to purchase soap, so he could later sell it in Alti-Arik. Suedwerts was free like a bird, as before. Having the episod with authorities about his emigration to America behind him, he continued to do nothing. He spent his time going every day to Alti-Arik, stoping in library to read the papers, gossip with people on bazaar and eating some goodies behind his mother's back.

Heniek kept bringing those bottles with kerosin for aunt Rose to sell among Uzbeks, and I was dreaming about making a big deal to make few rubles on the side. But no matter what I did, it wasn't enough. I was plain scared, and didn't have nerves required for something big. And there were many opportunities.

After Cracow was liberated in January 1945, and Poland was in big need of doctors, Dr. Perlberger and her friend the doctor of dentistry went to Cracow. We also recived letters from our relatives Zosia and Roman Kahane, that they responded to the invitation from Zbaraz and went there to see where her parents and brother perished. At that time they already had their little daughter Yoel. Aunt Mala and her new husband Ferdinand Korngold also left Ural Mountains and traveled to Cracow. I am quite sure, that aunt Mala was heart broken leaving her beloved son Saul behind, burried there.

Chapter 90

Mother!

Even thou, life in those days never was like a piece of cake, being still young I saw everything on the bright side. My attitude was, that somehow we will overcome. It was like that until a personal tragedy dealt upon us a severe blow.

Late in August 1945, my mother got ill. As we saw it first, it was nothing to worry about. She wasn't well many times before, but always in her quiet ways, was able to shake off her pains.. She kept working around the house, and didn't complain to much, but soon it became obvious to us, that she wasn't herself anymore. We convinced her finally to go and see a doctor.

She went to Alti-Arik, and after examination, the doctor put her in Hospital. Still we didn't have any indication that she was getting seriously ill. Uncle Ludwik visited her every morning, always bringing with him some better food from home.. Evenings I was visiting mother, traveling on the company's truck with workers going home from work to Alti-Arik. Mother still didn't complain and her only dream was to get out from hospital, and start to prepare for the journey back home to Cracow.

At the same time my father, started to complain that he wasn't well either. On one of his days off, he went also to Alti-Arik to see a doctor. I was really surprised that he didn't see company's doctor on Vanovakaya. I was there with him. He acted frustrated and nervous. He tried very hard to talk in the doctor to place him in hospital also. I didn't like the way he spoke and acted, and my first thought was, that he wanted to be with mother, near her. There was a good thing, that I was with him. He walked into the doctor's room, and started to shout, and playing out a terrible scene. He was trying to convince the doctor how ill he was, and lied by telling the doctor that he was working in kolhoz. In one sentence father would get himself in lots of troubles if I wouldn't be there with him. The doctor told me, that was nothing wrong with him, and that he was ready to call militia,

I took him out of there, and escorted him home. But next day in much somber manner he checked himself into Vanovskaya hospital.

So I had both of my parents in two different hospitals. During the day I visited with father, and after work in the evening I spent with mother. She thought that rest was good for her, and told me that she was stronger, so she asked the doctor to release her from hospital. Ofcourse the doctor obliged. I am quite sure, that probably he really didn't know what was wrong with her, after telling us, that he thought, she was suffering from fatigue and lack of proper food. After all this was a disease of most of the people in those days.

Mother left the hospital the same day, Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and sent the Red Army into Manchuria. For few days everything was fine, we were happy because mother was feeling better, and we also knew that father wasn't seriously ill, and we expected him home anytime.

But it wasn't written for mother to be to much longer with us. After few days her condition worsened. She was in pain most of the time, and her leg, the same which gave her problems in summer of 1937 got swollen again, with the black pimpl, which doctors in 1937 were able to remove with medication appeared again in the same spot. Mother wasn't able to walk anymore, so we called in the doctor from the Palasan clinic. He was a Russian, an older man, but not a real doctor, more like today's paramedic, with lots of experience in medicine. He checked mother over, and I don't think, that he knew what was wrong with her. And if he knew he didn't tell us. He recomended to take her to hospital immediatly.

I took mother to Vanovskaya hospital, on company's truck. We used to have there a very good and nice lady doctor. She was Jewish married to a Russian man. I carried mother in my arms, and still didn't suspect at all, that this was her last trip alive. The doctor gave mother a complete examination, she didn't tell us in so many words what was wrong with her, but we suspected the worse. At this point I will leave it to your judgement. I hope you understand.

The doctor On Vanovskaya said, that mother needs lots of rest and good food. With uncle Ludwik's help we bought meat, chicken and other items good for mother, and aunt Rose cooked the meals. And again rest and food seemed to help, and made mother feel little better. But swelling on her leg wouldn't go away, and she was running slight temperature in the evenings. We kept hoping, that mother will improve.

When mother arrived in hospital, father checked out. It was already September, and our High Holidays came early this particular year. In kibitka Jews from the area prayed again, but we were to busy and involved with mother to participate. FIRST HIGH HOLIDAYS AFTER THE WAR.

After the two days of Rosh-Hashana passed, and mother was better I asked her if she wouldn't mind that I spend weekend with Anna. I thought first, that she wasn't to happy about the idea, but she didn't object. No matter what, she always wanted me to be happy. I traveled again on the company's truck, and arrived in Fergana early in the afternoon. I think that because of holidays Anna didn't work this particular week, so we spent much more time together. It was very pleasant In Leniowers home then.. As always I loved to be there. They all were concerned about mother's health and her condition. The atmosphere of an important holiday was in the air, but I couldn't enjoy myself, thinking all the time about mother.

Leniowers were doing quite well in those days, and have celebrated a very nice holiday. Also on Sunday afternoon friends came to visit.

I was happy to be with Anna together, but my thoughts wouldn't let me to stay in Fergana. So late on this Sunday afternoon, I decided, that it was time to go back home. I expected to walk all the way, but as soon as I left Anna I came across our truck carrying cement from Kuva-Say. It was a welcome break for me, and within an hour and a half I was home in Palasan.

For me, it was very sad homecoming. Aunt Rose told me, that mother's condition changed to worse, and she was uncouncious most of the time. I also found out, that uncle Ludwik was with her in hospital.

Very early next morning I came to hospital and father and uncle Ludwik were with mother in her room. Nurses moved mother to an empty room, because she was in bad shape. They didn't want other patients to be disturb. There were no single rooms in this small hospital.

When I walked in, mother was half asleep, and recognized me, and was glad to see me. Her mouth moved, like she would like to ask me;" Where were you?" I guess she didn't remember that I went to see Anna. It was evident, that she was in pain.

Uncle Ludwik went home, and father went to his place in dormitory to get some rest. I remained with mother for the rest of the day and night. From time to time she spoke few words. Despite the pain I think she realized, that those were her last hours, and during few clear minutes, she told me to make sure, that she is burried next to Mrs. Schnall.

She was saying something from time to time, and it was obvious that shots and medication don't help her anymore. She even couldn't control her refuse, so nurses removed her sheets, and replaced them with a large rubber sheet.

Father and uncle Ludwik came in in the morning, when mother was sliping fast. We stood there until the last second of her life. I was looking at her, when she gave out the last breath. I ran out to call the nurse, who came fast with a needle to give mother a shot. As I said it took just few seconds, and it was all over for my Dear, Loving, Unforgetable Mother.

Esther Rose (Ester Reizel) Nussbaum Kondschein, daughter of David Leib and Zlata Speiser Nussbaum died almost at noon on September 12 1945, still a young woman, 53 years old, after not an easy life, dedicated to my well being. Even now, while I write those words my heart is breaking, and I cry inside. Then I also cried, aloud, only for couple short minutes. I put my arms around father, and said to him; "What will we do without her?" He stood there silent, and he didn't cry, but I am sure in his quiet manner he kept his grief to himself.

Mother!

I wouldn't be to far off, if I call my mother a woman of valor. Nothing was ever to hard for her, as far as our family was concerned. She loved us dearly, and not just my father and me, but the whole Nussbaum family. Her brothers, sisters, and their families. Since I was a little boy I couldn't stand to be home, without her, even if she left me there with my father. I loved her very much, and I am only sorry, that I wasn't able to make her dreams come through, and be like Nussbaums. I never was a good student, and learning was the fartherst from my mind. I always pushed through, and whatever I accomplished was because of my mother, and I am gratefull for her efforts. She always was a lady, and it was heartbreaking to see her without decent closing, and she never lost her dignity.

I was almost 24 years old when mother passed away. Her death for me, was like an end to a chapter of my life. In a way I was thankfull, that she didn't suffer to long. In a fact only two or three last days.

Mother always loved Anna very much, and was pleased, that we were going together. I am quite sure, that she would be extrimly happy, if she knew, that we have been married. She would love with all her heart, you Jack, her grandson, and Elaine, and her great-grandchildren Andrew and Emily. With better luck, she probably would survive this ugly war. Until last days of her life, she was confident, that all of us together will return home to Cracow.

Despite my grief I made rounds, first to carpenter shop to order a coffin to be made immediatly, so we could proceed with the funeral, later in the afternoon. I also got the permission from Novosielov, our director to to purchase a sheet to make mother's burrial clothing. I also sent Heniek Zimetbaum home to ask the Schnall brothers to help him with digging the grave. Israel Suedwerts, arrived soon after with a Jewish woman, ~~with a Jewish women~~ to prepare mother for burrial.

After the coffin was ready, late in the afternoon, mother's last journey, took place on company's truck. Father, uncle Ludwik, I and Mrs. Larmur and profesor Zamura accompanied mother on her last trip to the Palasan Moslem cementary, to the corner where other Jews who died there were burried. Schnall brothers dug out the grave next to their mother's as per my mother's last wish. They filled-up a small pillow case with dirt, and put it under mother's head, then they sealed the coffin, and this was the last time we saw her. Schnall brothers conducted the entire ceremony, and said all the prayers. After I said "Kadish" we lowered the coffin into the grave and poured dirt over it. All men from kibitka were there, and some other people. We have had the required minyan. Later in the evening in kibitka while saying "Kadish" again, we had a small memorial service, and this was the way the life of my Dear Blessed Memory Mother came to an abrupt end.

Couple of months later, because of the uncertainty, of how much longer we will be in Soviet Union, I was able to obtain a large bag of cement from the construction, and with help of my brick layer friend Abraham Presseisen and the Schnall brothers again, I made a concrete plate on my mother's grave. As always Schnalls helped not only with work, but also with ritual aspects of the ceremony, by saying prayers, and writing the hebrew inscription on the plate. There are no words to explain the kindness and rediness of those two brothers not only for me, but many other people in need. Plain folks from a little town, or maybe from a village, but with very big hearts.

For awhile father and I remained with uncle Ludwik and family in our hut. It was very difficult for me to stay in this one room at nights and on weekends, where every corner kept remaining me of mother. I thought, that she was around and would walk in anytime. At nights was even worse, thinking, that she wasn't sleeping on the large "pritcha" (wooden bed) with all of us.

I was thinking a lot about my dear Anna, and how much better I would be, having her close with me in Palasan.

Aunt Rose was nice to father and me. She cooked our meals and washed our closing. But we didn't know how long this togetherness would last.

Chapter 91

The Begin of the New Beginning!

To prevent any future misunderstandings Father and I decided to move to Vanovskaya. I wasn't hard at all to place another bed, next to my father's at the dormitory. We didn't have to much to take with us anyway. Just couple of old pillows, an old blanket, some torn rags not fit to wear anymore and mothers last dress, which she made for herself from the fabric we purchased at the company's store. Before we left Vanovskaya, we gave the dress away. Now I regret this very much. At least I would have something with me to remember mother by. Our old suitcase from back, HOME was already worn out, and only thing inside, still showing, old glory was fathers hat, which he bought few days before the war.

After mothers death relations, between father and myself, instead to get closer, seemed to cool off considerably. Inside he grieved a long time, but never mentioned it aloud. He became more subdued, and even spoke less, then before, keeping in mind, that he never was a big talker. As I re-call it now we grew more apart with time. We spoke to each other only, when it was necessary. But what hurt most, that we weren't hungry anymore, which made me feel my pain even more, while thinking about mother.

I became reckless, trying to make some money on the side,got involved with people who were always ready to deal, people which mother would never allow, even to talk to them. I wanted very much to make some money, to take with us to Poland. My behavior was so obvious that I recived few warnings from my supervisor Pavlov, and the party secretary, also warned Pavlov to be more observant to things which went on in his No.1 section. Well! I made few extra rubles, but hardly enough to help us to make a better living in Poland.

Only once, one week after mother's death, good luck shined upon us. Sunday uncle Ludwik and I went to buy some food on the bazaar. While looking around for bargains I put my foot on something soft, on the ground. I picked a package up wraped in an Uzbek scarf. Uncle Ludwik glanced at it, and decided, that it was just a piece of an old "shmate"; and was ready to throw it away. Something was telling me: don't let him do it. I took the scarf back, and un-wraped the package slightly, finding a bundle of money. Uncle and I left the bazaar immediatly, forgeting all about the vegetables, we were about to buy. We skiped the town and proceeded back home on the back country roads. The count at home revealed 1,500 rubles wraped in the "shmate". Ofcourse we expressed our thanks to God for this gift and attributed it to my Blessed Memory mother, still watching over us. Uncle Ludwik and I took 700.00 rubles each,and we gave 100.00 rubles gift to Heniek. I hope that uncle Ludwik, was aware of the fact, that if not for me, he would have just a "zero". This money and some small deals carried us through the last few months in Soviet Union.

Ten days after mothers funeral I went to Fergana to see my dear Anna. Grandma Frances cried, when she saw me. Expression on her face, showed me that she was hurting with me. I always felt good with Anna's family, and especially then after my personal tragedy. I spent a nice and relaxing weekend with Anna. In my heart I wanted to ask her to marry me then, even because of our jobs, we would have had to be separated during working days, but I couldn't get up enough nerve to pop the question.

The year 1945 was coming quickly to an end. A very significant year in the history of mankind. Still before the year ended, we went through an erthquake on Vanovskaya and Fergana. Anna experienced it in the garden in the back of their home and I sitting on a concrete fundation eating lunch. For a moment I thought that world was coming to and end. Miraculously there were no causulties.

Life was hard without mother. I was missing her, and her love and face. Whatever I was doing I was also thinking of her. My relations with uncle Ludwik also deteriorated since our move to Vanovskaya. He was cool toward father and me, and I felt that he didn't care about us anymore at all. I am quite sure that he had some idea, that I made big money, and wouldn't share the news with him.

Chapter 91 (cont)

The Begin ~~ng~~ of the New Beginning!

Frick accidents kept hunting Anna. The third one happened in ~~xhex~~ Leniowers home in Fergana, where after a long rainfall, the ceiling got drenched and collapsed on Anna's head. Frieda was standing next to her, but the debris didn't touch her. It was a heavy bleeder, and was really good, that the health institute was just across the yard. Anna's wounds required many stitches.

There were other tense moments in Anna's life in Fergana. One of them occured, when inspection came at night, while Anna was working, making those silk fabrics. The owner of the shop, had a permission from government to operate such establishment, on the condition that he will do the work by himself, which he did, but only during the day hours. In order to ~~pxp~~ produce more silk he hired Anna, which was a no-no. So for such an emergency, Anna was forced to jump into special ready for her bed in another room, and pretend to being asleep.

Another emergency came, when a friend of the family, a young engineer, with the health institute, once knocked on their outside doors, jokingly announced, that NKVD was waiting outside. At that time Leniowers had in their house a large canister full of cooking oil. Hearing the words NKVD Anna grabed the canister and went running fast to the nearby creek in order to empty it. In the last second, when she was all ~~rxxxd~~ ready to pour, somebody from the house stop her, with an explanation, that it was only a poor joke, in poor taste by their good friend. The guy was really sorry. He couldn't find appropriate words to ~~xppxxxxxxxx~~ apologize.

To greet the New Year 1946 I and my friends Presseisen, Wlodavsly, the brother of the shoemaker Przytycki, accepted a proposal from Mrs. Greenberg, the wife of one of the Greenbergs brothers who used to live on Vanovskaya to cook for us a ~~NXY~~ New Year's dinner. We paid her 100 rubles each for a rice pilaf dinner. But how foolish we spent our money. We got cheated with nothing. It was just a big embarassment, and Mrs. Greenberg kept our money. The meal wasn't even worthed 10 rubles. I wanted very much to see Anna, but as I re-call New Year came out on Saturday, and we were told to work on Sunday. One of those communist party's idea to greet New Year with work, helping to rebuild.

Early winter of 1946 was colder then usual. I was lucky having my G-man slacks, given to me by Union of Polish Patriots. I also had a fufayka and cotton lined slacks, but I didn't wear them to often. As I said before I recived from the company a pair of slacks and shoes made from tent fabric. I also bought a piece of fabric in company's store and Mrs. Homski the Jewish woman from Odessa made for me a light suit; A pair of slacks and Eisenhowerx jacket. Most of the time during that winter I wore a pair of rubber boots borrowed from the construction warehouse, and a rubber raincoat over my fufayka.

In early February Anna came visiting in Palasan and Vanovskaya. We spent some time together, but not enough. She was staying in her former hut with Marmurs and friends, and I slept couple of nights in our old hut with uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and ~~Xxx~~ Heniek. Basia Grzybowski ~~xj~~ invited Anna to dinner in their home in Alti-Arik. I thought that I was snubed off. I should have been invited also. I came to Basia's home after the dinner. We had a short conversation, and I left. Nobody even Anna stop me from leaving, and I wanted so much to be with her. I never said nothing about it to nobody, but I thought it was wrong. I remember Anna bringing a present for me. It was a new cap. She remembered, that my old one was worn out. Monday I made certain, that Anna had transportation to go home.

In those days I visited Anna quite often, and also took to her a piece of material, which was distributed among the workers. Anna made a new dress for herself.

Time was going fast by. We kept waiting for good news, but it was just waiting. There was no official word about the date, when we will leave Soviet Union.

Chapter 92

Good-By Soviet Union!

At last in March 1946 local authorities in Alti-Arik region recived instructions to register all Polish citiziens for the purpose of their return to Poland. I guess this was the best news since the war have begun in September 1939, with the exception of V-Day when Germany was finally defeated.

As for me, it was a joyous occasion, but painfull, becausex I was leaving my mother behing on the Uzbek cementary in faraway Palasan. After so many years of suffering, she was just a step away from the day of her dreams. But fate, changed everything, and not in her favor,

Each Polish citizien, was required to show proof of his or her's eligibilty, either by former Polish documents, such as: citizienship papers, old military registration books, or school report cards. If those weren't available, statements by witnesses would do.

Father and I didn't have nothing to worry. We still carried with us all kinds of documents, but the most important was, my father's citizienship certificate showing, that he was a citizien of Poland, aproof he needed since the days before the war, when in his work he was involved in dealing with Polish customs. This document would be good for both of us, but I also carried my own army registration after I graduated from gimnazium, my birth certificate, and quite few my old report cards.

There were many people without documents at all,xx so all of them had begun a search for suitable witnesses. At the end nobody, who wanted to leave Soviet Union had been left behind. People were helping each other. I myself filled out a document on behalf of Israel Suedwerts and his mother, making up a story, that they were our family's friends from a time way back, and my statement was accepted without questions. Ofcourse as per Soviet law many Poles have been left behind still serving terms in Soviet prisons and labor camps. Many of them returned much later, and some of them never returned.

Leniowers, their friends from kibitka, uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and Heniek came through with flying colors.

Registration over everybody had begun to prepare for the long trip. Uncle Ludwik ofcourse made plans on his own. He never told father and me, that aunt Mala and her new husband Ferdinand Korngold invited them to stay with them in aunt Mala's old apartment, which she successfuly claimed from Polish authorities on her return from Soviet Union few months before. All her furniture and furnishings remained in the apartment un-touched, but due to shortage of living space aunt Mala and Korngold shared it with another couple. Yet she still found space there for xxx uncle Ludwik and his family. The secret came out, when they left the train in Plaszow, suburb of Cracow. It was obvious to us, then, that uncle Ludwik , didn't want nothing to do with us anymore.

The travel fever, kept my mind away from work. I and other people were walking like in a dream, waiting with patience for the final leaving date to arrive. Anna and family also kept busy getting ready for the journry. They sold many things, and burned others not fit to carry anymore. The family made pretty well while living in Fergana, and were able to save some money, to the tune of 10,000 rubles for their hard work. Don't kid yourself, it wasn't as much as it sounds, xx but it made a difference.

People with money were buying, rice, salt, dried fruit and other foods they thought were in demand in Poland. Other people with more money, went even as far as buying old Russian gold coins, the ones with czar's head on one side, and the Russian eagle on the other side. Those coins were in circulation on the black market. In Polish language they used to call them "swinki", which translated to English ment "piggies".

People who knew each other, and friendly families formed groups to share space in those box cars. Ofcours uncle Ludwik and his family got together, with Marmurs, Schnalls, Suedwerts and his mother to form such a group, which also included Leniowers, Kutcher's friend the other speculator Zelichowski and his family, Eda Rosenzweig and her boyfriend Nisonovicz, and a single woman with her little boy. They left father and me completly out. It even hurt more because Anna also didn't say a word on our behalf.

Father and I found ourselves with a group of people, which we didn't like at all. A far cry from our "friends". I didn't know anymore if those people were our friends. Nothing I could do about this situation, besides feeling sorry for myself. People like Kutcher, Greenberg brothers, Papierowich and others in our car weren't exactly our cup of tea, even thou they appointed me the car's elder, just to criticize me later. To argue with people, never was in my blood, and this what this job was all about, so half way into the trip, I gave it up.

To tell the truth, nothing was working right for me. Anna still was sore at me, because of the unfounded gossip, that I was running with other girls. It took me a long time to keep convincing her, that it wasn't so.

Before our departure I continued with my trips to Fergana, just to be with Anna. Nothing else really mattered.But when lists were posted in Fergana showing who was leaving,, Anna told me that she was so much upset, and wished that our names (my father's and mine) wouldn't be included.

Two transports on two different dates were scheduled to leave Fergana. To many people used to live in the region, to be transported on the same train. All I remember that our Transport left Fergana on May 8, 1946, exactly one year after war ended in Europe. Some of my friends on Vanovskaya have been forced to wait, few more weeks, but eventually, they left also.

Our leader on Vanovskaya Mrs. Mantel, and other Polish leaders throughout the region left also, leaving many of our people without representation. Everybody leader or not, wanted to protect his or her's behind.

When finally my time came to quit the job, I was hoping to spend some time with Anna in Fergana, but I encountered problems, while transfering the job to my successor. The situation was very familiar to my lifestyle. It wasn't nothing new that during my stay in Soviet Union, nothing ever came easy for me, so that time wasn't different.

Everything seemed under control when I turned in my reports. Yes! There were some un-significant shortages in tools and other equipment, but those things haven't been unusual in Soviet Union. People kept stealing all over the place. Some of the equipment I was able to recover, with threats, that harm would come to my body, from the thiefs, but I managed somehow.

The main difficulty came from a Jewish engineer Mr. Silber, who also was getting ready to leave Soviet Union, and had nothing to gain or loose by his behavior. Reading my reports he made a big deal about shortage of cement. The reason of the shortage was, because one of the workers forgot to cover the storage dump with tarpaulin overnight. A large rainfall turned this cement into a concrete block, which in turn made it unusable. It wouldn't hurt Silber to leave things the way they were in my report, and why he was doing this I never knew. I always maintained a very friendly relation with him. My supervisor Pavlov finally signed my report, and Silber was forced to stop medling. It showed, that a Russian man, who had more to loose, by signing the report, had more understanding, then so-called friend a Jew, who was leaving with me on the same train.

There was no a man available to take over my job. The administration finally choose Miss. Neuman, a young woman from the German group. I guess she had some kind privileges. First of all she came to Vanovskaya with her mother and younger sister. Secondly by special permission they used to live in their own apartment in Alti-Arik, instead to share the dormitory with other Germans.

I collected my final pay, and vacation pay due me. The last chore was to go to community bath-house to bath and desinfect all our posseccions (only blankets went through desinfection), and finally a trip to hospital to get somekind od a shot in the back.

Another unforseen difficulty I had came from Mr. Matchinsky, the head of the communal department, who wouldn't sign my release until I return his pillows, and sheets. This was the man who was my father's boss, who even liked my father, but my father even wouldn't go to him to help me out. As usually Matchinsky won and I lost. I slept the last few days on a mattress.

Good-By Soviet Union!

The toughest and most trying day, before leaving, was when I went to the cememtary to say my last good-by to mother. I stood there very quiet, crying in my heart. It was very hard to put my mind in a focus, that mother wasn't leaving with us. Life was full of surprises during those past few years, But I never expected that mother will leave us still in a prime of her life. I could do nothing else but accept "God's" will. I said "Shmah Israel" before I left, because I didn't know "Kadish" by heart, and I didn't have a prayer book. After walking few steps I turned aroud to see the grave for the last time. Since then I think about her lots of times, more now, then ever at daytime and nights as well. I see her many times as a vibrant woman, as she was in her younger days, and again as fragile and hungry during our ordeal. I hope and pray, that the place, where she and other Jewish people are burried is kept intact and not desecrated, so they all could rest in peace.

"Blessed Be Their Memory"

I don't know if father paid his last respects to mother. I never asked him about it, and if he did, he never said anything about it to me.

In exchange for Soviet passports and war books, we recived new documents written on a blue paper, certifying in Polish and Russian, that we were Polish citiziens, with rights to travel throughout Soviet Union, and cross the border between the two countries. And again as before some fool misspelled our name. My document was correct "Mondschein", but father's was spelled out as "Mondszajn". Anyway it didn't matter anymore.

Shortly before the registration a question have emerged, about the possibility that uncle Eisen, because of lack of Polish documents, could be left behind. To avoid this, Leniowers decided, that one of the girls would marry him in a fake ceremony. They didn't know then that witness statements would be acceptable.

Father and I didn't have no problems with packing. Our possessions, fitted all in our broken down old suitcase, pillows and blankets included, with documents, my report cards and diplomas inside those pillows. Whatever I was wearing I could somehow get by. But father didn't have nothing. Besides a change of underwear, he was still wearing shoes given to him by the Polish delagation four years before, and an old working suit. His hat bought shortly before the war, was the only thing of some value, which he started to wear, as soon we crossed over to Poland.

Being young and sometimes frivolous, I didn't realize then how much I was hurt by my family and friends, so I even didn't feel sorry for myself and father. The feeling of abandoment came much later, when we finally arrived in Poland.

Leaving Soviet Union was a blessing by itself. Nobody of us realized then how much power Stalin kept in his hands over the entire country. Even Lenin have found out to late that he handed power to a wrong man, but it was already to late, to take this power away from Stalin. His comrades underestimated his genius, and after they put the power in Stalin's hands, he was the only one who realized his genius. Stalin's "we decided" acctualy was"I decided", but allowed all comrades to do the dirty work for him, until the time came to finish them off. He hated the communist party aparatus in Leningrad, because he thought, that sooner or later they will remove him, so he removed them first. There were many Jews among Stalin's early co-workers, many of them members of the ruling"Politbiuro" (central committee), but he hated Jews, because as he said, that the Jews never understood the idea of a leader. They have never learned to submit, and this was their position throughout history, and was their national tragedy. All other nations had submitted to Rome and preserved themselves as nations. The Jews were the only nation that would not submit. Only the Jews had not deified leader, and only the Jewish religion would not permit the personification of God as man. For them there was no such thing as absolute authority, and for that reason they had not been able to maintain their statehood.

According to Stalin, the supreme authority in a state must be personified in the supreme leader. The Jews had argued away their whole history. For them democracy meant the possibility of arguing. They had to,put their own opinion against that of the majority.

Stalin was born Josef Visaryonivich Dzhugashvili to a poor shoemaker and a maid who used to work for the society, in Baku, Gruzya (Georgia). He didn't like his father, but loved his mother. Many people suspected, that, really he was the son of the rich man, his mother used to work for. He was studying in a theological seminary for five years to become a priest before he quit. The education at the seminary had been similar to that of a classical highschool. They studied Latin, Greek, biblical Hebrew, French, English and German. He never managed to cope with foreign languages, yet he learned Russian well. He still had his Georgian accent, and made no effort to loose it. Stalin's first love was Sofya Petrovskaya, a Polish aristocrat who lived in Baku (capital of Georgia). She had liked him, the proletarian underground revolutionary, she had been gentle and sensitive to him, and cared for him. She did not try to foist her ideas on him, and avoided political arguments. Their relationship ended, however, when she died of tuberculosis.

Under Stalin's rule, everybody, marked as "His or state's enemy was tried and convicted by the infamous star-chamber "troika" courts, in which three party and state officials had absolute power over the accused. The courts were the dictator's primary instrument of mass terror during the 1930's and functioned until his death in 1953.

Twenty two years after Soviet revolution in years 1940-1946, the whole country seemed to fall apart. Ofcourse a patriotic war was going on, but according to press reports of 1950's 1960's 1970's and 1980's cities and towns still falling apart, new buildings are shoddily constructed, dim, gloomy. All this suggests, not power but disrepair. It was impossible to find windows to replace broken ones, or concrete that didn't crumble. In old buildings general neglect was apparent. Light fixtures were broken, waste paper accumulated in the stairwells, hand railings were broken from crumbling stairs. There were no slums, yet the courtyards were filled with trash, as they would be communal dumping grounds. There were streets, that looked as if they were lifted from old type albums, doomed streets, sooty and overhung with sagging utility lines, and windows patched with bits of cardboard.

Customers as always had been waiting in long lines in front of food stores. Some of them had come from faraway, where some products were not often available. Inside behind the counter clerks worked, with as much vigor as turtles. It didn't matter what were you buying. A clerk took and order from the customer. Let say for sausages. (The only item on sale). She weighed out the goods. She wraped several whole sausages per customer, and she wrote down the weight and price on a slip of paper. The customer took the slip to the cashier, and waited in another line. The cashier always added up the total on an abacus, took the money and marked the slip "paid". After the customer returned to the original sausage counter, he was forced to wait in another line, while the clerk went about her regular business, wrapping and weighing sausages for other customers, until her attention was attracted by customers waving their stamped receipts.

While all this was going on, two other clerks were standing behind the counter doing nothing, just chatting. They kept always chatting, never stoped and never did any work.

The idle clerks didn't worry, for they were poorly paid, and anyway they knew they cannot be fired. The management didn't care. They knew in adwance that the sausage quota will be sold, according to the plan, and it didn't matter, whether it was sold quickly and efficiently, or sold the way described above, the way it always had been.

Chapter 93

Going Home!

At last time came to leave Vanovskaya, Palasan, Fergana and the whole Soviet Union as well. I secured a permission from the construction to use one of their trucks to travel to our assembly point in Gorchakovo, a station located about twenty five miles from Vanovskaya on the main railroad going from or to Tashkient. With father and myself other families like Papierovich, Kutcher and the Greenberg brothers traveled with us, but Kutcher and Greenbergs paid for the raid. My supervisor Pavlov still tried hard to get me to bring his winter coat from Scherer the tailor, who kept it for couple of years and never returned. And all this just few minutes before our departure. He appealed to my friendship, as they used to say in Russian; "Nye po sluzhbie, letch po druzhbie". (Not as my worker, but as my friend). Ofcourse I didn't go.

Still before we left one of my friendly truck driver's assured me with all the authority he could master, that where I was going, I would never see Poland again. Meaning he was very much sure that we were going back to Siberia. If he only knew how wrong he was.

It was a beautiful May day. After 45 minutes ride we arrived at our assembly point, on a large plaza, just across from the railroad station. Our group was, one of the first there, but soon the place started to fill up with happy people arriving from all directions.

Before we left Vanovskaya I said good-by to all my friends there and coworkers. My friends Presseisen and Vlodavski, were scheduled to leave on the second transport. Also the big wheel from Wilman Polish delegation Fredek Gross said good-by to his mother and sister, because of problems connected 4/74 him marrying a Russian woman. Later he was forced to pay his own way, but at least he traveled on a regular train.

For couple of days trucks kept arriving from all over Fergana district. Soon came uncle Ludwik and other friends from Palasan. Later in the first day Anna and family arrived escorted by a bunch of boyfriends of Frieda and Ela. Everybody was able to find places on the plaza. The departure was scheduled in three days later. Father and I brought some food with us, but not enough for three days. While waiting there we had to furnish our own food. Later during the trip we recived soup, bread and tea from the authorities. With so many people gathered there, it was very hard to buy a loaf of bread even on the black market. We slept at night either sitting or laying on the ground. Leniowers rented a small place outside of a teahouse, where they were able to sleep more comfortable.

Some other people we knew also arrived shortly, like the old Mrs. Fenichel with her last daughter Zhanka. This lady also left her husband and two daughters on an Uzbek cementary. With them also came the Scheinman family, leaving Soviet Union under an assuming name, because of problems, about which I wrote before.

And finally. Guess who came to travel on the same transport? Our big shot friend from Siberia; Grisha Weintraub and part of his family. All ready to leave Soviet Union except the oldest sister, who let her husband and children go. She was just waiting there for her family to leave it all the time in company of NKVD officers.

One day before the departure all us elders have had a meeting with the transport commandant, a retired Red Army colonel. He informed us about all the travel regulations. What a difference from our trip to Siberia. No more NKVD soldiers, no more locked doors. Ofcourse still box cars, but not holes and thick pipes in the floor to serve as restrooms. There were many doctors with the transport, but only one was selected, as an official doctor. As I wrote before, later during the trip I relinquished my elder status to young Kutcher.

Before leaving I once again came across the same driver who told me that I will not see Poland again. And again he repeated his prediction. He probably still thinks, that we perished someplace in Siberia.

With all kind of expectations running high, it seemed that everything was going without a hitch. And it was. Those three days with Anna were the best I had in a long time.

Going Home!

We talked and walked all over this little town, and spent every possible hour together. Also Frieda's and Ela's boyfriends came again from Fregana to say their last good-by's. One of them still was trying to find out where his father was, after NKVD arrested him, when the Polish delegation in Fergana was closed forever.

On May 8 1946, already quite late in the afternoon, an unknown person sent somebody from the railroad station to tell all of us to hurry-up and board the box car train immediatly. It was a big surprise, like anything happening in Soviet Union. It was only one difference this particular surprise was a pleasant one. You should have seen the mass of people grabing their belongings, and running to the train, in a fear that they might be left behind. The train was standing there ready to go. As agreed before at the elders meeting, each group reported in front their numbered cars. (We informed them about those numbers in advance). All car numbers were wtitten down on the platform in front of each car. There was no mess, and no panic, within few minutes in orderly fashion everybody was settled in their assigned cars, and each family choose their places for the long journey, either on the floor, or on the boards fastened to walls on a higher level, similar to those in the cars we occupied on our way to Siberia six years before.

In comparison with the journey to Siberia it was like a freedom ride. People were happy. They ran to toilets on stations, or fields, when the train was resting a little away from the station. As on the previous journey, we always kept our buckets and bags ready, to go after soup, bread and tea, anytime of day or night. Weather permiting, we kept our gates and the small windows below the ceiling all the time open, and communicated freely with Russian people on stations we kept passing, while traveling through the tremendous wastes of Soviet Union.

It was dark already, when the train started to move, to loud hoorays, and cheers of people on it. Few minutes later we stoped on Vanovskaya, which gave me a chance for the last look at this stinky hole. It also made me sad because of another thought that mother was left alone there in the darkness of the Palasan Uzbek cementary. We who spent the past few years there raised a large noise, hoping that some of the people we knew would be there at the station. But nobody answered. We traveled about 30 km, and stoped in Kokand , the place, where Regina Kremnitzer was put in an institution by Dr. Perlberger few years before. Luckily for her, she was able to escape after two days of confinement.

Because of some misunderstandings one family was forced to leave the train and wait in Kokand for the next transport. By coinsidence it was the same family, who traveled with us and uncle Ludwik on the same truck from Aldan in 1941. We came across them again in Displaced Persons camp after the war in Steyr,,Austria.

Everybody made themselves comfortable in the cars. Father and I took a small space on the floor in the middle of the car across from the maingate. Our small suitcase with our "shmates" and small bag of powdered eggs, didn't take to much space. As you already know, the company there wasn't by our desire, but there was nothing we could do about it. The Kutchers (seven people) took the upper place on one side. Papierovich, the man from Lodz who used to work for Batovski took the other up-stairs on the other side. He was traveling with his wife and two children. He was mean to her, and still un-comfortable after he lost a toe to an infection. His operation was painful, and left him kranky. He walked with the help of crutches, and we were forced to help him anytime he decided to come down, or leave the car. The family below Papierovich were the women and children (seven of them). One of them was the wife of the paint mixer from Vanovskaya, who after being drafted, never let know his wife where he was. The rumor was that he derserted, because Soviet authorities didn't have no information about him. One of those women was a nurse. Greenberg brothers and their wives, and a small child took the place below Kutcher. The last one was the Polish shoemaker from Vilna, who was hoping to find his wife, who used to live somewhre in the new Polish terrirories, taken from Germans.

Going Home!

The car wasn't crowded as the car going to Siberia. There were only 26 people in it.Somewhere on this transport was the young girl Palivoda, who few years back sent her younger brother, with Polish Army to Palestine, with the same group my cousins the Goldsteins sent their children from Samarkand.

One or two cars had been taken over by people who considered themselves, above the rest of us. Among them were: Mrs. Mantel and her brother in law Rosenkranz, the Grzybowski family, and the family whose son was the assistant bookkeeper at the old refinery. Mrs. Gross and her daughter tagged along, with other few families.

The attitude of all the people was rather pleasant. From time to time some arguments took place, but nothing important. After all we were on our way, going home. Many of us thought, that home would be the same as seven years ago, before the war.

I spent most of my time with Anna in her car. Couple of times, returning late in the evenings to my car I almost missed my jump to reach the inside. Once I finished-up on a platform in the back of the car. With less luck I could have missed it at all and be left behind. I spent most of the night on that platform, until next stop came along. Our moods changed all the time. sometimes we were subdued, on another occasions we joked, sang songs, watched the landscape and countryside, and poor living conditions of the villagers. I personally didn't give a hoot about what lies ahead. Father and I didn't have nothing, and we were going to nothing. I didn't have any illusions about the future. I knew for sure , that the going will be tough. The change in the lifestyle from Soviet ways to the previous lifestyle was the farthest from my mind. I got used to the ways that government was giving everything, and was able to take it away, and as far as I was concerned, there wasn't any other way. So riding the train was like being home and for time being I didn't worry what future will bring.

The first major stop after leaving Fergana, Was Ursatelskaya, a major railroad crossing in Uzbekistan, the same one where I almost missed my connections on the way from Bukhara to Vanonskaya, back in 1942. Early morning stops, were the funniest ones, when people from all the cars raced each other to reach toilets first. Another race was to beat the clock while feeling up the cans with hot water for early morning tea. On other longer stops, people with money or goods to trade mixed with local folks, to trade, swap, buy or sell.

After two or three days of traveling we arrived in Tahkent. The picture of outdoor waiting room "Zaal 3" was still vivid in my memory. Also the non stoping hunt for bread, washing-up in the canal, and the the endless lines in front of toilets. All this and waiting for Anna to arrive from Siberia, in autum of 1941.

My mind was racing back to the time when mother and I found our cousins, the Foersters and their young baby and aunt Dina.Then the few weeks with them in Bukhara and their moving to Tchardjou, and finally the tragic news about Lusia's death.

Not far from Tahkent our transport crossed into Kazakhstan. The way was different from the one we came from Siberia. On our way home after leaving Tashkent we traveled in north-WEST direction. It was spring and at first everything was beautiful. Going farther northwest the landscape changed to so-called Kazakh Steppe. Nothing but grassy terrain with huts made from clay. After leaving the Steppe we finally reached the industrial part of Kazakhstan, we were coming closer to Ural Mountains (southern part) and European part of Soviet Union. On one of the stations we noticed a group of Polish Jews stranded, because couple of cars from their transport broke down. Russians took those cars out ot the transport with people in them in order to repair them, instead of replacing them. And we knew very good how long took to repair anything in Soviet Union. We could only feel for these people. Who knows how long they were stuck at this small station.

Going Home!

Stop at Uralsk, a city at the southern edge of Ural Mountains, made us realise, that we were in Europe again. Still traveling north- west we were heading toward Saratov an old Russian city, with an important railroad center and large industry (coal and iron) which expanded considerably under Soviet rule. Not to far south from Saratov is proudly standing on both banks of Volga River Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) where a decisive battle of world war two between Red Army and Germans was fought, a first step as far as Russians were concerned, which led to defeat of Germany. Not many more miles to the south Volga River fall into Sea of Azov, which in turn merges with Caspian Sea at the Crimea.

Saratov was also the city, where many of our friends from Siberia later were resettled, when it became obvious, that Polish citizens would go back to Poland. This resettlement was accomplished without any cost to our people. If we wouldn't be so anxioud to leave Siberia, we probably would be much better off, healthwise, maybe financialy, and would save us lots of aggravations, and who knows, maybe mother would go home with us.

I think that we spent in Saratov more then one day. To his big surprise uncle Ludwik ran there into a good friend and business associate from Cracow. Acctualy the man was from Silesia, but uncle's good customer. He made an impression like a well to do person. Uncle and him hugged each other warmly. It was a cool and windy day in Saratov, and uncle Ludwik didn't wear his hat. I guess this man assumed that uncle Ludwik don't own a hat, so showing off his concern or affection took off his large cap off his head and put it on uncle's head. Really uncle Ludwik needed this cap like a hole in the head, and besides looking ridiculous, because the cap was large enough to cover two uncle's heads.

Everybody tried hard to be relaxed. On some occasions people got ill and the transport doctor tried to help as much as he could. Once at night father came up with terrific pains in his stomach. We couldn't summon the doctor because the transport traveled with full speed for a long time. Luckily the lady nurse in our car, gave him a right pill, which stopped the pain.

During some quiet moments the shoemaker from Vilna used tell us stories from his youth, when he spent some years working in French coal mines. Many Poles of that era left their homeland to make some money elsewhere. His favorite story was, about him not knowing French, and his friends sending him to the nearby grocery store to buy food. Instead to teach him French, they taught him some dirty words. The incident was amusing to the storekeeper, becuse it wasn't first time that things like that used to happen to a young greenhorn.

The speculator Kutcher pulled two fast ones on people. First he collected some money on the pretence to help out the poor shoemaker, because he was hungry. Really he gave him only some of the money, and kept rest for himself.

On another occasion the same Kutcher told us a story, that somebody told him, that was something wrong with our transport, and that there was a possibility of puting us on a sidetrack in order to inspect the cars. He wanted money from people so he could bribe the inspectors. Ofcourse the story was just a hoax. There was nothing wrong with the transport, but I am not certain if somebody gave Kutcher any money.

In second half of May, we finally crossed into Ukraine. From then on was just straight west toward former pre-war Soviet-Polish border. As before, most of the time our transport moved rather slow. Many battles had been fought on Ukrainian territory during the war, and many Ukrainian collaborated with Germany, hoping that they would finally gain their independent state. Many of them helped German to kill Jews, and their own fellow Ukrainians as well. The destruction of war was visible all over the place. Buildings in ruins, along the railways rusted cannons, tanks, railroad cars, military vehicles, and other weapons, and lots of graves in empty fields. Ukraine's land was and is very fertile and produced bread for most of the Soviet Union. The first after war crop was expected soon, and we could see from the train fields with wheat and other crops emerging.

Their cities and villages in ruins, shortage of food, forced hundreds of thousands Ukrainians, all dressed up in their national clothing to travel elsewhere to buy some grain or other food. Peasants from all parts of Ukraine practically have had taken over all small and large railroad stations waiting for a chance to get on trains going west to Western Ukrainexx (former Polish territory) where more food was available. They traveled on passanger trains, fright transports, taking over to capacity insides, outside platforms, and roofs, without any interference from NKVD, militia and railroad authorities, who even helped them to find space. They also swarmed all over our train, but only on roofs and platforms.

We spent long hours in cities like Kharkov, Poltava and Kiev. We recived our food there, and buying and selling was going on with a full force. Uncle Ludwik came around with some man, who wanted to sell his watch, and wanted to know if I would consider to buy this watch. He probably thought that I was carrying lots of money with me. Oh boy! How mistaken he was. I wished then, that I would be able to effort to buy this watch.

On small stations outside towns or villages , when people were preparing their food, or did some washing, grandma Frances cooked for us our powdered eggs, and on one occasion even washed our clothing, which was very nice of her, and for which father and I were extrimly grateful.

There was a real celebration on the train, when we crossed the River Zbrucz, on former Polish-Soviet border., only few kilometers away from Zbaraz, my parents hometown. My heart was beating faster, thinking not only about my mother, but also about all these people young and old who perished there. I even wouldn't mind, if the train would pass through there, so we xxxx could see the mass grave, where all Jews of Zbaraz were burried, after digging the large hole with their own hands, including members of our own family.

All this was a wishful thinking. Before arriving in Tarnopol early in the morning, we passed through the small town, which was an assembly point for all of us before being taken to Siberia in 1940. All those places around seemed familiar. I only imagened how my father felt. After all those places were part of his birth, childhood and growing up. All I know for sure, that my mother would be very happy if she would be there.

And again the station in Tarnopol was full of those Ukrainian peasants, waiting for trains to take them back home, Our stop in Tarnopol was short. Before we knew we were heading toward Lvov. Half way between Tarnopol and Lvov, there was a small town Zloczow, only few kilometers away from Gliniany, the place from where Leniowers and their friends were taken to Siberia. I don't think, that any memory about that part of Former Poland will ever fade away from my mind.

Early afternoon the same day we arrived in Lvov, before the war, the third largest city in Poland. They put our transport on side tracks, faraway from the main station. We thought we would be there for a while, so group of us decided to go for some sightseeing. We came to the main station, which was partialy destroyed and looked like a graveyard. Everything around was boarded up, and so the large plaza in front of the station. There were only couple of trains on tracks, and few military personel. What a different view from the time, when I saw it last time in September 1939. The tunel where we waited for cars to take us to Zbaraz on that sunny September day was completely destroyed, only pieces of broken concrete were still visible.

On the plaza in front of the station, behind those boards buildigs laid destroyed. There were hardly any people around, and no traffic at all. Another ghosttown. And the glory of the pre-war era gone forever.

But suddenly! Keeping in mind that xxxx life in Soviet Union was one paradox after another, in the middle of this emptyness a winestand appears. Yes! a man was selling wine by drink, to few drunk customers around him, singing. One of those drunks even made some derogatory remarks about Jews, to which one of our men, told him to keep quiet, because the old Polish past was long gone, and that nobody mess with Jews anymore.

To make us feel better we also tried some of this bad tasting wine, and after one more glance at the sorry landscape of the area we headed back to our transport.

On the way we came across another large transport of Red Army soldiers going back home from Poland. We stopped for few minutes to converse with them, and to ask about life in Poland. One of them was a Pole in Red Army uniform, but he choose to keep his mouth shut.

In meantime Anna, Frieda and Ela went sightseeing, but in different direction. Not knowing the area they and their friend Basia Grzybowski, and other girls ventured further away from the train. They found themselves someplace on streets of the city of Lvov. At the transport the time was running short. Grandma Frances and grandpa Abraham started to worry about them, thinhing, that they might miss the almost ready to leave train.

Somewhere in Lvov those girls got worried also. Luckily a passing by truck driver agreed to take them to the train. Ofcourse they paid him for the favor.

We left Lvov heading for Przemysl, and the post-war border between Soviet Union and Poland. Even thou we still traveled on Soviet territory, but really this was former Polish land, and farmers at that time still cultivated their own fields. Soviet style colletivization still didn't reach them, and everybody, even a person without knowledge of agriculture could see the difference in tender loving care farming in those parts of the Ukraine in comparison to the shabby collective farming, farther east where collective farmers simply didn't care.

We also passed some previous suburbs of Lvov, still with their nice and lovely homes where before the war many people working in Lvov used to live. The charm was still present, but homes probably were taken over by Soviet dignitaries who came from Deep Soviet Union, to replace the defeated Nazi dignitaries.

The notion of seeing the new post-war Poland, became more urgent,, and thoughts, about what will be like there kept creeping into our minds. Before crossing the border River San, Soviet border guards entered our train, car after car, asking us all kind of questions. The speculator Kutcher was most scared, becuse of the forbiden merchandise he carried with him, and in case of a search he would be in much trouble. But the Soviet guards didn't search anybody. Kutcher was off the hook, and the Russians just cut off the Russian language side of our blue documents. Together with the border guards the Soviet major (commandant of the transport) said good-by and left also. In Przemysl, the city on the Polish side of the border, representatives of the Polish Repartriation Commission took over, and guided us , until we reached our final destination.

While the train was standing on side tracks, Polish farmers working nearby were really friendly. Some of them even asked some questions and wanted to know, how come it took us so long to come back. Some railroad workers came around and wanted to buy things. They wanted Soviet made cigaretts. On leaving Soviet Union, nobody suspected that Soviet cigaretts would be in demand in Poland. If we only knew, we would bring with us hunderds or much more packages.

Soon after the train was moved closer to a Polish administration building and left there alone, until we got registered again and taken to a small office to exchange our Soviet rubles for Polish zlotys. The official exchange rate was one ruble for one zloty. People with lots rubles made just token exchanges, because they knew that on black market the rate was much higher, and could effort to to hold on to their rubles little longer. Father and I couldn't wait. We owned maybe 1500 rubles and needed money to live on for the rest of the journey.

The real shock of Polish reality came the same day in the evening. Never mind the friendly reception by the working farmers. With night approaching, two railroad officials, recommended, that would be wiser for us to leave the place immediatly, because in nearby forest anti-government forces were hiding.

Going Home!

During the war two factions of Polish resistance fought Germans in cities and as partizan units attacking the enemy from forests and close guarded countryside. One of those two groups was the so-called "Land Army" supported by the Polish government in exile in London, and the other was the "Peoples Army" getting their support from Soviet Union. The Peoples Army disbanded after the liberation, but some units of the Land Army opposed the Soviet Union, and the new Polish government created with Soviet support. The feeling among Jews was that the Land Army was against Jews and on many occasions cooperated with the Nazis, by pointing out to them Jewish hiding places.

Some units of this Land Army remained in forests after the war, attacking Polish and Soviet security forces, but also trains with refugees returning to Poland from Soviet Union, meaning mostly Jews, looking for their money and valuables. In many cases those soldiers wearing crosses and doing their fighting in the name of Christ used take those Jews off the trains as prisoners, sometimes beating them up or even killing them in some instances.

The news was upseting, we not only decided, but demanded to leave this place at once. Riding all night without problems, next morning we arrived in Rzeszow. Another memory came to my mind back from September 1939, when we traveled from Cracow to Zbaraz, escaping from Germans. We spent there all night long, watching trains loaded with Polish soldiers go through to face the mighty German army in a lost cause. I also couldn't forget couple of guys walking around with small flashlights looking for spies. That was also the same Rzeszow, where aunt Mala, went to town to buy some food for us, because she wasn't able to convince us young people to do so. I guess aunt Rose remembered all this, because she sent out uncle Ludwik to go to the station and buy her a good old-fashioned Polish breakfest.

Next stop on our journey west was Dembica, a very important railroad station with crossroads in all directions. We always used to change trains when we traveled to Tarnobrzeg. Next was Tarnow, the city with so many memories for grandma Frances and the girls, and Tuchow their hometown was just around the corner 20 minutes train ride from Tarnow.

Part of Tarnow railroad station was still destroyed as a result of German bomb put there two weeks before the war. Our train have parked right in the front of the main building on track No.1. I remember very well. It was Saturday morning, and couple of well dressed Jewish men have walked there. Grandma Frances approached them, hoping they would be able to tell her something about her relatives and friends. As it turned out those men were newcomers to Tarnow, and didn't know nothing about the past.

Anna and I left the station just to look around. We just walked few times around the plaza in front of the station and then went back to the train. I am quite sure that grandma would be pleased for an opportunity to see Tuchow, which at that particular moment was so close, but yet faraway.

For me waiting at the Tarnow station was a very anxious time. In no more then couple of hours, our train would enter, the old majestic main railroad station in Cracow. Being in Tarnow, was like being in Cracow already, because before the war Tarnow was the second largest city of Cracow Province. Nowaday Tarnow is a provincial city by itself. After seven years of absence all kind of feelings overhelmed me. I would gladly leave the train there so I could see this old historic city, place of my birth again. Then another thought came to my mind. Why would I want to go there? Actually was nobody there to find. It was so sad. The family. Our large family wasn't there anymore.

Before arriving in Cracow we passed through a small town of Bochnia. The place where we left our train in a hurry shortly after leaving Cracow in 1939, because of heavy bombardment by German Air Force. The memory of pushing aunt Rose back into the moving train, and carrying her mother Mrs. Zimetbaum, so we wouldn't miss the train was still in my mind. Few minutes later our transport stopped in Plaszow, a suburb of Cracow, where during German occupation a concentration camp was located, where after liquidation of Cracow ghetto many Jews got killed on a famous hill called "Huyova Gurka" (~~man's organ~~ PENIS hill).

Why this small hill was named after a male's organ I never knew, but I know for sure that at least two members of our family lost their lives there, after an incredable experience in an old prison in Cracow bilt way back in Austrian times before world war one, in a cell full of lice.

Also at Plaszow station my father came across a driver of horses driven wagens who used to work for my fathers company, directly under my father.

But the biggest surprise of the journey home, came, when I spotted uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and Heniek quietly leaving the transport. It was obvious, that their plan was to leave, without telling father and me about it. Even without saying good-by. We also didn't know that long before arrangements have been made for us leaving Soviet Union, uncle Ludwik got for himself and his family an invitation to come and stay with aunt Mala and her new husband Korngold in aunt Mala's old apartment in Cracow. At least they could tell us about it. I wouldn't go with them anyway. I couldn't help to feel sorry for father and myself. It was clear then, but I still didn't realize, that uncle Ludwik, simply didn't want to associate with us anymore. NOTHING

Besides me wanting to be together with Anna, there was for us left in Cracow. There was also a possibility for father and me to get some help from Jewish committee, but the idea didn't occur to us then

Slowly but sure our train was entering the city of Cravow. Through the open gate I saw some of the old streets, landmarks, towers of churches and monuments in memory of former Polish heros, like Josef Pilsudski, Queen Wanda, and King Krak, who according to an legend were the founders of Cracow.

At the main station my first impression was, that the place didn't loose it's pre-war splendour. Trains kept coming and going as always. The difference was in shortage of passenger cars, and people have traveled in converted box cars. Our transport stood on the main track, so I had some opportunity to reminiscen while walking around. For one short moment people made a circle and gazed at an Uzbek, Red Army soldier from Alti-Arik who recognized the Zelichowski boy, and started to chat with him in his native Uzbek language. It was kind of sensation for some young Poles, who admired Zelichowski's knowledge of this oriental language.

After couple of hours in Cracow, time came to leave again. It was clear then to everybody, that our final destination was either western Silesia, or Pomerania, inherited by Poles from Germany after the war to compensate for the lost territory in the east.

Because I still wanted to see some of Cracow, I took a place on a back platform of our car. From there I was admiring the western part of the city. Far away on the horizon I even was able to see the apartment building, where we used to live before the war.

I stood there all the time until we came to the old Polish part of Silesia. First was Sosnowiec, the hometown of Mrs. Marmur, and then capital of Silesia Katowice. In both cities our transport was greeted by Jewish boys and girls, who used to be members of kibutzim located there. Their main purpuse was, to recrut new members to organize them for the anticipated possible emigration to then Palestine. Not until later we found out about the gigiantic effort of the Jewish Agency for Palestine to take out all Jews from Poland and resettle them in Palestine in anticipation of creation of and independent Jewish state there.

Those young men and women at the stations, had one thing in mind, to get as many young people as possible to join them. From then on this procedure was repeated on all large stops. I think you are aware of all those Jewish political parties, large or small. Each one of those parties had kibutzim all over Poland.

Back in Katowice two young women left the transport and joined those kibutzim. One was Regina Kremnitzer, and the other was Paliwoda who already sent her younger brother to Palestine. Both wanted to go to a kibutz, but weren't able to make up their minds. Finally, thanks to urging by the kibutznikis, and good advise by Frieda, Anna and Ela, they decided to join.

Uncle Ludwik and family left the train in Plaszow, followed at the Cracow station by Eda Rosenzwieg, who left her boyfriend Nisonovich behind to join her former friend Dr. Perlberger already in Cracow. The third couple to leave was Israel Suedwerts and his mother for a very happy reunion with Mrs. Suedwerts daughter, who with her husband whom she married during the war survived in hiding.

From Katowice in Silesia we went farther west to Bytom, a city divided between Germany and Poland before the war. After the war the united Bytom, was a city where all Poles who used to live in Lvov before the war, choose as theirs hometown.

Moving along we found ourselves in former German territory, annexed by Poland. Even thou one year passed, this part of Silesia still have preserved its German character. The German neatness was visible in cities, towns and villages. Traveling slightly north-west we reached a large industrial city Opel (Opole in Polish). Before the war Germans manufactured there famous all-over Europe cars, also named "Opel". The wide Russian railroad tracks ended there, replaced by the narrow ones used all over Europe. The Repartriation Committee transfered all of us to small Polish box cars for the rest of the journey.

Many people left the transport in Opole, including the Tepper family from Fergana (Leniowers friends), and the Weintraubs. A young man from kibutz, came to the train, and fell in love with Etka Weintraub (Grisha's sister), the minute he saw her for the first time. Adventually they married, and father of Etka, the old man Weintraub performed the wedding ceremony. It seems that a real Rabbi wasn't available.

Watching the countryside it was clear that times and life in Poland as such were still complicated. As in the south of Poland the anti-government forces similar to those near Przemysl threatened the new settlers in the new territories. The population was scared. The main targets were politicians who kept reciving anonymous death sentences, because they cooperated with communist authorities. The travelers had been robed all the time, and snipers kept killing strangers on the roads. People used to read in papers horror stories, about selections, like in concentration camps. Killing and kidnaping were common, and not just Jews felt the danger. Poles were affected as well.

Replacing the German population who was leaving in masses for their new homes in West Germany, were Poles from the east (Ukraine, White Russia, and former Polish Lithuania) who came mostly by rail transports similar to ours. Each one of them wanted to be first, especially farmers, who wanted to grab best land available, like early settlers in America during the land rush. It took a long time for the situation to stabilize, before Polish authorities were able to destroy so-called "Wehrwolf" band and other treasure hunters, who raided the villages right after the previous German owners departed, or attacked new settlers destroying all their property, brought with such difficulty from their former places.

Before uncle Ludwik left the train he informed me, that my uncle Salo from Gliniany survived the war and was living in Warsaw, working for the Jewish Committee there on the reaserch of history of the Warsaw Jewry. As you already know his son Tolo lost his life in the Warsaw uprising in 1944, Uncle Salo himself narrowly escaped death, when two Polish young men recognized him on a streetcar as a Jew, and kept following him, hoping to turn him in to Gestapo. Uncle walking in circles real fast was able to loose them. His wife aunt Dina came back from Soviet Union minus her daughter Lusia, who passed away in Tcharjou. Another case of parents surviving the war, but loosing their children. With aunt Dina returned Lusia's husband Dr. Foerster with his young son George. While in Opole I wrote uncle Salo about father's and mine situation hoping for some finacial help, on account him working for the Jewish Committee. He never answered, but couple of months later when I saw him in Cracow he explained to me that he was to poor himself, but if he could he would. Evidently he couldn't.

Wroclaw, former German Breslau, was our next large city claimed by Poland after the war. Poles from the east and many refugees from Soviet Union settled there. Wroclaw was another of those stops where people left the transport and made arrangements to travel to other places of their choosing.

Among them was Mr. Grzybowski, who put together a large group of people, who wanted travel to Lodz. There was no problem for Mr. Grzybowski to get a car attached to a train going to Lodz. Papierowich the man without one toe, from our car, took his family and went with Grzybowski. I think Lodz was his native city. Before they left Anna, Frieda and Ela said good-by to their friend Basia for the last time.

Traveling after leaving Wroclaw all the time north at a rather slow pace, we came to an ancient Polish city of Poznan. Although Poznan was part of Poland before the war, Germans always claimed this city as their own, and other parts as well of former Polish territory. Ofcourse their wish came through after the victory over Poland in 1939, and then Polish Poznan, became German Posen. After the war Posen became Poznan again. This large western city was according to Catholic church a cradle of Polish Christianity and few other cities and towns of this area among them Gniezno. No wonder that before world war two this part of the country was considered more anti-Semitic then the rest of Poland.

Poznan was a standard stop for all trains coming from Soviet Union. The authorities put the transport on side tracks, away from the main station, next to a reception center, with a dining room and a storage full with all kinds of clothing. I think that we ate a soup there, but we didn't get any clothing. I stood there for most of the day for nothing. I saw some people coming out with dresses, shirts, shoes and slacks. They were all Poles. Anna, Frieda and Ela also got some nice dresses, because of their blond hair and light complection, those Polish "mahers" thought, that they were Polish too. Our poor shoemaker from Vilna, who used to live in Alti-Arik got help there. The committee gave him new clothing, food, money, and most important they told him about whereabouts of his wife. Few days later he left the train to catch another one, which took him to a small town of Szczecinek, at the mouth, where River Oder was entering the Baltic Sea, the place, where his wife was living.

Waiting in Poznan, was also lucky for some people who carried lots of Rubles. Transports with Red Army soldiers going back to Soviet Union stopped there next to our train. These people mostly officers asked for rubles, so our people obliged them. Many of them including uncle Eisen got an opportunity to get rid of their rubles in exchange for Polish currency, for a much better rate, then one ruble for one zloty,

Poznan was our last important stop, before reaching our final destination. At last we were told, that our final stop will be Stettin on the Baltic Sea. Stettin was located in German Pomerania, also annexed by Poland after the war. Polish name of Stettin is Szczecin, and the German territory of Pomerania is called in Polish "Pomorze". In peacetime Stettin was beautiful, typical German city, but when we arrived there it was more then 50% destroyed by Allied bombing.

To get to Szczecin the train crossed a temporary wooden bridge over the River Oder, which replaced the one destroyed by the retreating German army. The river was flowing, way down below, and the river banks used to be on the high ground. Trains moved very slow, while crossing this bridge, like inch by inch. It was scary just to look down, and think, how would it be in case of a disaster, and yet this was the only railroad bridge available to reach Szczecin.

After the crossing, the train finally stopped on side tracks away from the city. To our surprice couple of young men, who left us in Wroclaw to travel with Grzybowski, found us again. Evidently during those few days they weren't able to find nobody from their relatives and decided to join the transport hoping for some benefits, which never came.

The following morning we moved closer to the city. And again members of the Polish Repartriation Committee came to see us in order to give us some information about Szczecin, and what to expect. We registered for God only knows, how many times, adding to this impressive number one more registration. The people from this committee told us, how much Szczecin was destroyed, and how desperate was the job situation, and that was almost impossible to find a half decent apartment. They concluded that in case we need help to come and visit the offices of the Repartriation Commission. In other words, they could save us time with one sentence; "From now on, you are on your own".

There was no use to wait any longer. Quickly the cars, our home for a month started to empty. There was a long walk from the side tracks to the city. First just "delegates" from each family, went to look around. Some of them returned with good news. They have found relatives, friends, and some got lucky and came across some pretty good rooms in half bombed out buildings. Many people us including, spent the last night on the train. The real hunting had begun in the morning.

For myself the key words were "on your own". The thought to run around a strange city, without money, decent clothing, kind of shook me up a little. Maybe not just little. Probably alot. We both father and I weren't prepared for all this. It never crossed my mind that we wouldn't be offered some kind of accommodation by the authorities. I was expecting the continuation of Soviet ways at least for a while. Actually I never was on my own before. First I was with my parents. Even later during the war in Zbaraz, Siberia and Uzbekistan the meaning of "my own" never ment anything. As long as mother was alive I never was alone. After her death, in a way I was for the first time on my own. Then at least I didn't have to start a new life. I had a place to sleep, I had a job, food and whatever Soviet government provided for me and my father. We didn't own nothing and we didn't worry about. Yes! I wanted to live better, but I didn't try hard enough. I didn't want to be involved, and to risk my health and life. As far as my father was concerned I think, he lost his will to do anything after mother passed away. He wore this beard for many months, and didn't shaved off until we reached Poland.

So this was our "Going Home" and at last our "Coming Home". It didn't look at all the way I imagened. Maybe I if I would be in Cracow, so I thought it would be different. But as I look back at those days I don't think so. My mother's side of the family abandoned us, which was a shock, which didn't register in my mind in those days. I was then still light-minded, like a spoiled little boy.

Despite all those misfortunes I had, thanks God at that time a great friend on my side, who didn't abandon me and my father. My friends took the separation from the train much better. Leniowers, Marmurs and Schnalls, went apartment hunting rightaway. Ofcourse girls helped the most. I was concerned about being left alone. I felt ashamed about my un-activity. Still my dearest Anna didn't leave us, and told us to join them. I thought then, that she really loved me, and for the first time, a feeling of relief of not being left alone, came all over me.

I think that this day in Szczecin was a breaking point in my life with Anna. I feel that our fate to be together forever have been sealed right there next to this empty train. Since then with few minor exceptions, we never separated again. I cherish my life with Anna tremendously, and if it wouldn't be for her I am not sure I would never be able to pick-up myself from the mess I was in then. Whatever I am now, and whatever we have together is thanks to my dear Anna. None of it would be accomplished if not for her.

Part IV

Chapter 94

Stettin (Szczecin)!

Stettin (Szczecin) is a seaport city north-east from Berlin on the west bank of the Oder-River few kilometers away from Baltic Sea. It is an industrial and ship-building center. By the Potsdam agreement of 1945, the eastern part of the German province of Pomerania, of which Stettin was the capital, was transfered to Polish adminstration. Poland renamed the city to Szczecin, and made to a capital of the Polish province of Szczecin.

Many centuries ago Stettin (Szczecin) was an important member of the Hanseatic League. From 1648-1720 it was a part of Sweden, except of short time in 1678, when it was a part of Brandenburg. The city was under French administration from 1806-1813. Sometimes along all these years Stettin probably was part of Poland, even thou todays encyclopedias don't mention it, but this was always my impression, because, that was what they taugh us in our history lessons in elementary schools and gimnaziums.

During world war two Stettin was damaged by heavy bombings, by the Allies. Szczecin's population now-a-day would be circa 200,000.

When we arrived, there still were many German families in the city. Little by little they kept leaving the city. Heavy contingent of Red Army troops, kept watching, so so there wouldn't be any disturbances against Soviet authority, but their command on another hand restricted them to their quarters in order not to antagonize the Polish population. Small Soviet patrols patroled the city, and Soviet soldiers on leaves, escorted German girls. A polish girl wouldn't go out with a Russian soldier for nothing in the world.

First time in the city Anna and the girls, thought that they found a nice apartment on rather good looking street in a white painted building. We rushed back and forth few times in order to transfer our belongings, and all this on foot quite away from the city. Along the route we passed trains with German families leaving Szczecin. What an irony it was! Them leaving, and us Jews coming to take their places. Two years earlier none of them would never imagene such reversed development.

Needless to say our speed didn't do us any good. The apartment already belonged to somebody else, who came just in time. Few minutes later we probably would have a fight with so-called rightful owners. It was very late in the afternoon, and if we wouldn't find something we would be forced to sleep outside or in some hall.

Not faraway was just developed the new Szczecin's Jewish district, and before got real dark we came across, so we thought on a bombed partialy out an un-occupied building. First and second floor seemed empty and liveable. Third and fourth floor were a disaster area. We took over the apartment on the first floor to find out later in the morning that another Jewish family was living on second floor, closer to heaven. It used to rain every day in Szczecin, because of the nearby sea, and each new rainfall brought that Jewish family upstairs closer to the "Almighty" So they used to say.

This apartment had a hall, two rooms, a kitchen, and bathroom in outer hall. Another room was also available, but it was full of junk and debris. We thought, that father and I could clean it up nad move in adventually. Leniowers, Schnalls and Marmurs split the apartment among themselves, at least for time being. Uncle Eisen was there also, and the old Mrs. Fenichel with her daughter & Zhanka also tagged along. Father and I slept in the kitchen. We had to be up early each morning, because the other people needed the kitchem to prepare breakfest and other meals for the day.

Ofcourse the apartment was completely empty. Just bare walls, no furniture. The following morning all of us young men went on town to find some chairs and s, and maybe beds. We concentrated on destroyed buildings, and checked he debris around. Who knew, what would happen, maybe we would be lucky iscover some burried treasure. There was in Szczecin a strickt ordinance to touch anything in damaged buildings. We could be caught and put in jail.

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But in our situation, who cared about city ordinances. We needed furniture, so we kept looking. Scaning through streets with wiped out buildings we finally found couple of Tables and chairs. No hiden treasures. But we didn't find any beds. We didn't have choices, so we slept on the floors.

Thinking of miracles, I noticed a wall in one of the rooms, patched up with a coat of cement. When knocked at the wall gave out a hard sound, like filled up with something, which in comparison with other walls who on knocking gave out a hollow sound. I tried to convince people to tear down this wall, hoping to find there something valuable, but nobody wanted to listen.

Next step was to look over the neighbourhood. My father went out and found few blocks away the building, where Jewish Committee was located. It was an area full of Jews. The building was an impressive structure just across the street from a nice park with sport facilities. Grandpa Abraham, Marmur and Schnalls also went on Town to look around. Everybody returned without any special discoveries, except the Schnalls, who found in Szczecin some very close members of their family, who also survived in Soviet Union.

There always was a large crowd inside and outside the committee building. the committee have been ran by members (representatives) Of all Jewish parties; Socialists and Communists included. In charge was the chairman of the committee, and responsible to him chairmen of many departments. All of them bunch of crooks who most of the time had their own interests in mind. It was the same old story as throughout the war years. The masses were neglected, poor and starved, while their leaders always good dressed, fed and leaving in nice quarters.

As on previous occasions we registered, so as the leaders of the committee explained they could help us in any way possible. Their primary duty was to give us a start. To give us some money, food and clothing, and assistance in finding a job.

Needless to say all this was just a farce. Maybe people who arrived earlier, before us, got some help, but not us. No matter to what department I came asking for assistance; The answer was the same: "No help available, at this time".

This was a continuation of an era of rule by a committee, similar to ways introduced by the communist party in Soviet Union. Before the war Jewish affairs in large communities and small as well used to be handled by "Kehilas" (Zhidovska Gmina Wyznaniowa) or translated to English: "Jewish Religious Municipality"; changed during German occupation to so-called "Judenrats".

The men at the helm of the Jewish committee ordinary were the biggest crooks. To make themselves more popular they declared working people (as in Soviet Union) having a priority in reciving all those gifts from America. They gave me a referal with a recommendation to the Union of Bakery Workers. There was a clerk's job available in their headquarters. Before I went there I asked for some decent clothing, so I could make a good first impression, but the man in charge told me, that I will get my clothing after I will be hired.

At the bakers union I filled out an application, I also on their request typed right there my whole autobiography. The manager told me to come back in few days. I guess from my biography, they came to the conclusion that I was Jewish, even thou they liked my crudentials, the manager informed me that the person who hold the job before returned to work. So my first try ended without a job, and new clothing.

In meantime people with money opened shops in and outside the building, and in surrounding areas, as they said to serve the public. In those days free enterprize was not forbidden by the authorities. There were tailors, barbers, shoemakers and other profesions making living the best way they could. The best deal had the black marketeers. Their business flourished, and with money you could get there, everything your soul desired from a pair of cheap socks to gold and American dollars.

On a more funny side, barbers had the worst go, because most of them used to cut hair outside, and when it rained, they and their customers ran for cover. cover

Chapter 94 (cont)

Szczecin!

Father and I tried to do our best to stretch out our last 1000.00 Polish zlotys. It wasn't much by after war standards. All we could effort to live on was just bread, little butter, onions and tea. Sometimes Leniowers shared their meals with us. My letters for help to my uncle Salo remained unanswered.

Szczecin even destroyed by bombs was still a beautiful city, and many parts were untouched by destruction. For first time in so many years I enjoyed walking on real streets with sidewalks and paved roads. War was only one year gone, but life steadily kept improving. In those days Poland wasn't yet ruled by one party (communist) and capitalist tendencies persisted. I envied the people dressed up, their eating habits in nice restaurants, going to the movies and theaters and shopping in elegant stores stocked-up with all kind merchandise. I felt terrible in my Soviet rags, and just looking at my father made me sick.

Twice in Soviet Union we purchased war bonds, because our employers, which actually was the Soviet government and the party insisted, telling us to help the war effort, and to destroy the enemy. Before we left the branch of the Soviet National Bank assured us, that those bonds would be paid off by the Polish National Bank as per agreement between the two governments. It was another lie on the part of Soviet authorities. The National Bank in Szczecin informed us, that there was not such an agreement between Poland and Soviet Union. Many other people before us came there to collect their money, but to no avail, because such bonds didn't have any value in Poland at all. So another few thousand rubles of our sweat went down the drain because of Soviet trickery.

Many port cities around the world getting bigger share of rain, then inland cities, and Szczecin wasn't different. It was raining there almost every day. Lots of times rains came accompanied with severe thunderstorms. On days like that we felt that the half destroyed buildings might fall apart with each thunder. Nights used to be even worse, because of echos combined with thunders made it even more scary, and rain waters coming through the ceiling kept adding to the frustration. The good part was that those rains never lasted to long, and after they stopped soon enough we had plenty of sunshine.

Shortly after coming to Szczecin we ran into two Mastbaum sisters who used to be with us at the settlement in Otkritiy. With them in Szczecin was also their other sister Mrs. Litwak with her daughter Anna. The one who so mysteriously took away from Frieda her job as "tabelshchik" (timekeeper). This was the same Anna who carried on with our settlement doctor Ettinger, who adventually dumped her after arrival in Poland. They all were good off, settled in nice apartment with many privileges, because their brother Marcel Mastbaum, the laughing stock of the settlement got lucky despite all the difficulties while all of us were rejected, he was drafted into the Polish army and finished the campaign with a rank of lieutenant.

Marcel Mastbaum was stationed in Warsaw, but used to come to Szczecin often, to visit his mother. Old Mrs. Mastbaum survived the Siberian ordeal and Uzbekistan, even thou doctors predicted that she wouldn't last to long. Mastbaum visited us in our broken down apartment. I could see his face with "I am sorry for you expresion", meaning: "Look at me now! I made it. But what about you". Such were ironies of life in those days. On his chest he proudly displayed a medal. When I asked him, what the medal was for? I thought that he was wounded in battle. Mastbaum hesitated for a split of second and told me that he fell off a wagen, shortly before Polish troops entered Warsaw.Being clumsy as always before, he broke his arm, but clumsiness paid off for him, in a most unusual place: During the battle of Warsaw.

Mastbaum's niece Anna Litwak visited with Leniowers on few occasions and wanted to be friendly with girls again.

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Marcel Mastbaum was always fond of Anna, because she defended him, anytime some smart alec tried to intimidate him because of his inability to perform the hard physical work. Who knows maybe it was even more then just fondness. He never said nothing about it. Mastbaum was a hundred percent gentleman.

In Szczecin when he saw Anna after all these years, he was very happy. He not only greeted her friendly, but saluted her with all the military honor and grace of an Polish officer. Mastbaum told Anna then, about the worm spot he have had in his heart for her, because of her attitude toward him, for which he was gratefull forever.

How foolish were all those Jews, who thought, that because of holocast they would be special in Poland and all over the world. Actually the attitude of Poles didn't change. Ofcourse many of them felt sorry, and regreted, what happened to Jewish people. But most of them acted surprised on contact with Jews whom they knew before the war. The common greeting was:"Are you alive?" Like they would like to know:"How Come!" I guess deep down their hearts they continued to dislike Jews, and even more thou, because those Jews who have returned, claimed their old properties back, and this was at the time, when some Poles thought that those properties would be theirs forever.

Money in those days ment everything. People with dollars, "swinki" (old Russian or German gold coins) ruled over the black market or used to buy for themselves a role in politics. Men like this openly embraced communism, mostly the ones who came out from Soviet Union, even if it wasn't true in some cases, they kept making a point all over the place that "the idea of communism was dear to their hearts".

Soviet Union already then ruled POLAND as their own, but still accepted a coalition government by all the parties. In meantime they kept robbing Poland blind of their minerals, mostly coal and machinery, Polish government under the leadership of a socialist Osobka-Morawski even convinced the prime-minister Mikolajczyk (leader of the Polish Peoples Party) of the Polish government in exile in London to return to Warsaw and join the government as vice-prime-minister in a show of good will and unity. But few months later Mr. Mikolajczyk left Poland, not only to avoid arrest, but a possible death sentence. In other words he ran for his life, under the darkness of night. Soon after all other political parties have been banned. The socialist party merged with communists into one ruling party under the banner of Polish Workers Party, which in reality was Poland's communist party.

One of those prefered Jews who joined the bandwagon was Mr. Berkovich, who became a "Voyevoda" (Chief executive) of the Szczecin Province. There were many others like him all over the country. Another very important man was Hilary Mintz, a minor official in the pre-war Polish government who under the new rules in new Poland became the minister of commerce. There were many others, who changed or modified their names to give them a Polish sound, or pronounciation.

All Jews, the ones liberated from German concentration camps and those returning from Soviet Union had one most important thing in-common. They all searched and tried very hard to find survivors from the war. It didn't matter, if it was a close relative or even very far removed. Everybody wanted to find somebody, even a good friend or not so close friend would do. Lots of families got reunited. Good's will and some luck kept them alive, but most of the people didn't find nobody. All of us registered many times, so our names could be placed in some central pool.

At this particular time I already knew, who perished and who survived from our family. Mondscheins and Nussbaums as well. Probably there were some other relatives with different names, about whose existence I never knew.

Grandma Frances was the first one to discover a cousin I presume farther removed. Hania Sternlicht actually found grandma and came to see her in the apartment. She heard Leniower's name mentioned someplace. This cousin was in Szczecin with a child. She was a singer and piano player who performed in publi

Mrs. Sternlicht came visiting couple of times. She and grandma spoke about old times. Later she left Szczecin, and grandma Frances didn't hear from her anymore.

Other former residents from Jaslo before the war used to drop by. And it was the same old story. They came and went after short conversations, never to be seen again.

A surprise visitor was one Mr. Altholz with his sister, who were brother and sister to another Mr. Altholz a husband to best friend of grandma Frances. Mrs. Altholz passed away in Soviet Union, but the rest of the family came back. The above Mr. Altholz and his sister were obliged to thank Leniowers for taking them, and giving them space on the wagen while leaving Jaslo in 1939. If not for the Leniower family they probably wouldn't survive. Another surprise visitor was another Jaslan Mr. Altman who was close related to the Blut family. He probably was first cousin to Tadek Juszczyk. When he came visiting he still was in Polish army's uniform, but already discharged. Anna tells me a story about him, when she and her sisters were 14 years old this Altman was already 26 or 27. Once walking in Jaslo with their cousin Regina Blut, they came across Altman who in turn took them for a ride in a "doroshki" (horse pulled wagen for pleasure rides). First Altman droped off his cousin Regina in her house in Jaslo, and then took Anna, Frieda and Ela home to Brzyscie. Grandpa Abraham was furious seeing his daughters riding in doroshki with Altman, and grounded them for entire week.

A permanent visitor was one Mr. Kastner, who before the war was Fenichels family friend. Actually he was coming to see the old Mrs. Fenichel and her daughter Zhanka. Mr. Kastner and his son survived in Soviet Union, but his wife survived a German concentration camp and at that time was recupareting in Sweden. Mr. Kastner was hoping that they soon will be re-united. While talking with him I found out that he was related to the Brand family from Cracow, very well known respectable furriers before the war. Their daughter Henia was a good friend of mine. We used to be students at the Jewish Commercial Lyceum.

Mr. Kastner's son was a boyfriend of Sala Altholz, Anna's good friend in Jaslo, and everybody thought, that eventually they will be married to each other. But I guess it wasn't written, becuse in Szczecin this young man was already married to another girl. They were also lucky in other ways. Maybe because of an early arrival, he landed a good job in the provincial government under the chief executive Berkovich, and she was working as a typist for the Jewish Committee.

Fenichels while looking for survivors, they discovered that Mrs. Fenichel's son in law one Feldman was a German "capo" and was responsible for killing of many Jews in concentration camp.

Zhanka Mrs. Fenichel's only surviving daughter left her mother for couple of weeks in care of grandma Frances and went to Jaslo to check on their prewar properties. With some effort she was able to recover some of them and to sell them to people who were interested. Being a professional photographer Zhanka found a good job in Szczecin in a Photo studio.

After checking all possible localities, grandpa Abraham Leniower, came to a sad but true conclusion, that no one from his large family survived the holocast.

In the same time grandma Frances discovered through Mr. Altman, that her second cousin Tadek Blut (Juszczyk) was also alive and living in Kudowa, a resort on Polish-Czech border. You already know Tadek's survival story. In those days he was employed by the Polish department of forestry. He lived then with Tamara a daughter of a mixed marriage between a Jew and Russian woman. Also in Kudowa was grandma's cousin Monek Rotter with his wife Lonka and retarded son Simon, who was ill with epilepsy since, when a German bomb exploded next to him. Another Rotter who also survived in Soviet Union was Tadek Rotter, who then was living in Wroclaw.

Szczecin!

Somewhere in the first part of this writing, there is a brief mention about the Blut family, who perished in holocast. Tadek Blut survived the war under Polish name "Juszczyk" thanks to a Polish family Truskolaski. Few years ago the Israeli government declared this family as "Righteous Poles or Christians" for their deeds during the war. And awarded them a medal. Because these people weren't alive anymore Tadek invited their daughter for the presentation in Istael, but Polish authorities wouldn't allow her to leave the country.

It happened just recently when relations between Poland and Istael improved, that Tadek and his wife had been able to travel to Warsaw and in presence of Polish government officials was able to make the presentation to Miss Truskolaski,

I guess it was also through Lonka Rotter's brother who with his wife and child also visited Leniowers in Szczecin, that Tadek sent a gift of 2000 zlotys to help Leniowers out and also invited them to come to Kudowa.

Not to make this story more complicated, I should mention here for the first time the Amsterdam family. Mrs. Esther Amsterdam used to be a good friend of Lonka Rotter before the war. Somehow the 2000 zlotys wind-up in Amsterdams hands, and through somebody they sent a message to Leniowers to come and pick-up the money.

Frieda and Ela went to get the money, and evidently made a very good impression on Mrs. Amsterdam, who later introduced them to her son Norbert. Well as you already know Norbert fell in love with Ela, which was the beginning of a long courtship, ending with marriage few years later.

I met Norbert couple of weeks later. First he dated Ela, but never came inside. They used to stay in hall and Talk. Sometimes Norbert sang to Ela popular, pre-war Polish songs, and sometimes they even danced to those tunes. I met Mrs. Amsterdam much later at the time when we left Szczecin on the way to Austria. As far as Mr. Amsterdam was concerned I didn't meet him officialy, but I was sure that it was him after i picked him up from among so many people on Szczecin bazaar while he was selling some of their stuff. Norbert looked alot like him. Ofcourse on the way to Austria I met him in person. He was a very nice man and I liked him, since the first time I put my eyes on him in Szczecin.

After exchanging few letters Ela was selected to travel to Kudowa and see Tadek Juszczyk. When we took Ela to the station Norbert also went along to say good-by. It was a long trip from the most northern point of Poland, to the most southern. The train took Ela from Szczecin to Wroclaw. There she changed to a train going to one of those new Polish cities taken away from Germans, called Klatzko, and then on a local train to Kudowa, right on the Polish-Czech border.

Ela had a wonderful reception and a wonderful time as well in Kudowa. It was good for her after those dismal years in Soviet Union. Tadek Juszczyk was a gracious host, and ofcourse Tamara his girlfriend was jealous, but Tadek told Ela not to worry about it, because he didn't have any intention to marry Tamara. He also told Tamara not to worry, because Ela was just his cousin and not Ela's type. Ela spent in Kudowa almost two weeks. She came home, one day later then expected. Norbert's trip to the station to greet Ela with flowers was for nothing. According to Norbert he got rid of them right there. Delays in travel were common in those days.

Grandma's Frances letters to her cousins in New York and San Francisco finally paid off, and food and clothing parcels started to arrive shortly. Their help was welcome, and came just in the right time.

The biggest flap was Polish Repartriation Committee, created by the Polish goverhment to help all former victims of the Nazi concentration camps, returning to Poland and Polish citiziens coming back from Soviet Union. Maybe survivors who returned from Germany in 1945 or early 1946 recived a better deal from this committee, but not us Jews coming from Soviet labor camps.

The committee was located in a/impressive building in a part of Szczecin spared from allied bombing. It was obvious that German elite used to live in that beautiful area. It was easy to find because of many mansions surrounded by parks, gardens and xxx trees. Germans on the streets, the ones who still lived in Szczecin, when asked, answered in German or broken Polish with pride about the old glory of this neighbourhood, reciting German names of streets, and who used to live in those mansions. Ofcourse in time we arrived all streets had been changed and named after Polish xxxxxxx heros.

So this was the area, where xxx thousands of newcomers to Szczecin headed each morning, to find out that another thousand was already there waiting from the wee hours to be let inside first.

The building opened at 8amm and the mob charged the open gates, runing in all directions to be ahead in one of those many lines forming inside. On paper everybody thought that on the other side of those many doors somebody was sitting with instant answer to their problems. These people thought that funds were available for them not only from Polish government, but also from an enormous relief coming from United States. I haven't met a person who recived any help in finding lodging, job, money, food and clothing. The old story from Soviet Union repeated itself again. When after a long wait in long lines, we finally reached the person behind the doors, all he or she did, would only ask questions, which ment another registration.

Security inside the building was tremendous. Mostly young people, strong, rude and insulting especially toward Jews have done their best to keep order. There was a large dining room in the middle of the building, with hundreds waiting all the time for a bowl of soup.

So we never get anything from the Polish Repartriation Committee. To go there and hope was a big waste of time. There was no difference between Polish leaders and some workers of this Repartriation Committee, and leaders of the Jewish committee, they all were crooks starting with capital "C". They all took the cream, leaving a little for the workers and a drop in the bucket for the rest of the people. Exactly the same way, as the Polish delegations in Soviet Union in 1942-1943.

The only person whose life changed because of those long lines was Zhanka Fenichel, who met there a young nice Jewish man who fell in love with her and married her xxxxx one year later. They never left Poland as far as we know. Maybe they still live in Szczecin.

It was very hard to find a good job, as I explained before. What was available was in construction, or cleaning-up the mess left after bombings.

It was obvious that to get ahead in those days wouldn't come from finding a job, or wait for a miracle. Coming to Poland I had with me a piece of fabric which I recived on Vanovskaya. I tried there to make me a suit (Soviet style) but tailors I knew expecting to leave anytime wouldn't accept new work. When father and I almost ran out of money I took this piece to bazaar and a man bought from me to use as lining for his new suit.

While walking around the bazaar I noticedxx that people doing there a tremendous business. They were selling, buying and re-selling. There were people with their own stands, and others walking with merchandise hanging from their hands, elbows and arms.

At home I told Anna all about it. I was sure that she would be very good in this business, and with help from Frieda and Ela they could make lots of money.

In couple of days Anna and I went to bazaar, just to check out the possibilities. In matter od few minutes Anna bought a pair of socks and sold them with 40 zlotys profit, which she split with me.

Chapter 94 (cont)

Szczecin!

A new era had begun for Leniowers. With everybody working, they were on the way to better life. The work was hard and demanding and they worked six days from early morning until late in the afternoon, but soon the effort started to pay off.

In meantime uncle Josef Eisen went on a fact finding trip to Cracow, Tarnow, Tuchow and Oswiecim (Auschwitz, his hometown). He was away two or three weeks. When he returned he confirmed that grandma's Frances mother and her sister Helen (Eisen's wife) perished in ovens of Auschwitz, in 1942. He also described Tuchow as town without Jews. Only ruins remained of the old Salomons synagogue. In the place where grandma's Mariam's house and store stood, was a potatos field. Someplace under this field grandma's Mariam's fortune was buried, which uncle Eisen helped to hide, but even he didn't have a fogiest idea, where to digg for this fortune, and if he knew he would be afraid to do so.

In Cracow Eisen met his cousin, who survived the war, and they decided to get married. He told grandma Frances that he was already engaged, but there was a strong possibility,that he was married already. The lady had in Cracow her own apartment, and after couple of days in Szczecin Eisen left to join her.

As I wrote before Schnalls found their own family in Szczecin. Couple of their sisters survived the war, and also a sister-in-law who saved her life, working as a hired hand on a farm. The family in Szczecin was the late Mrs. Schnall's sister with her children. The son of this sister later married his cousin Chaya Schnall. So Chaya became Mrs. Mayer Garten. There was a nice Jewish wedding. We went there anticipating a good dinner, but not such luck. Before the ceremony the bride was sitting on a high pedestal surrounded by the family, and an old man was performing so very popular during Religious wedding ceremonies in pre-war Poland so-called "besingen". In a singing voice in Yiddish he tried to recall good and sad events of Chaya's life, but when he started to sing about Mrs. Schnall, Chaya's mother, the bride almost fainted, then cried, so the family wouldn't let him finish. But the ceremony changed everything. The bride got happy again, the bridegroom was also happy, and they still enjoy their happiness in Toronto with their children and grandchildren.

The Rabbi who performed the ceremony was an old man from Soviet Union. He presented himself as a distinguish person, with a long white beard, earlocks and dressed-up in orthodox clothing. He came to Poland because of his daughter's marriage to a Polish Jew, who also happened was a Jaslan, and also known to grandpa Abraham. With many weddings taking place in Szczecin the Rabbi and his son-in-law had done pretty well. I guess he was the one and only Rabbi in Szczecin and his son-in-law acted as his menager.

After the wedding Schnalls left our broken down apartment leaving more room for the rest of us, and joined their family in their apartment. Finally father and I were able to vacate our space on kitchen floor. Schnalls didn't stay to long in Szczecin. They left with many other Jews who kept leaving Poland in those days and settled in West Berlin in a Displaced Persons camp until they emigrated to Canada.

Among many members of their family Schnalls introduced us to their uncle Mayer. It seemed in those days that he was the leader of the entire family. A man with integrity, wealthy. Puting it bluntly a "Pe-Me" (Short for Jewish High Class in Yiddish). To show a good will, he even once gave me cheap piece of suit fabric to sell on bazaar. The sad story was that nobody wanted to buy it for 300 zlotys. Maybe for 100 zlotys somebody would take it.

Many years later when we visited with Chaya and her family in Toronto, uncle Mayer's name was "tabu". He must had done something very wrong. They shivered when we mentioned his name. Evidently he disgraced the whole family, and they wouldn't hear about him no more.

After Schnalls left the only ones in the apartment were Leniowers, father and I, Mrs. Fenichel and Zhanka and Marmurs.

Chapter 95

A Painful Visit in Cracow!

As I understood, situation of the Marmur family wasn't as good as it should had been. I noticed them hudling together and discussing their choices. They finally decided that Mr. Marmur would travel to Sosnowiec, former hometwon of Mrs. Marmur, near Katowice in Polish Silesia. They came to a conclusion, that Sosnowiec was the place to start and look for a change. Mr. Marmur told me all about it, and hearing this I told my father that I would go along with Mr. Marmur and travel to Cracow. I was still kiding myself, that with uncle Ludwik and aunt Mala there, with her influential new husband Korngold I would be able to find some kind of a job for myself.

According to Polish government's directive Marmur and I, and all other returnees from Soviet Union and Germany were entitled to one train ticket, to travel anyplace in Poland. The Repartriation Committee in Szczecin issued to us such tickets.

We left early Saturday morning. I wanted to travel light, and not to carry any packages, but for some reason my father insisted, that I take with me an old pillow and blanket, so I didn't have no choice but carry a small bag, like a peasant going from his village to a large city.

The train was going direct to Cracow, scheduled to arrive there in 24 hours. There were many spaces available, because not to many people traveled from Szczecin to Cracow. As we went along, all cars filled up with people traveling to Poznan, Wroclaw and other cities in Silesia. A surprise of this journey was, when shortly after the train left Szczecin Polish patrols boarded the train and checked for documents among men hoping to find deserters and those who didn't register with local draftboards. I never saw something like this on Polish railroads, but I guess it was another example of adapting to Soviet rules and regulations. For a while Marmur and I got scared, thinking, that we might be taken off the train, but our blue documents showing that we returned from Soviet Union few weeks ago did the trick.

In meantime not just our car but the whole train got so full, and people were standing everywhere supporting each other. Most of them left in Wroclaw. In those days people to make money traveled from place to place selling all kind of products and merchandise. Poles took over the habit who was Jewish specialty throughout the centuries. Also Polish farmers afraid of collectivisation, tried hard to sell their farm products as fast as possible so they wouldn't be forced later to give it to government for nothing. This was Stalin's pet project for Poland, which later turned to a disaster. For the money made farmers bought goods in the city.

It was still night when Mr. Marmur left the train in Sosnowiec. More people boarded the train going from Silesia to Cracow. We arrived in Cracow on schedule after 24 hours of riding early Sunday morning. And again mixed feelings, came all over me. I thought about uncle Ludwik and aunt Mala, and how will they recive me? I also thought about the city. How would my eyes see it, after so many years of absence.

At seven o'clock in the morning I left the Cracow station through the same exit as many times before the war. I walked down the street into the plaza in front of the station, like many years before. Like nothing happened in between. It seemed to me that it was just "yesterday". The first reality of the day hit me, when I saw the small shopping area across the station all boarded up. This was the place where on September 5 1939 father and Lipe Goldstein tried to leave Cracow, but tremendous German bombing pined them in this area. This was the day when when they almost lost their lives, and were forced to postpone their leaving the city until night.

Not knowing uncle Ludwik's address, and not knowing where my cousins Zosia and Roman Kahane were living, I decided to pay my first visit in Cracow to aunt Mala and her husband Ferdinand Korngold. I knew for sure that they were in aunt Mala's pre-war apartment located at the Slowacki Alley.

Chapter 95 (cont)

A Painful Visit in Cracow!

It was beautiful mid-June Sunday morning. Streets were half empty, except people going from or to early morning masses in many Cracow's churches. Seeing the city first time after seven years for a brief moment I thought, that nothing happened. As long time ago people kept passing me by, dressed in their Sunday best. I imagened that my poor Soviet clothing and the bag over my shoulder, made them think that I was one of the Soviet Russians.

I walked down Basztowa street (Tower), where in the middle ages tall walls used to protect the city, and where the old city of Cracow ended. On my left runing parallel to Basztowa were the beautiful planty, all green with georgous flowers and ponds with swans swimming in them. I passed the building, where Cracow's provincial government was located. Old, seemed there the same, with an exception of the Polish emblem showing the white eagle without the crown, and instead of the old sign on the building saying "Wojewotztwo Krakowskie' (The Province of Cracow), the new sign was changed to "Wojewodzki Krakowski Narodowy Komitet" (National Committee of the Cracow Province).

Another example of winds coming from the east. Next I passed Mateyko Place, named after famous Polish painter, but without the monument of former Polish king Wladislaw Jagiello, whom people of Cracow honored on the anniversary of his victory over the Prussian Teutonic Knights back in 1400s. His monument was the first one destroyed in Cracow after German victory in 1939. Some years later after the defeat of Germany Poles found certain parts of this monument and restored it to the former glory at the same spot. Few yards away from the monument there always was and still stands the monument of the unknown soldier.

Walking in direction of aunt Mala's apartment I passed the Plastics Cafe on Lobzowska street, where before the war giants of Polish literature used to meet, and where during the German occupation Gestapo raided and arrested and later killed some of famous Polish intelectuals, among them Karol Woytila the present pope John Paul, who after an interrogation was released.

Dunayewski street was the next on my slow walk to see the Korngolds. The street where as a small boy I used walk with my mother and friends on those crispy winter days before lunch and eating hot peanuts.

There was still on the corner of this street the famous Bizantz Cafe, whose owner used to be a German before the war, and acroos the street on the corner of my childhood street Krupnicza and Podwale was another sidewalk-cafe "Esplenade" On the nearby Planty there was the "Pavilion", where our family spent so many Saturday and Sunday afternoons eating good food, and watching and listening to a dance band playing nice familiar popular tunes.

Now-a-day there is no more Bizantz cafe. In the building where Esplenade was located there is a large transportation company, and in the place of the Pavilion Polish authoriries bilt a monstrosity of a skyskraper in honor of Joseph Stalin, according to his design as other buildings like this one in Moscow, Leningrad and other eastern European countries.

The last stretch of my walk to Slowacki Alley was Karmelicka street, named after the church, and monstery of brothers Karmelitans located there even today. I walked there for many years on my way to Sobieski gimnazium.

Finally I was standing in front of the building on Slowacki Alley No.7. Aunt Mala's apartment was on second floor. By European standards this was really first floor. In Poland we used to call "first floor" - "parter" which ment "ground floor". I went up the stairs. On the doors of the apartment, where before the was a small golden plate with the name "Nussbaum", there was another plate saying that "Ferdinand Korngold" was living there. I rang the bell. Mr. Korngold came to the door. I guess he saw me already through the glass covered eye in the door. I first said good morning and asked him if he knew who I was? Ofcourse, he recognized me, and an expression on his face told me that his first thought was! "What the heck is he doing here?" Still he invited me, to come inside. Him and aunt Mala were still asleep, before I came in, because Korngold was wearing his pijamas, and aunt Mala made her appearance few minutes later.

A Painful Visit in Cracow!

There was nothing friendly about aunt Mala also. I expected some kind of a greeting. A hug from her, after all those years. Ofcourse I would respond with a hug and kiss, but not such thing. She was cold like a stranger. Many years later, she told uncle Ludwik, when it didn't make a difference anymore, that she regreted very much, the cool meeting with me, and that she didn't show some warmth toward me, which I needed so much at that particular time.

I explained to Korngold and aunt Mala, why I came to Cracow, that I was hoping, they could help to find a job. They even didn't answer my question, instead, aunt Mala informed me, that I can't stay with them, because they share the apartment with another couple. It was clear to me, that I was not welcome.

Ofcourse aunt served me a breakfest. Coffee or tea, with a coffee cake, the same kind she used to bake before the war. Nothing changed in her apartment as well. The furniture was standing, the same way as many years before. Even the piano stood un-touched in the same spot. Probably some important German personality used to live there during the war. The Gestapo headquarters was located in a building just one block away. Aunt Mala by coming to Cracow much sooner then the rest of us, was able to recover her possessions.

She poured over me, all her grief about loosing both of her childrem. Saul in Ural Mountains, and Zosia and her husband murdered by Germans in Plaszow concentration camp, after being moved there from old Austrian Montelupich prison from a lice infested cell. I felt her pain, and sympathised with her, but I already knew the story. Still her grief wouldn't stop her from lay down on me the whole megila about not helping uncle Ludwik in Uzbekistan.

I was just sitting there, keeping my mouth shot. As always in predicaments like that I didn't have answers. Ideas what to say used to come to me much later, when there was nobody around to ~~answer~~ listen, to be told off. Instead of keeping quiet I should have defend myself. Tell aunt Mala, that uncle had lots more then us, and if he and aunt Rose wanted, the could live much better then they have. The gossip and big mouth of aunt Rose did the same thing, what it used to do all the time.

Aunt Mala's grief didn't stop her from making the best of her life. It didn't bother her at all, that me the poor soul, was sitting there with no place to go, while she and her husband were getting ready to go swimming for the rest of the day at the stadium swimming pool. She didn't mind me leaving my bag there, and gave addresses to uncle Ludwik and Zosia Kahane.

Zosia and Roman Kahane and their daughter Yoel used to live just around the corner. The profesor Woynas family, best friends of Nussbaums (Zosia's parents) in Tarnobrzeg gave Zosia and her family a room in their apartment on Pomorska street. When I got there I recived much more pleasant reception, not only from Zosia and Roman, but from the Woynas family, whom I knew very well, then from aunt Mala and her husband. The old Zosia's friend Wishka Woynas was there also and still not married. Their son Joseph who was my cousin's Sigmund's best friend wasn't with the family, because he collaborated with Germans during the occupation, and was forced to leave Cracow with the enemy. I saw for the first time their baby-girl Yoel who was born in Soviet Union, and as far as I can remember I ate a dinner with Zosia and Roman. But they also explained to me, that they can't impose on the Woynas family, and that I can't stay with them. Help in finding a job was elusive again, even thou Roman had connections with the Jewish Committee, and himself was employed by the Cracow branch of American Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. Even showing off a little of a compasion it was obvious, they didn't wanted to bother with my problems either.

My cousins Esther and Lipe Goldstein, like the others wouldn't help me. All they were interested to join their children in Palestine as soon as possible. They had a nice small one room apartment, but no place for one more person, claiming they will give up the apartment to people expected from Soviet Union shortly.

I was inclined to believe Esther's story. She always was a woman with a golden heart, and because of her close friendship with my mother since their youth I don't think she would turn me down. I was convinced then that they even had some money, because of Esther's husband shroudness. While walking through the old City Market Lipe inquired from some black marketeers standing there, about the price of Soviet Ruble, which ment that he had plenty of them.

Early in the afternoon, I managed to register at the Jewish Committee. Being rejected by everybody else my last hope was uncle Ludwik. I thought that for the old times sake, he would let me stay for few days in his apartment. Well I stroke out again. For the fourth time in one day, I was told the same story. There was no place for me in my "former" family's homes. Uncle Ludwik's story was that his landlady hasn't allowed strangers in her building. He also said that even his step-son Heniek Zimetbaum was forced to stay in a kibutz, because of this woman's ruling. Uncle's conscience bothered him, to a point which made him to go with me to some kibutzim around Cracow asking for a place for me to stay, but they were full also. At least good old uncle Ludwik, made an effort. Late in the afternoon he decided to go with me and talk to aunt Mala, and convince her to put me up. When we got there Mala and her husband were just returning from their day in swimming pool. He spoke few minutes with Ferdinand Korngold, but suddenly changed his mind, and never mentioned my problem to him. Instead he told me later that I can stay with them in their apartment, but only overnight.

Uncle Ludwik's apartment was in the same building on Stradom, where his business was located before the war. In a matter of facts, the apartment was next door to uncle's former business. His story about the landlady was a real one. When she saw me coming in, she raised hell, but gave in, after uncle assured her that I would leave next morning.

So this was the sad story of my first day in Cracow, after the war. All of those so-called relatives of mine, were in position to help me, but choose not to bother. None of them even wink a small finger. All what was left for me to do, to pick up my poor bag at aunt Mala's and go back to Szczecin. But how? I even didn't have money to buy a ticket. At least, they could offer some money for my ticket, but they didn't.

Walking through streets of Cracow, after an long absence would be a pleasant experience if circumstances would be different, and my personal problems only added gloom to my dispostion.

The city didn't change at all, but people did. Just looking at them go by, I was certain, that most of them were strangers. Not real native Cracovians. During my one and a half day there I didn't spot nobody who would remain me of somebody I knew before. Granted: Jews perished, but other people I knew, just weren't there. After all Cracow wasn't such a large city, but it was a friendly place to live, and during normal pre-war times they used to know each other, just from seeing each other on the streets. But those weren' normal pre-war times after all.

Seldom people who survived have ran into their former friends, just walking by them on streets. If they recognized each other first before they started to hug, they asked questions. "Moyshe is that you? And Moyshe answered; Yes that's me, and who are you? Don't you know! Said the other man; I am Srulek, the one from the Miodowa (Honey) street. And then Moyshe said again. Is that really you Srulek? And I almost didn't recognize you. Where have you been all these years? Tell me all about it". Then they hugged, and the conversation went on and on. Two friends found themselves only by chance, but they were really happy to be alive and see each other again.

And so it was by chance, that this particular Sunday my aunt Rose recognized a lady who was her friend before the war. Their meeting was just coordial. This lady very well dressed, survived the horrors of war, but her husband perished. The man with her was her new husband, also wealthy. Life went on, and people made the best of it.

My desire for at least a half decent job didn't come through. Probably I would find employment if I would settle again for just dirty labor, as the one I was subjected to for many years in Soviet Union, and on the other hand I didn't have no money to start something on the black market, which was really the right thing to do. Not many Jews were looking for jobs in those days. Even Jewish Committee in Cracow used to give loans to people, if they came up with a good business idea.

My only dream in those days was to have some decent clothing. I was jealous when I saw people dressed-up, and I would be very happy to have a nice suit, shoes, couple of shirts and new socks.

So as fast as I came to Cracow, even faster I was getting ready to leave. It was wrong for me to go there in a first place. My family didn't want me there, and they didn't make any secrets of it.

Not having money to buy a ticket to go back to Szczecin, as my last resort I went to the Cracow's branch of the Repartriation Committee, to try to get a free ticket again. At least at this instance I was lucky. The official there didn't notice the stamp from Szczecin on the back of my document, which showed, that I already recived one ticket, and gave me another one to go back to Szczecin.

I went to aunt Mala's apartment to pick-up my bag. we spoke few minutes. Just some banal conversation. She even didn't offer to me a piece of bread for my 24 hours journey.

I said good-by to aunt Mala, hoping that this was the last meeting between us. I went to the station two hours before the scheduled departure, and almost I came to late. Train was still parking far away from the main station, but somebody at the station told me if I wouldn't go there I will never be able to get on this train. After I finally reached the train I discovered, that all cars were not just loaded with a mass of people, but overloaded and it cost me my last 20 zlotys to bribe some guy to get on this train. Somehow I squeezed in between mob of standing men and women. I put my bag on the floor and stood on it, most of the time. Once or twice I managed to sit down also on my bag. I stood there in this madness for 12 hours, until the train arrived in Wroclaw, where most of the people left.

After the mob left, only two or three people were left in the compartment. Among them young Polish officer with light green markings around his military cap, and around his stand-up colar, which indicated that he was with U.B. a Polish version of KGB. U.B, ment "Urzad Bezpieczenstwa" (Security Services).

At first he seemed to be a very nice young man, but when a large Jewish family walked in, with large baggage, his mouth started to work overtime. His anti-Semitic remarks continued, after the grandmother had begun her story, how they found their family in Szczecin, and were on their way to a re-union. The officer didn't like the way they took over the compartment, and it was obvious his sarcastic language was directed at their many good lookong suitcases.

It was clear to me, that these people didn't travel to Szczecin just to reunite with their long lost family. This was the beginning of an era when many Jews started to leave Poland, and the border between Poland and East Germany was not to far away. In those days it cost lots of money to cross the border. The crossings were pre-arranged with guides who used to take people over at night. In normal circumstances so much baggage would travel in a baggage car, not together with owners in passanger car, which gave them away, that they were on their way to meet the guide, and the U.B. officer knew it. Couple of months later such crossing were taken over by Jewish political organizations. People crossed then in many other designated crossings all over Polish borders, where authorities used to be notified about such crossings in advance, and generously paid off, without any cost to people willing to cross.

Mr. Marmur also returned on the same train, squeezed someplace among the large crowd. He was lucky. Some old friends assured him of a job and apartment and told him to come to Sosnowiec with family right away.

Chapter 95 (cont)

A Painful Visit in Cracow!

Marmurs didn't waste any time. In next couple of days,they were packed and ready to leave. It was a sad good-by after all those ups and downs together. We wished them well. It was the last time ever we saw Mr. Marmur, who passed away in Sweden in 1971 or 1972, after the family moved there from Sosnowiec some years later after their arrival there. Mrs. Marmur still makes her residence in Goeteborg Sweden. We never saw her after they left Szczecin. Their son Dow (Belek) studied in London to become a reform Rabbi. After 14 years with a reform congregation in London he became a senior Rabbi of a reform congregation in Toronto Canada. He is married, and a father to three children. We had a great pleasure to visit with him and his family in Toronto 1n 1985.

Back in Szczecin I told father, Anna and the others about my short visit with the family in Cracow, but I didn't tell them how humiliated I felt. Later in his letters uncle Ludwik turned upside down my story about Szczecin, and our frustrations with the Repartriation Committee and the Jewish Committee. I guess to justify himself he wrote that I made a comment: "Who needs Cracow, when we get everything we need in Szczecin" Which of course wasn't true.

Because of the continuing misery in Szczecin father decided, that finally there was time for him to leave. He got his free railroad ticket at the Repartriation committee, with a warning, that things were rather bad in Cracow. As I he was kiding himself, that some of his former friends would give him a job in his old profesion. As it turned out, it was just an illusion. It was Sunday morning again when I took him to the station in Szczecin. While saying good-by I mentioned to him, that I was without money. He still had 1000 zlotys on him, but choose to ignore my remark. Without hesitation he left me standing there and went to the platform to board the train.

So I Was alone on my own. But really I wasn't alone. My dear Anna, was with me, and this was all what really matter. I helped out with the business on bazaar. I ate whatever I managed to put my hands on, but most of the time I ate with Leniowers. They used to be my real family in those days. They gave me the love I needed, without rushing or pushing me. If not for them I don't know how I would survive.

Anna and her sisters continued doing well on the bazaar. But well- being in business wasn't everything. What was bad, was a serious illness of grandpa Abraham. There was a clinic at the Jewish Committee in Szczecin, but to get an appointment to see a doctor was another story. There were many sick people, but not enough doctors. At last Anna found one, who was willing to see grandpa at home. He diagnosed the illness and prescribed medication. After few days grandpa's condition improved. It wasn't sooner, but quite few years later, that we realized, that the illness in Szczecin was the beginning of an illnes which caused grandpa's death.

Chapter 96

Thoughtsm, and Szczecin Again!

Thoughts and more thoughts, day and night and most of them about my Dear mother kept my mind busy all the time. How w everything fell apart after her leaving us, and especially after our return to Poland. She was always the one who kept us together, so no wonder that it was real hard to live without her.

After father left I thought that the time came to put myself together. But how to get organized and do something it remained to be seen.

The market or bazaar in Szczecin was located then in midtown, not farmway where we used to live. The place was like a madhouse full of people all the time buying and selling. Once while trying to buy something Anna noticed there a familiar face from her past. Not just one, maybe two or three of her former school friends from Jasło. These people were selling merchandise form their own stand. They greeted Anna rather friendly, and tried to recollect some of the old times in few short minutes. At least those young women were nice, and didn't pop the common question; Oh! How come you are alive?

New Jewish business" opened in Jewish district of Szczecin, some with help of the Jewish Committee, to buy all kind of goods and food. For some reason people weren't able to shake off old Soviet habits. Since early in the morning long lines used to form in front of those establishments creating an aura of panic. They Fought among themselves and yelled at each other. Why I dodn't know, but the kind of men and women standing there, always found a reason to argue. The situation in this particular area became so explosive, that the militia was forced to hire some Jewish militiamen to calm those crowds. It seemed that authorities were afraid of more problems by sending Polish militiamen to control those crowds. During those disturbances the Jewish militiamen used to fire shots into the air.

Another tence situation developed when after a pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946,46 Jews got murdered, and a rumor circulated all over Jewish Szczecin that some anti-Semitic elements planed to raid and kill Jews in their district. The pogrom in Kielce started a massive exodus of Jews from Poland.

The threat seemed as a serious one. I remember this particular night, standing at the window and watching our street. Polish security forces armed with automatic weapons patroled the dark streets, and many of them stood hidden behind the entrances in halls of the buildings. The night went by, and luckily the expected raid didn't materialized. Well! It was either a rumor, or the bandits didn't want to challenge the extraordinary security forces.

When I finally recived the first letter from my father, he still didn't find a job. And again he registered with the Jewish Committee,and got a space for himself in one of those dormitory type apartments located in pre-war Jewish institutions and schools. I think that aunt Mala gave to him some old clothing of her husband. Father was also in line to recive a 1000 Zlotys from the Repartriation Committee in Cracow, somthing we weren't able to accomplish in Szczecin.

Needless to say the good news didn't last to long. Next letter came from father with real bad news, telling that he was ill in hospital, and asked me to come to Cracow to be with him. One night he experienced again pains which he always thought had to do with his kidney problems, the same kind of severe pains he developed on the train to Poland from Soviet Union.

His neighbours at the dormitory took him immediatly to the Jewish hospital, located in the same building as the Jewish Committee. He felt better at the time he wrote the letter to me, but his doctor wouldn't let him out from hospital. In a way it was better for him to stay in hospital, because of much better living conditions.

The bad news shocked me again. First of all I didn't have money to buy a ticket. I tried just for the heck of it the Repartriation Committee, but they even wouldn't listen. I kept waiting few days for better news, but they never came. Finally my dear Anna solved my dilema and gave me 500 zlotys, needed to purchase a ticket, and few zlotys extra for expences. She went with me to the station. we said good-by again, not knowing what will happen, and again I went to Cracow but not by my choice at that time.

Chapter 97

Cracow - (Another Visit, Father's Illness)

I didn't have any idea how things will work out for me and father during my second time around. I hated the notion about facing my family again.

The second trip went rather smooth. No more large crowds, no more adventure, and no reason for bribing the conductor. On arrival in Cracow I went straight to uncle Ludwik's apartment. They changed their living quarters, since my last time in Cracow to a very nice apartment on Kremerowska street No.12, just few steps away from my former Sobieski gimnazium, thanks to courtesy of Mr.& Mrs. Kapp, who owned another apartment in Cracow and used to travel a lot. By coincidence Mr. Kapp was a wealthy Jaslan, and Mrs. Kapp was an old friend of the family, from way back. She even remembered me, but I didn't have no idea who she was.

Really it was a beautiful place to live. More to aunt Rose's taste, and gave her a psycological boost, similar to her pre-war grandeur. She played again her role in this three room apartment, with kitchen and bathroom, completely furnished on a prestigeous second floor. Ofcourse there was no maid around to do all the chores and cooking.

This time around, aunt and uncle didn't object to my staying with them. Ofcourse there was no bed to sleep on for me. All I had was a small space in the corner on the floor, with an old winter coat serving as mattress to soften the hard wooden floor.

I saw my father next morning in the hospital. He was looking well and rested, and was doing much better. It seemed then, that he was on the way to recovery. Doctors concentrated on his kidneys problems, but still were hesitant to let him out from the hospital.

Father was very happy to see me. He shared his room with other three men, and the atmosphere there was real friendly.

For the first time since my return from Soviet Union I finally got a job. It was nothing to brag about, but with the job situation as it was in those days, it was a good beginning. Pre-war Jewish establishments were then alredy in Polish hands, and they weren't eager to hire Jews. Anyway most of the Jews didn't look for jobs, and those who were working came to Poland much sooner then I to claim those jobs available either with Jewish organizations or with government, but not before you proved to them that you are a communist or a very close sympatizer.

So I was on the right track. My job was with a Jewish organization. And if it wouldn't be for my cousin Roman Kahane I wouldn't get this job either, because there were plenty of men and and women, who wanted this job, even thou the salary was low. The job was with American Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and Roman was there an assistant to the president. The Cracow branch then used to recived lots of affidavits from relatives of families who wanted to leave Poland and go to United States. I was typing notices and later delivered them to those families who used to live in Cracow.

I made 1000 Zlotys for my work, but from time to time few other benefits came along. Some people were so happy and generous reciving those notices, thinking that they will travel to United States right away, used to give me some nice tips. On another hand Roman used to take typing jobs for all kind of people and organizations. First I have done those jobs for him for nothing, but later I asked him for at least 50% of his fee and he agreed. Another chore I was performing for Roman was when I was going for him to the housing authority to file applications for apartments for certain people who paid Roman for this service. And there I also demanded and recived couple of time a small fee from Roman.

I used to walk alot in those days, even thou I carried a special card for free streetcar rides, and those walks rekindled in me many long fergotten memories. I encountered many different people in those days. Those who remained Jewish, and those who tried to hide their Jewishness.

On one occasion I was trying to deliver notices to two families in the same building, located in an elegant section of Cracow. There was easy to find the first family, but there was not a family in this building by the name indidcated on the affidavit. I went back to the first family's apartment, and they informed me that they were quite sure that such Jewish family was living on another floor, but under assumed Polish name. I went there. I knocked on the door, but nobody answered. We mailed their notice to them.

When I was leaving the building a Polish caretaker, called them dirty Jews, also making clear to me that he was aware, that these people were Jewish.

Uncle Ludwik's apartment on Kremerowska street was nice, but not as nice, as their pre-war apartment on Retorik street. During the war a high ranking German official used to live there, as in Aunt Mala's apartment. When uncle Ludwik went there after arriving in Cracow, he found his elegant furniture and other items intact. A shoemaker with his family used to live there, at the time. He was poor, but suddenly after the war he stroke rich. He wouldn't pay uncle Ludwik for his furniture, but just to get rid of him, he gave to uncle four pairs handmade brand new shoes.

Aunt Rose's nephew Heniek Zimetbaum, still slept in kibutz..In the beginning he tried going back to school, and graduate from gimnazium, but wasn't able to learn and concentrate, so he settled for watchmaker's school. He was certain then, that his parents and sister didn't survive the war. Aunt Rose got in touch with her brothers in South America, and I am quite sure, that they came through for her, as far as finances were concerned.

Only few people of the Zimetbaum family survived the holocast. They were aunt Rose's cousins, some even farther removed.

During one weekend aunt and uncle invited all those Zimetbaums to a small reception in their apartment. The dining room table was loaded with some good staff to eat. Ofcourse I wasn't invited. I was just sitting in the other room, admiring those new shoes, uncle Ludwik got for his furniture from the shoemaker, There was one pair I particulary liked, and I wouldn't mind to put my hands on it. But I knew it wasn't possible.

After couple of hours, uncle Ludwik, finally remained himself, about me sitting alone in the other room, and decided to invite me to join the company. I knew only one of those Zimetbaums. A cousin of aunt Rose, who before the war owned with partnership with his sister Mrs. Brav, a grocery store nearby our neighbourhood. We used to be their customers for a certain period of time. Mrs. Brav was a widow, with one son Arthur, who was few months younger then I. Mr. Zimetbaum told that afternoon that Arthur survived the war and at that time was living in Lodz. Arthur and I knew each other well, and because of his relation to aunt Rose, just in fun we used to call each other "cousins". Among the guests then also was one very good looking young woman, also a cousin to Zimetbaums. She was planing to marry the old Mr. Zimetbaum, who was at least 20 years her senior, but he was filty rich, and many people in those days acted weird, just to get rich.

As before the war my aunts Rose and Mala continued their close friendship. As before they used to go out together, so it was evident that money was no problem. Aunt Mala in those days made many mysterious trips out of town, under an assumed name Mrs. Byczkowski, which really was the name of her sister Genia, who was married to the musician Byczkowski. During my second time in Cracow, I actually saw aunt Mala once, and this was the last time ever.

Despite the tragedy of the war the on and off arguments between Rose and Mala continued as before the war. A little hell broke out when aunt Rose noticed aunt Mala wearing a pair of black and white shoes, which she claimed were the pair she borrowed to aunt Mala once before the war. Imagene it. Aunt Rose couldn't forget it, after all the help aunt Mala gave us while we were starving in Uzbekistan. Ofcourse aunt Mala never admited that the shoes weren't hers.

Seeing my father moving around hospital, and looking well, gave me an impression, that he was doing better, and would leave the hospital soon. But his doctors even thou, they agreed on his progress, but still not enough for him to leave the hospital.

Thanks to my job, I finally was able to feed myself. Nothing fancy, but good enough not to be hungry.. I had plenty of bread, rolls and butter. On the three meat days I used to buy myself 100 grams of ham, or Polish sausage. During meatless days I ate cheese, fruit and sometimes vegetables. Once a week on Sundays I ate full course dinner, thanks to the good heart of Zosia Kahane.

As far as my clothing was concerned I still wasn't able to change my Soviet style for the western European. The head of the relief program at the Jewish Committee, a sick with TB hard core communist, and also mean, wouldn't help at all. He just kept informing me, that nothing was available, which was an enormous lie. I knew for sure, it wasn't so. His name was Nachteiler. His brother and family later used to be our neighbours in Steyr.

I also pleaded for clothing with the head of HIAS, and the head of the Jewish Committee, who was an Attorney of HIAS as well, but they both politely declined. Both of them used to live in elegant apartments in Cracow. I knew it well, because I was running errands for them, and saw how rich and beautiful those apartments were decorated with maids and etc. The head of HIAS left shortly after for United States, but Mr. Stuhlbach the president of the Jewish Committee, remained in this position for many years to come.

My last resource to obtain some clothing was the Mizrachi organization, which was located in the old building of the former "Jewish Gemeinde". Somebody gave me this idea, but needless to say I came to late. All the good staff was already gone. From the leftovers I picked-up some used summer shirts, pair of old shoes, which no shoemaker in Cracow wanted to repair, and shaggy old slacks, which I thought I would be able to mend, but I ended up with throwing them out.

Among others, the biggest problem was my inability to get an old-fashioned good bath. Since my last bath on the way from Soviet Union to Poland, I haven't had one. O yes! I washed myself often all over, all the time, but it didn't feel as good, as a hot bath. So it was a real shock to me, when aunt Rose told me, about a broken hot water tank in their apartment. She also said, that she just boils her bathh water on the stove in a bucket, and uncle Ludwik was Taking his baths at a public bath somewhere in the city. Once I went there, but the smell and clientele turned me off before I went inside.

I couldn't impose on aunt Rose even if I wanted to boil the water myself, but I was determent to use that wonderful bathtub at any cost. So one hot sunny afternoon, when aunt Rose was sound asleep, I filled-up this bathtub with cold water. I also didn't hesitate to use the shower. I was sitting there for awhile enjoying this cold water poring all over me. I had a feeling, like being in a paradise.

Uncle Ludwik also recomended to me an old lady who used to live on Stradom in the back of the building, where his store was located before the war, who after their return from Soviet Union did their laundry. I went to see her with my small bundle. After I came back to pick-up my wash, she probably deliberatly told me a story about people who brought laundry to her infested with lice. I guess she ment me. There was a possibility, that I brought some with me from Uzbekistan.

Yet the worst of everything, was being away from Anna. I was very lonesome and missing her tremendously. My quiting time at work was 3pm. From there every day I went to hospital to be with father. In the evenings I felt terrible, by myself with all kinds of thoughts going through my mind, including a thought of loosing Anna. Boy! How much I wished for her to be with me together. We wrote to each other, as much as possible, but mail was so slow in those days. So you can imagene how exuberant I was, when I recived a letter from Anna, telling me, that pretty soon she will come to see me in Cracow. From then on I was just counting the days.

Typing for Roman Kahane brought me together with the only Pre-war Jewish cyclist Kluger in Cracow. I alredy wrote about him. I came across him in a bicycle store, he took it over after the war from survivors of the family who used to own the store before the war. Kluger then was an official of Cracow's motorcycle association, and I typed for him invitations for cyclists to take part in an international motorcycle race in Cracow.

During that time I also collected in father's name 1000 zlotys from the Repartriation Committee.

Couple of times I also met with Israel Suedwerts, and together we went to see some soccer games.

Another surprise meeting was with my former friend from Falat street, Adam Putz. Our seeing each other wasn't as warm, as you would expect, seeing again an old friend. Like other Poles he was really surprised to see me, but he didn't pop the question about me being alive. He fought Germans during the war as a member of the Polish Land Army. The family was forced by the Germans to leave the apartment on Falat street, and move to an apartment left by some killed Jews in the Kazimierz (Kasimir) district. His brother, who always had an anti-Semitic attitude cooperated with Germans during the war and left Poland with them.

As a worker I joined an Union. HIAS paid a fee for me, and they gave me all kind of papers and coupons, and even free tickets to the movies.

Streets of Cracow in those days were like a memory lane. Starting with a house few meters away from the house on Kremerowska 12 where my uncle Ludwik used to live after the war was an apartment where aunt Mala and uncle Gabriel used to live for many years. Many pleasant events took place in this house, and sad as well. There my cousin Saul spent many long weeks in bed , after his heart condition was diagnosed. Also few steps away from this house was my former school Sobieski gimnazium. I even remember a time when my pants busted in the back, and how I ran very fast to Aunt Mala's house so she could sew the seams while I was waiting in the bathroom.

Through the side door I went inside the gimnazium. Hardly anything changed there. Playgrounds because of vacation were quiet then. The gym building remained me of the fun we used to have there, and in my old classrooms, chairs and tables,, the same our parents bought for us in 1930s during the modernization still stood there. Director Wladislaw Rutkowski was still the principal of the school, with the same goatie, so was the secretary and some profesors, and the crew of the four custodians.

A paradox was to see buildings, where Jewish doctors or lawyers used to practice their profesions before the war. Most of them were murdered by Germans, but their shingles remained in place, like monuments to their memory.

Our apartment complex on Falat street also didn't change. Anti-aircraft shelters which I helped to build, when first German bombs hit Cracow, were still there, untouched. Buildings custodians kept their old jobs. Only tenants were different. The old tenants were moved out by the Germans to make room for their personel. I went up to third floor to our old apartment, but somebody elses name plate was on the door. I didn't have enough guts to knock on the door. The only familiar face I saw, was the daughter's of Mr. Myslowicz, the owner of the grocery store. I didn't feel, how to start conversation with this girl. I just passed her by. She gave me a long stare. I am quite sure that she recognized me.

Some players on my former favored soccer team Cracovia still played, but not the Jeiwsh player Roman Greenberg. He perished.

Planty, Deptak, Szewska street, Jagiellonian University, where we used to meet, Krakowska street and vicinity, where many of my friends used to live, my old Commercial Lyceum, Chaim Hilfstein Hebrew Academy, the Temple, where our family used to pray, still were there, but my heart felt sorrow and emptyness.

Only few people I knew before the war, either I saw or spoke with during those days in Cracow. I was trying to seek out familiar faces from the crowds on the streets. I am quite sure that once I saw Mr. Bogucki, the man who used to own a grocery store nearby, where we used to live. Then I saw Jerry Leuchter, who was in those days a member of a kibutz. On another occasion while waiting for a streetcar I met a friend from the commercial Lyceum Yosel Markus. This guy really have changed. Being from an orthodox family in the old days, he had earlocks hidden behind his ears. But no more earlocks after the war. He was dressed up very nice. In my mind I wished to have a suit like his some day. I think his sister still owned their whosesale flour business. At school before the war I used to copy from him my Hebrew assignments. Another pre-war friend I saw was Maryla Muszynski, the same one I came across in Tinda, on the way to Siberia. In Cracow she already had a different boy-friend. Probably all had forgatten her former friend Elisha Weinberger, who perished in holocast.

But none of this people was able to give me information about my best friend Zyga Krantz-Blitzer, except that he was killed after the war in a car accident on the highway from Cracow to Budapest. Even his old friend and neighbour, Gintel, didn't know to much about this accident.

The old stadium of the Jewish Sport Club Maccabi, was still standing, all remodeled, with a brand new fence. Some of the players survived, but most of them perished.

Also while waiting for a streetcar I came across the old friend of my cousin Saul, Lulek Dembitzer. The same Dembitzer, who was with us in Siberia. He survived many serious illness, thanks to loving care, by his aunt Mrs. Abend, sister of his mother. His entire family survived the war in Cracow, with the help of Arian papers, under the name of Dembitzki. Dembitzer was one of those young people, whom grandpa Abraham fed with his own money, without any prospect of being paid back. I am not sure if Lulek remembered this while we talked about the Siberian times and settlement. Ofcourse he asked about the girls, and grandma and grandpa. He was happy with his life then in Poland. Why not? Him and his family were the first I knew who as a family, came out from the war, without scratch.

Other people who survived the war and I was able to see them in Cracow, were Mrs. Frenkel and her son Fredek. He was still serving then with Polish Merchant Marines. Needless to say he died few years later from a heart attack. Mrs. Frenkiel wanted very much that her daughter Lusia would marry Jerry Leuchter, but I think he was already married to Ida. Lusia married later somebody else and live now in Caracas, Venezuela. Mrs. Frenkiel's husband passed away in Soviet Union. Frenkiels and Leuchters used to be neighbours before the war on Czapski street.

At the Jewish Committee on Long street I had a pleasant surprise, meeting Mrs. Schoenberg there, mother of my good friend Jurek, since my days in Santa Barbara school. Her husband also passed away in Soviet Union. She showed to me Jurek's picture still in uniform somewhere with the Polish army. Now-a-day, he commutes between Paris and Warsaw. There was a rumor circulating, that Schoenbergs were able to escape during the war to United States, but I guess, that somebody mixed them up with the Lauterbach family, who escape to America from Lvov.

The last from our family I met after the war was my cousin Paul (Josef) Balin. Our conversation on the street in front of the Jewish Committee was like a talk between strangers. He just arrived from Soviet Union few days before. He was wearing an elegant navy-blue suit. He explained to me, that the suit, wasn't his. Just borrowed from a friend. He also shared the apartment with this friend. For some reason he always was able to find rich friends.

So the life in Cracow went on. I kept typing the HIAS notices and delivering them to the prospective emigrants. Many times it was hard for me to find them, because many former streets names changed, to remember new war heros.

But the new heros not always had been Poles. Many streets after the war have been named after Soviet heros as well, not just war heros, but heros of Soviet Revolution of 1917.

Anytime I wasn't able to find a particular street I used to seek help from the doroshki drivers. These men knew all streets new and old. As I explained before, doroshki in Cracow were just horses pulled buggies. Their name came from a Russian word "doroga" (road). Doroshka, translated to English, would be a "small road".

When I delivered HIAS notices to people who used to live across Vistula River in the Podgórze (Under the Hill) district, often I passed through the area where the Cracow Ghetto was located by the order of German authorities from March 20 1941 to March 13 1943. From the 80,000 Jews of Cracow the last 15,000 were ordered to settle in ghetto. One day I had an opportunity to walk around the famous Zgoda Place. Ironically "Zgoda" means "Harmony". So it was a real irony that on this Harmony Place the German SS with help of Ukrainian and Lithuanian police commited the most terrible crimes against Cracow's Jewry. Even until the day, when I was there, dried out blood was still visible on the walls nearby former pharmacy, whose owner Mr. Pankiewicz and his assistants, were able to observe and hear SS-men killing Jews at random, accompamied with un-human screams and noises, aiming at their heads either with pistols or iron heavy sticks, under the command of Amon Goeth, the commandant of the nearby Plaszow concentration camp. But the most active was a German, former Polish citizien, a member of SS, who used to own and operate a razor blade factory in Cracow. Once he was convicted by the Polish court for his anti-Polish activities. Soon after German army occupied Crcaow he killed both the judge and the prosecutor, WHO COMMITTED HIM.

The chronicles of Cracow's Ghetto mention him all the time for his murderous actions during the liquidation of the ghetto, and other occasions. He always was like a wild man, drugged, drunk, without mercy.

My father still remained in hospital, even thou he felt fine , his attitude was good, and his looks weren't bad either. Never occured to me in those days, that he was on a brink of a major illness.

I was doing all kind of work and assignments for HIAS. I paid fees assessed on us for taxation, by the city and county, as a foreign institution. The collectors never could understand the meaning of HIAS and their work on behalf of Jewish people. His main problem was, why would Jews want to emigrate to United States.

At the same time a mystery woman with a little girl started to come to our office, almost on daily bases. She always used to have long disscussions with Roman Kahane. He explained to me, that she was a prime candidate for immigration to United States. After the visits kept continuing, I even started to believe, that Roman and her had an affair. Then I realised that Roman wasn't the type. Anyway she didn't go to America as fast, as she was expecting. It wasn't until much later, when I was already in Austria, when Uncle Ludwik wrote, That Roman became the president of HIAS, and this woman got Roman's job. Uncle Ludwik was upset, because he was counting on this job, but instead he got stuck with my job, typing a little and running errands. So it was another example, that in many cases even a close relation don't count.

Other patients in fathers room, were nice people. Only one of them at that time was gravely ill, and passed away few days after entering hospital. Other man, was an older person, with his wife always with him. After the war, they discovered, that their only son was safe and living In Czechoslovakia. A young lady came to visit them, with greetings from their boy, and they eagerly expected him anytime. Once both the man and his wife told ME that,a young woman, their relative would come visit them shortly. They would like very much for me to meet her, and also dress nice for this meeting. So I told them that I wasn't interested, because my girl was living in Szczecin and also coming to Cracow, and I also told them, that I don't own a nice suit to get dressed up.

The last man in father's room, was little younger, then the others. My father knew from before the war. Even thou, the food was good in hospital, his wife used to bring him deligious home cooked meals. Judging from her appearance, they also seemed to be wealthy, and on the top of everything, she also worked for the Jewish Committee, for a department, which had been issuing loans to people who wanted go in business. Ofcourse some planing and proof of good will was involved. Once she even urged me to go there and apply for a loan, up to 10,000 zlotys. According to this woman, there wouldn't be any questions asked, and I wouldn't be required to proove anything. But as foolish and honest I was I couldn't get up enough nerve to go there. No wonder that I was in such abad shape.

Trying to find in Cracow some people from the past, made me believe one very nice Sunday morning, walking down Szewska street, that I have seen three girls I knew before the war. They were in a hurry, all dressed up in white summer dresses, and I could have sworn, even having their names in my mind. They were happy talking to each other. As I re-call this incident now, I know, that this was just an illusion, because being on Szewska street, the place of our get-together, I wanted them to be there.

Funny as it was I always kept running into people, that I didn't care in particular. On some other day I came across Tadeusz Kaminski, a boy who almost died from hunger in Siberia. Him and his sister survived, but his mother passed away. The Polish army drafted him, and he served until the end of the war behind the frontlines.

On Krakowska street I also bumped into sister in law of Lonka Rotter from Kudowa. This was the lady who once visited us in Szczecin. She was in the company with another woman all dressed in black. She told me that she planed to settle in Cracow, and wanted to know, if this was a good idea. Her husband and child, were still in Szczecin. Ofcourse I couldn't tell her, because I was having more important problems on my mind.

According to the law, I registered with Polish Armed Forces. They put me immediatly before a draft board, but the commission sent me to an eye specialist because of my bad sight, who after examination, recomended to take me off from the army's register.

Most of the time in Cracow I spent with the Kahane family. To show my appreciation for their kindness toward me I used to run lots of errands for Zosia. When for example Yoel's baby boggy broke down, we made arrangements with a man to reapair it. Next morning when I tried to drop this buggy off at his shop, he denied that he ever saw me, and also said that with that much work around, he wouldn't be able to fix it (buggy) anyway. Such was the attitude of most repairmen in Poland after the war. Ofcourse Zosia never believed my story.

I used to go out with them to sit at the Park Krakowski (Cracovian Park). One of the oldest of Cracow's parks. It was located near Kahane's apartment. The place changed alot, since I saw last before the war. It got much smaller. Many tenis courts were gone. The swimming pool disappeared since they opened the new stadium. The pond, where as students we used to paddle on small boats or kayaks was no more there Also gone was the large pavilion, where on Sundays bands use to serenade residents of Cracow. There in this Cracovian Park, was the last time, when I saw aunt Mala.

Many evenings we spent on Planty, watching people walk by, but not seeing nobody with familiar face. On weekends we watched the same lady chasing kids away from chairs for a fee, who used to chase us away before the war.

Another favored locations in Cracow for me were the beautiful modern buildings Jews bilt before the war to accommodate Jewish organizations. It was a sad sight, to see all those places where before the war Jewish cultural, educational, intelectual and religious life flourished, all in Polish hands.

Chapter 97 (cont)

Cracow! (Another Visit, Father's Illness)

There was no more Jewish hospital on Skawinska street. No more Fireside school for girls, Chaim Hilfstein gimnazium and industrial school in modern buildings and equipment got incorporated into the Polish school system. There weren't people around to claim all those public Jewish buildings, all taken over by Polish government. There weren't young people anymore to exercise at the facilities of the Jewish Sport Association in their new modern building, errected shortly before the war. The only one building taken over by Jews again, was on the bank of Vistula River, an impresive structure bilt before the war by American ORT, and occupied by its original owners.

Hands of vandals destroyed some of Jewish cementaries and synagogues, but some were spared. Our Temple, where we prayed before the war, survived, but without the beautiful furniture inside. Only plain benches and naked walls greeted people who wanted to pray.

My cousins Esther and Lipe Goldstein left Cracow shortly before I arrived the second time. All they wanted was to re-unite with their children in Palestine as soon as possible. They were one of the first to leave Cracow, heading for Salzburg, Austria.

In late July Anna, finally arrived in Cracow. I wasn't prepared to see her this particular day, and was taken by a complete surprise when ~~xxxxx~~ Israel Suedwerts showed up in the office to tell me the good news, that Anna was already in Cracow in their house. She choose Suedwerts, because she didn't know exactly where uncle Ludwik was living at that time.

Mrs. Suedwerts was delighted to see Anna, she even bought from her a small bag of rice, brought by Leniowers from Uzbekistan. I didn't know if I was coming or going, that how happy I was with Anna being with me. After a short stay Anna and I left to see uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose. They greeted Anna warmly, and were real happy to see her. Uncle Ludwik gave up his bed for her, and slept few nights on the top of a large chest of drors. There were plenty of beds in other rooms, but the lady who owned this apartment was in town at the same time. As I wrote before she was a very nice person, and while meeting her, Anna explained to her about knowing her husband in Jaslo before the war.

A weekend was coming up, so I could spent all the time with my Anna. Aunt Rose served dinners for us ~~xxxx~~ couple of times. It was the first time for me since I was there with them.

At the time when Anna was in Cracow I also ran into Zosia Molik former Anna's partner from the road brigade in Siberia. When I told her about Anna being in Cracow, she also came to visit her in uncle Ludwik's apartment.

Suedwerts probably told uncle Eisen that Anna was in Cracow, because on Sunday morning he showed up in ~~xxxx~~ uncle Ludwik's apartment and took us to meet his wife. Anna and I spent with them the entire Sunday. The new Eisen's wife was his cousin. He told us, that they were still engaged to be married, but I think ~~was~~ wanted just to be polite, and not to hurt Anna's and eventually grandma's Frances' feeling as far as his former wife Helen was concerned.

Eisen's wife served us a nice lunch, and in the afternoon we went to see a movie. It was an old Polish movie, wery popular before the war.

We said our good-by's and took a walk back to uncle Ludwik's house. This gave Anna a chance to see some parts of ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ the center of the city. In those days we were together I was trying to show Anna many places of interest from my childhood and early youth. It was another trip down the memory lane.

One other evening Anna and I went to see another movie, and to our surprise, we met there Dr. Perlberger's friend Eda Rosenzweig. She was there with a very nice man, who later became her husband. we also saw this movie together.

The same evening in the front of the same cinema I saw a group of my former students friends from the commercial lyceum, also survivors of the holocast.

Eda and her husband later emigrated to Israel. Together they had a son, who grew up to be a very nice young man. In Israel Eda and her huband lived through many sicknesses, and Frieda helped them out financially lots of times.

Chapter 98

Szczecin Revisited!

During Anna's stay in Cracow we reached few important decisions. There was time to decide if we would be together forever. One thing was clear that Anna, wouldn't part with her family. Even aunt Rose suggested that we should marry, and if we should decide to live in Cracow, we would be welcome to one of the room's in the apartment. It was nice of her. I hope she really ment it. We also went both to visit father in hospital, and Anna invited him together with me to come and live with the family in Szczecin. At that time Leniowers found a new apartment in a nice and save building with plenty of room and conviniences.

Things then were looking up, except that father still couldn't leave the hospital. We all agreed that in few days I will travel to Szczecin again and watch the situation as it develops day by day from there.

In meantime, still before I left my uncle Salo came to Cracow from Warsaw to see uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose. When I saw him first time, he kind of was apologetic for not answering my letters. He was sorry that he wasn't able to help father and me. I felt real sorry for him and aunt Dina for loosing their son and daughter to the war in Warsaw and in Soviet Union. Their only consolation was their grandson George.

Uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose never stoped urging me, that my best bet was to leave Cracow and join Anna and her family in Szczecin, which I intended to do sooner or later, just waiting for improvement in father's condition. Uncle Ludwik, even went as far as promising me 1000 zlotys for seeing me on my way. I guess he never expected that I would hold him to this promise.

I also was very happy to learn that Zosia Kahane, with help of a friendly lawyer in Tarnobrzeg was able to sell her parents both homes there. The families who took over the homes after Germans left Tarnobrzeg, gladly paid the money. The properties as far as I remember were beautiful, and the buyers I am sure bought themselves a real bargain, considering that Zosia couldn't travel to Tarnobrzeg in Person, because of fear of her life. There were cases when Poles used to kill Jews in those small towns, while they tried to sell their pre-war properties.

When I came to hospital to say good-by to father, he was in good spirits, but sad. We both thought, that we will see each other pretty soon. We were in process to make arrangements together with Leniowers to leave Poland in near future. I was leaving hoping that father would either come to Szczecin to join us or that we will meet in a convinient location on our way out of Poland. But the fate was real cruel to me again. Our family's bad luck kept following me again, standing in the way of our happiness. It was the same old story. Little did I realize at that moment, that I was seeing my father for the last time in his and mine lives. If only I could then forsee our future, maybe I would arrange things different. What can I say? At the time he was much better, well on the way to recovery.

And again in a short period of time I said good-by to my family for the second and last time. I parted with them without hard feelings, even thou they didn't deserved. I said thanks to the Kahane family, for their good hearts. For finding a job for me, and for feeding me as much as they could.

Before saing farewell to aunt Rose and uncle Ludwik, I remained him about the 1000 zlotys promise. He was surprised,,but couldn't wisle out of the situation, and gave me 500 zlotys, telling me that was all he had. I also collected my last pay from HIAS, so for time being I was in rather good shape. The best I ever was since returning from Soviet Union. I also recived another free ticket from the Repartriation Committee, using Heniek Zimetbaums ID papers. There was still the matter of a top coat, which aunt Rose promised to give it to me before I left Cracow, but when it came to giving she conviniently fergot the promise, and I choose not to remain her.

Szczecin Revisited!

So Anna left with an understanding, that soon I will join her in Szczecin. I think it was Monday afternoon when I took her to the station. She found her place in a half empty compartment. It would be 24 hours later until she will reach Szczecin.

In my last few days in Cracow I reconciled myself with the idea, that, ~~that~~ it was probably my last time there in my life. As times progressed, the idea proved so far correct. I tried to make my last nostaglic inventory of my beloved city. I went down to the banks of Vistula River, and as in my childhood I saw people bathing swimming and boats plowing the river going north. The same feeling of finality shadowed my walks through the rest of the city.

Cracow will always have a reserved place in my heart, and my best memories of home and my youth, and best friends as well. Cracow wasn't an enormous city, but an aura of history, made it so special. I felt that I knew it well, and could almost sense it breathing.

Another familiar route through Planty to the Wawel castle, remaining walls of the old city, and each morning marching to Sobieski gimnazium, almost were like my private processionals, which went on for so many years. From the Wawel Hill opposite the Vistula River I tried to look hard enough, to keep in my memory, the baroque facades of churches, mansions and castles of Cracow ~~that~~ what once had been the city's most beautiful area.

For the last time I went to see the the old Jewish district of Kazimierz (Kasimir). With most of the Jews gone, still the memories persisted. I wanted to see the old Jewish cementary on Miodowa street (Honey) but I couldn't made myself to enter. One of the oldest cementaries in Poland (Jewish). As kids we used to play soccer on the field on the other side of the tall wall. Many old stones reflected on the history of Jews in Cracow since 1304 when the Jewish street used to be near the old wall of Cracow, where now Planty and old buildings of Jagiellonian University are located.

Sadness came over me, and I felt sorrow for the millions of our people, who perished from hands of maniacs for a crime of being Jewish. "BLESSED BE THEIR MEMORY"

Few days later, with my military papers in order I was on the train again. I carried with me just a small shoe box, and a cap (a present from uncle Ludwik), the same large cap uncle Ludwik got from his friend in Saratow on our way to Poland from Soviet Union. It was even to large to fit my head. There was plenty room in the car, and the trip was rather relaxing. The route also was different that time around. We traveled through Czestochowa, the city with an ancient monastery and the large picture of the Holly Black Madonna from Czestochowa. In Poznan I changed to a train going to Szczecin. It was Sunday morning, the day, when Poles executed there the former Hitler's governor (for "General Government" (the part of Poland not incorporated with third Reich) Hans Frank. for his crimes commited agains Polish state and people.

Near Szczecin the boredom of the trip changed, when Polish military patrol boarded the train, looking for deserters and draft evaders. They arrested a nice young man from a nearby town, because he didn't have on him his military registration ID. People who traveled with him tried to vouch for him, telling those soldiers, that he came from one of the best families in town. Yet nothing helped. They took him off the train.

When the train arrived in Szczecin Anna was waiting for me at the station. so after a short separation we were together again. This was what really mattered.

The main railroad station in Szczecin was rather impressive. It was located on a large plaza facing the River Oder, few kilometers away from the Baltic Sea. In a matter of facts, the river looked like the sea right there, with no river banks visible anywhere near.

We took the streetcar, and were on the way to the Leniowers new apartment. In meantime I noticed that the new city market and bazaar was transfered from the old place where Anna used to do her selling and buying to a large place just across from the station, which ment for the girls a streetcar ride EVERY DAY.

I was very much impressed, not only with the building but with the entire neighbourhood as well, only one of few in whole Szczecin not devasteted by Allied bombings. The name of the street was Naruszewicz street. The apartment was on third floor, but the building was few floors taller. As always Frieda, Ela, grandma Frances and grandpa Abraham gave me a friendly greeting. I felt in my heart, that I was welcome in their home. The apartment was light and bright, with furniture, which came with the apartment.I came into a nice large hall, and then into two furnished rooms, and another one empty. One completely equiped kitchen and a large bathroom. This bathroom was like a heaven. First of all a modern toilet. At last we were able to take baths anytime our souls desired. But there was one hitch. No hot water available. But who cared. There never was a problem with boiling few buckets of hot water.

Leniowers shared this apartment with Mrs. Fenichel and her daughter Zhanka. Zhanka's job in a photp studio helped in obtaining this apartment. In case Anna and I would decide to get married, while we still were in Szczecin, we would fix up this third empty room for us.

This was the first time in long time, when at last some tranquility came into my life. As I re-call since then Anna and I never separated, except for very short periods. We made some new friends, and a young man who came with us from Vanovskaya, started to hang around Frieda, just for a short time. She didn't like him. It was obvious that Ela and Norbert Amsterdam would be an item for sure, even thou Norbert a good looking young man in those days, still tried to circulate. To show off once to his own surprise he hipnotized a girl, and while doing his act, he almost scared her to death.

As required by law in Poland I registered with the neighbourhood militia station. I also registered again with the Jewish Committee, and finally managed to get out some badly needed clothing from them. My dear Anna bought for me a new pair of slacks, sport coat and a light car coat. And finally in Szczecin I found a shoemaker who repaired for me the badly torn shoes I got from Mizrahi in Cracow.At last ~~finally~~ I stated to feel a little like a "Mench".

And again on the agenda was to find a job. While I was collecting clothing recived at the Jewish committee, I also went to see the man in charge of the employment office. He was Richard Kleinhandler who with his wife also lived through the war in Soviet Union. We talked for a while, when he tried to explain to me, how hard it was in those days to find a good job for a Jew. He understood me well, when I told him about my desire to finally find some responsible office position, because while in Soviet Union he came through the same stages as I did. At the end he told me that I should not expect anything spectacular, and gave me a referal to a section of Polish Ministry of Commerce in Szczecin. It sounded real good, and as far as I was concerned it had possibilities because as Kleinhandler told me, the head of the section was Jewish MAN with a Polish name Malinowski. As expected Mr. Malinowski was sitting behind a large desk full of papers in a very elegant office, like many new born big shots in those days. As before I went through the old Soviet style procedure writing my autobiography. Then the man called me in and talked to me. I told him everything, about my background, education, and the years in Soviet Union. But when time of decision came, he said that the position I was applying for (I even didn't know for what kind of a position I was applying for) it was required to be a member of the communist party, and if I was interested I should go and join, and see him later. The whole thing was just a farce. The man knew very well, that it was almost impossible to join the party. To become a member it took a long time of learning and indoctrination. Mr. Kleinhandler from the Jewish committee was flabergasted, when I told him the story. He wouldn't believe what he heard. Obviously he wasn't informed about policies of some agencies of Polish government.

This was my last try in Poland to find a responsible job. Hopes of leaving Poland in a near future convinced Anna and me to quit running in circles without results. From then on, I helped the girls on the bazaar. Sometimes I was trying to sell some items, but mostly I was carrying the heavy stuff.

Many times even grandpa Abraham used to come down to the bazaar to help out. Business was good, and there were no complains.

I also received better news from Cracow, about improvement in father's health. He was allowed to leave the hospital, and prospects of joining us in Szczecin were good. He slept in his old place at the dormitory, and Zosia Kahane took good care on him. He spent lots of times in her apartment, playing with Yoel.

Packages from grandma Frances' cousins in United Stated kept coming, with a nice wardrobe for girls, and other clothing items, and ofcourse food. Along with parcels affidavits, the first step in an effort to bring the family to United States also arrived. For the first time then I realized how much Anna, and family cared, when I saw my name as Anna's husband included in this affidavit. For reasons un-known to all of us, my name Czeslaw was changed to Isidor. To avoid complication I started to carry this second name. But this was just a minor detail in comparison to my feelings I felt to Anna and her family.

Many people from Jasło, Tarnów and Tuchów used to come to see grandma Frances. Some of them grandma didn't know at all. But this was the trend in those days. People wanted to find people from their old communities, hoping to hear news about their relatives, their whereabouts, clinging to that small hope, if maybe some of them would be alive.

Anna Litwak the one who stole Frieda's job in Siberia also came visiting couple of times. We used to sit around the dining room table reminiscing about the Siberian miseries, and this gal hoping, that nobody noticed , she had a nerve to make eyes to Norbert. I guess he didn't notice, or was just pretending, that nothing was happening.

Friendship between Ela and Norbert, grew more and more. It was obvious at least to me, that something would develop from this relationship. At the same time the idea about Jews leaving Poland forever picked-up more steam. Norbert then was the first one, who mentioned to us, and proposed if we all would be interested in making such a move together with his family.

The beginning of world war two, with the German assault on Poland, changed within a single decade the whole international system. Many parts of the world had been totaly destroyed, and 60,000,000 people including 6,000,000 Jews lost their lives. A new dimensions had been added to the human memory, and the exploration of it will never end. New political systems came to power in many countries. Soviet Union emerged as a world power, and small nations under colonial reign of Great Britain, France and even United States started to demand independence and self-rule.

The new order in Poland didn't change the attitude of certain cirlces of the general population. As before the war they continued in their anti-Semitic ways. Many of them used to support the Nazis, and helped them in destroying Polish Jewry. It was even hard for the new post war Polish government to stop them. Those elements fought against the Polish security forces from their hideouts in forests, mountains and other shelters, killing their own brothers, and Jews who happened to show-up in their former "stetls". In a full scale pogroms many Jews lost their lives in the city of Kielce. Altough condemned by the Polish government, this pogrom concinced the remnants of Polish Jews, that the time was ripe to leave this un-grateful country, to which they gave so much throughout the centuries, forever.

The pre-war slogan "Precz z Żydami" (Away with Jews) finally paid off for Poles after the bloody war. Little by little Poland would become a country without Jews. A small group of Jews still resides in Poland. But those who wanted so badly to get rid of Jews, started to realize, but to late, that they not only lost the Jews, but also their beloved Poland to the new lord; The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Strange things started to happen in major centers of Jewish population after the Kielce pogrom. First rumors and then facts convinced Jews to listen to representatives of Jewish Agency, Zionist movement and the Jewish World Congress.

Szczecin Revisited!

Jewish world leaders had begun a major international push toward creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. These people through their messengers, who swarmed first all over Poland, then Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, said that to accomplish this, it would be nessecary to organize a massive exodus of Jews from Eastern Europe, and re-settle them in Palestine to show the world, how much they long for a homeland.

Those with money already left on their own risk. The new exodus proposed by Jewish leaders, would eliminate all those risks. According to them, we would be transported by trucks and rail to so-called Displaced Persons camps, already in operation in Western Germany, Austria and Italy and would wait there until time would be ripe for us to travel to Palestine. Jewish organizations all over the world would care for the security and financial arangements.

To accomplish the tremendous transfer of hundreds thousands of people, they created an organization, a branch of "Haganah" (then Jewish Armed Forces) called "BRICHA".Until today I dodn't know the meaning of this word, but I am quite sure it had to do with guiding and helping our people on this important journey. Members of "BRICHA" used to be young people in military ages, strong, good build, with lots of "hutzpa"and most important brave. I am also sure, that many of them were survivors of concentration camps, and took part in many uprisings against Nazis, or fought against them in partizan movements.

So all those ingridients were parts of the plan Norbert was talking about earlier. He himself already had begun to try to put together a group of people willing to participate.

After a short debate we decided, that the plan had enough merit to follow, and it probably would be easier later to emigrate to America from Western Europe then from Poland.

The first step, was to join up with one of the many Zionist organizations. We chose one called "Ihud", and ofspring of the pre-war "Akiba", a democratic organization, you could compare to American Democratic Party. We answered some questions about our Jewish heritage, and paid them 60 zlotys each. This was all for time being.Later we would be informed about the future plans, when they develop.

We went on with our lives, and enjoyed ourselves as much as possible. The bazaar kept everybody busy. Because of the new apartment young people, new friends used to come visiting more often. We also went to see couple of movies, but the best of all was grandma Frances' cooking. For me was like living in a paradise. For the first time in many years I ate like a regular person. Three times a day, good delicious cooked homemade meals.

In meantime the Polish parlament (sejm) called for a referendum to show the rest of the world that Polish people aproved in full the annexation of territories taken from Germany, as a replacement for land in the east lost to Soviet Union.

The referendum was a tremendous success.. As announced by the government 99% of Poland's population accepted the annexation of the East German territories. As I saw it in Szczecin, the long lines on the streets in front of the polling places indicated that Poles were happy with the new status. Without any registration, everybody voted. Little the Poles knew then, that this referendum, was the first sign of things to come, and many more elections, and voting by Soviet rules.

A Jewish soccer team was also organized by the Jewish Committee. Norbert and I went to the tryouts, but we didn't make the team. Later we attended few games, which the club played with a mixed success. The prospect of leaving Poland in near future occupied our minds more then soccer.

My immediate peronal problem was to make sure if my father would be able to travel with us. At that point he was doing pretty good, but only the long distance from Cracow to Szczecin was stoping him from joining us in Szczecin.

Szczecin Revisited!

If I only knew how things would turn around on me, now I am not so sure, that I would leave Poland at that time. Arrangements worked out with father to meet in Wroclaw, and eventually couple of days later in Vienna didn't work out at all. It was already late in August, and time of leaving Szczecin approached rather quick.

I didn't have nothing to take care of in Szczecin, but Anna and Frieda needed to sell fast their merchandise on hand. XXXXXXXX My stuff was easy to pack. Not much, but I was happy enough with it, and to be with people whom I dearly loved and respected.

In meantime Norbert Amsterdam put a group together of nice, inteligent and professional people. Here is the list. Mr. Broder was a bussinessman. He was OK, but his wife was in my aunt Rose's class. Other were Mr. & Mrs. Zauermann. He was an architect. Mr. Zuberman as he told us was a lawyer. Mrs. Zuberman was a nice blond trying to keep young. The doctor in the group was a Russian Jew, who with his sister escaped from Soviet Union. They didn't speak Polish, but Russian and Yiddish. And then was the Mondrzak family. He tried to play a big Zionist, a worker for Israel. His wife was always upset, because of her inability to have children.. The last in the group were Mr. & Mrs. Kleinhandler. The same man who sent me earlier with the referal from the Jewish Committee to Polish department of Commerce to apply for a job. Two young men our age joined the Kleinhandlers. One was Sigmund Gleicher from Dresden a survivor of a German-Jewish family. His friend was Mark Astman. Both spoke fluent German. Mark also claimed being a German Jew, which he really wasn't. Both said, that they don't x understand even one Polish word, xxxxxxx which also wasn't true, because Astman spoke also perfect Polish, and whatever any of us was saying in Polish he translated it to Gleicher. In another words, those two boys played us for fools.

Early in September we recived news, on a set date to appear at the Szczecin railroad station with our baggage. We said good-by to Mrs. Fenichel and her daughter Zhanka went with us to the station. Our group gathered near the train, but there was nothing for us to do. A "Bricha" man showed up with our tickets. Our heavy baggage was put in the baggage car and we were told which compartments to take, and xxxxx behave normal, not to appear suspicious, like people who were secretly leaving the country. Shortly after the train left Szczecin, soldiers again checked our military documents, but all our men were ready for them.

The train was full to capacity, when we arrived in Wroclaw. I was forced to leave the car through the window in order to go fast and claim our baggage. Couple of "Bricha" men already waited for us. We traveled 13 or 14 hours, and there was night when the train reached Wroclaw.

Hoping that my father will be waiting for me in Wroclaw, I kept running all over the place trying to find him, but he wasn't there. I was so sure that he will be in Wroclaw. But not such luck. Much later I found out that the same night he went back to hospital seriously ill with pneumonia. I wanted to phone Cracow, but I realized later, that none of my relatives had a phone. So as many times in the past my thoughts and plans for the future were so xxxx abruptly interrupted.. Yet I was trying to keep faith, hoping that in few days I will xx re-unite with father in Vienna.

In Wroclaw the "Bricha" men gave us new tickets to travel to Klatzko on the Polish-Czech border. Our new railroad car was shaped different that all other cars. It remained me more of a streetcar, with long lines of benches, but not compartments. We took our seats in complete darkness. Yes there were no lights in this car. Besides our group, other regular passengers boarded this car. Hopes about good night sleep disapeared, when couple of young Polish punks started to make anti-Semitic remarks. xxx How they knew in the dark, that we were Jewish I still don't know. On our insistance the conductor called in a railroad policeman who finally restored order, threatning those punks with arrest.

XXXX

Chapter 99

Good-by Poland!

Early next morning we arrived in Klatzko, one of those neat German cities inherited by Poland after the war, just few miles away from the border with Czechoslovakia. Trucks took us to a save-house owned or rented by Jewish Agency. Families in our group got divided in separate rooms, but we took a room together with Amsterdams. After settling down I went to Post Office and sent a wire to father to tell him, where I was. Not knowing yet, what really happened in Cracow I felt a little better, still hoping for a meeting in Vienna.

The men of "Bricha" told us that it would be preferable not to speak Polish anymore. They suggested Yiddish only, which was easy for older folks, but not for us. We tried to adopt the best we could, but our tongues just kept spluttering making difficult to pronounce some words. It was fun for awhile. We spent the night in Klatzko on bags filled with straw. And again trucks took us to a resort town of Kudowa, right on the Czech-Polish border. This was the same Kudowa where grandma's Frances cousins the Rotters and Tadek Juszczyk used to live. Ofcourse Lonka Rotter still lives there.

Our trucks traveled on a perfect beautiful highway, bilt in times of German glory with also beautiful countryside on both sides of the road.

We unloaded and entered another save-house in Kudowa few yards away from the border. Under no circumstances we were allowed to leave the house. There was no chance for Leniowers to contact their relatives. We spent there one night only, until arrangements were completed for us to cross the border. Thanks to Jewish Agencies and other organizations we didn't have to snick and play cat and mouse with guides and hide from police. The "Bricha" took care of everything. There were with us some young men and one young woman. An emergency situation developed, when a high ranking inspection drove by to inspect the border. Before the "Bricha" members left to hide in the nearby forest, they told us to lay low in the house. During the night men kept watch in and outside of the house

In the morning with our baggage on our shoulder we walked the 300 or 400 yards and entered the guardhouse on the Polish side of the border. Some of us even carried more then one piece of the baggage except of Frieda ofcourse, who, only carried over her arm a gas mask bag, without a mask, just with some beauty supplies. Inside we saw the young "Bricha" lady handing to the commandant a larbundle of Polish zlotys. Maybe hundreds of thousands. I am sure he later splited the loot with some higher ups.

Another surprise came when the commandant thought that Anna, Frieda and Ela were Polish girls, who wanted to leave Poland with Jews. He wanted to talk to them, because of their light blond hair. It was all well again, when grandpa Abraham, explained to the commandant that the girls were his daughters.

The ramp on Polish side of the border opened. With everything left of our possessions in bags on our shoulders we begun to walk toward the Czech territory. For the second time in our lives we were leaving Poland. At least that time it was our choice to follow this path, with a hope of better future. My thoughts at that time started to focus again on the past. Poland! The land of my youth, and growing -up. The land of my happiness as a child together with my parents. The land where I used to play and got my education. Poland! The land where Hitler murdered most of our brothers and sisters. The land of sadness where Jewish blood was flowing freely like a mountain river. The land which Jews helped to build since many centuries ago, even thou they weren't appreciated. In a way we helped the Polish nation to realize their hundreds years old dream come through, to have Poland for themselves, without Jews. We were the pioneers, because those who stayed behind were forced to leave later in 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Yet Poles themselves didn't achieve their happiness. They are still fighting for their rights and real freedom and independence, which it will be very hard to regain in near future.

We kept walking in no-man land. Czech soldiers stood maybe 200 yards away. The last fast turn of the head. The last vision of the country and slowly walking away Polish guards.

Chapter 100

Another Look at the Past!

Walking through the no-man land just half way between Poland and Czechoslovakia, as I am thinking about this important event now, it comes to my mind, that almost forty three years went by since that day.

We will reach another important milestone in few months, when we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of Hitlers invasion of Poland, the begin of world war two, and the beginning of "final solution" for European Jewry.

The "final solution" succeded only in part, leaving 6,000,000 Jews death, either by gas, crematorium, all kind of weapons, beating and hunger. Almost half of world's Jewish population perished in one way or another.

But not all sacifices went for nothing. From the ashes of Jewish "Martyrs" a Jewish State of Israel came to life in parts of Palestine.

Since this eventful April 1948, many up's and down's occured. But Israel stood and still stays proud against their enemies, internal and external defending Jewish rights and honor.

Ofcourse our pledge never to forget our departed in such murderous ways, still remains alive as ever. We honor them with Yahrzeits whenever possible, with memorial sevices, and monuments in their memory all over the word, wherever Jews are living.

Therefore at this point I would like for you to read notes and thoughts, written down by your Blessed Memory grandma Frances cousin Tadek Blut Juszczyk. Actually Tadek's [redacted]mother was grandma's Frances first cousin. Tadek Juszszyk, who resides now in Israel traveled to Poland last August 1988, to present Israel's honors to people who saved his life during the last war. While in Jasło, his old hometown, with some of his friends, who saved his life, he traveled to a village of Bełżec in the region of Tomaszow, Lublin province, where between February and December 1942 600,000 Jews lost their lives murdered by the Nazis, and among them parents and sister of Tadek's.

And here is his story as follow's!

"Bełżec 600,000"
By: Tadeusz Juszczyk
Notes from Journey to Poland
August 1988!

We drove a Czech build Skoda automobile. Karol, a son of the man who helped me to survive, during the worst time of German occupation, risking his own and his friends lives, just to keep me alive.

Beautiful August morning, tried to invite us to enjoy ourselves, but thoughts of the past, wouldn't let us to be fully happy.

Suddenly Karol broke the silence, and told me, that we were coming close to a village Warzyce. He wanted to know if I would be interested to see the place, where many Poles from Jasło lost their lives. Ofcourse I agreed, and soon enough an arrow informed us that only 200 meters away there was a "Martyrdom Area". We turned to the right, and stoped by a board few meters from a forest road. It said: "Here Polish prisoners lost their lives!"..when Karol interrupted my reading. You know, he said. Here Germans brought from the Jasło prison, political prisoners and other Poles, with plastered mouthes, so they wouldn't be able to protest. They were told to remove their clothing above the waist, because their legs were in chains. The Jaslo Gestapo made ready for them rather long ditches. There were 10 Gestapo ruffians guarding the truck. They ordered the prisoners to jump and keep jumping all the way to the edges of ditches, helping them out all the time with painful whips strokes. Two ruffians acompanied prisoners holding them under arms, near the ditch the third ruffian, kept killing them with a shot from a gun in the back of their heads, and pushing them into the ditch. Prisoners knew and saw everything, what was coming up, but plastered mouths and chained legs paralized their thoughts and eventual possibility of defence.

Not faraway from this place few hundred Jews from Jasło were shot to death. Rows of dirt piles marked their graves.

Chapter 100 (cont)

Another Look at the Past!
(Bełżec 600,000)

Guards dressed in black uniforms forced Jews to remove all their clothing. In groups they marched to the edge of the ditches. Few guards waited for them, with their guns ready to shoot wherever possible, and pushing them often still alive into the ditches. One Gestapo man was circulating from one ditch to another, making sure, that anybody who was still moving would be shot to death.

After we left this place of horror, we passed the city of Rzeszów, driving in direction of Jarosław, Karol wanted us to stop and have a drink of tea or coffee. I refused, and we continued on our way in total silence.

The time was 10am. Without stoping we went through Jarosław. Then between Jaroslaw and Bełżec, we noticed many small posts with arrows, with some more inscriptions: "Place of Martyrdom". According to Karol those were the places, where German used to kill Polish members of the underground.

We drove in strange silence, coming closer to Bełżec. A silence, which Karol discretly didn't even try to interrupt.

In meantime my thoughts went back to 1947, when I was trying to see Bełżec. I was driven by a strange force to go there and see the place of execution of hundreds thousands of Jews mostly from Southern Poland (Małopolska) and vicinity of Carpathian Mountains. There in Bełżec my entire family perished, my dearest parents and my sister, my other relatives and the entire Jewish population of Jasło. Then I made as far as Jarosław, but the local Jews who survived, advised me not to continue, because of the danger being killed ~~from~~ BY hands of all kinds of bandits who opposed and fought the then Polish government. I turned back and decided to come back in more stable times. But then I left Poland, and settled in Israel. Finally after all these years of trying, Polish authorities allowed me to enter the country. So again after many years, on this August day 1988 I am on my way to the death camp in Bełżec.

What a coincidence, I thought. It was August 1942, when Jews of Jasło were deported to Bełżec, and this is the day,, exactly 46 years ago I lost all my dearest ones. But I survived thanks to Karol's father. He is not alive anymore, but I kept in touch by mail with my friend Karol, and others who gave me their helping hands.

Suddenly Karol interrupted my thoughts. We will be soon in Bełżec, he said. And soon we entered the village. A long street, even maybe to long for a village, curving between low homes. We reached the main railroad station. (There are two stations in Bełżec). And again, maybe 150 meters behind the station, another arrow informed us about another place of "Martyrdom". We turned to left, and there it was a large gate with a large sign above "Extermination Camp-Bełżec".

I was surprised. How could it be? A famous extermination camp, standing in the village, just behind the railroad station? I always thought, that an extermination camp would be located far away from population centers. I still didn't understand the German ingenuity. Their thinking was that, a camp near the railroad station, would save them the cost of building and guarding side tracks.

Germans surrounded the camp, according to their own methods. They told the local population to stay 80 meters away from the camp, or to be shot. It was a sufficient warning, and all residents of Bełżec, as they insisted, didn't know at all what was going on inside. One resident Stanisław Borek told me, that Germans to cover their steps, from time to time used to send Jewish prisoners to the nearby evergreen forest, where they cut hunderds of trees, brought them to the camp and lined them up around the fence which used to make an impression of a thick hedge. Passangers on trains passed by the camp, and didn't see nothing, and didn't suspect anything. But in the middle of the camp the factory of death was working full speed, producing nothing else but "Death".

The surprises and other preliminaries behind us, Karol and I left our car and soon entered the territory of the real Extermination Camp. Two our right there was the plan of the camp, but not clear enough. Next to the plan on a large board an artist wrote a short story of the camp, and listed places in Poland and all over Europe from where Jews came to Bełżec.

Chapter 100 (cont)

Another Look at the Past!
(Bełżec 600,000)

On the left side of the gate, on a pink marble fastened to stone plates, the artist carved out a following quotation:

AT THIS PLACE
FROM FEBRUARY TO DECEMBER 1942 HITLERITE
EXTERMINATION CAMP EXISTED, WHERE OVER 600,000
DIED IN MARTYRDOM!
JEWS FROM POLAND AND OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
AND 1500 POLES FOR HELPING THEM!

As you can see, it is a distinct mention, only about atrocities commited by Germans in Bełżec on Jews and the 1500 Poles, who helped them.

600,000 children, youths, women,men got killed in most barbaric ways in a period of 10 months. Imagene how much speed the Germans put into their activity to kill 2000 human beings each day in one gas chamber only. How many liters of gasoline lost the German war economy just to start and operate the diesel, to bring death to innocent people, gasoline so much needed on the war fronts. 600,000 killed just in a small village like Bełżec.

I see you now, my dearest parents, when the Jasło transport, came to Bełżec, and when the Polish crew turned over the locomotive to the Germans, who had driven your transport inside the extermination camp. I can see, how they open the gates of the cattle cars and command you to get out. I can hear, when they are telling you where to put your clothing. Each family in a different place. You need to undress in order to go to desinfection, because later you will be taken to your quarters, and early in the morning to work. I also see, when they divided the families. You my dear father went with men, and you my dear mother with women. You kiss each other, hoping to meet again aftern the desinfection next to your clothing. I see you naked standing in a long row on a narrow path, between fences, leading as you thought to desinfection. Finally the count had begun, You are moving into the territory of the desinfection building. I can see the large door opening rather fast. They beating you already with their whips, and quickly pushing you inside. You probably still don't understand what is going on. But then the heavy door is getting shut behind you my dearests. You hear the noise of the working diesel engine. You and the others are all squized tight, and smoke is getting into your nostrils. You probably don't realize that you are inside of a gas chamber, but like through a dream you finally understand, that the whole think was just a one big lie. Now I hear your last cry, you are fainting. Your last breath left you, as the end came.

Oh! My dearests, now I see the doors of the chamber open on the other side. They work hard, very hard to pull you all out. They keep selecting you. They are looking for gold teeths. They keep pulling them out, and your still warm blood is pouring out of your mouthes. They put you on stretchers and throw you in ditches on the top of other death bodies. And soon I don't see you anymore. Many other bodies have covered you. Oh! My dearests parents and my dear sister! The eingine keep working. The line is moving forwards. A new transport is arriving in extermination camp.

Suddenly I hear Karol's voice. Tadek! You look rather strange standing in front of this monument!

Yes; I answered. you understand. 600,000 in only one such small camp.

I finally realized, that I am still standing at the camp's gate. I still didn't see the inside, but I was mentaly warn out.

I excused myself from Karol, telling him, that I would like to be alone. He discretly moved to the side. I put yarmulka on my head, and armed with a camera, I went inside the camp.

Chapter 100 (cont)

Another Look at the Past!
(Bełżec 600,000)

And there it was. The first section, a large empty tract, covered with tiny red gravel. I saw a narrow path, worn out, going through this empty tract. The path leading all the way to the other end of the camp.

Today a narrow path, but tommrrow a new highway! Said my friend, when I told him about my visit to Bełżec.

At the end of the empty tract, bordering with the camp's territory which now is a green forest is standing a building, hexagonal in form, 4 meters high, with sides 6 by 4 meters. In front two figures, skinny figures, showing one falling and the second trying with much difficulty to hold up the first one. Around the figures few dry out flowers. This was the "Mausoleum", but all shut-up. There was no way to get inside. Nearby a worn out board with a Hebrew inscription. Probably the place where gas chamber was located.

A small alley leads to the forest, to the place where ditches with gased bodies along the entire east side of the camp, long over 100 meters are located.

Monumental concrete plates cover the dirt over the bodies. Plates over graves symbolize forms of Jewish monuments without names or signs. The entire camp is surrounded with a wire fence. It looks, like the fenced part of the camp is much smaller, then the original extermination camp.

I stood between two graves. Sand all around me. Small evergreen trees. Here lay the remains and ashes of my dearest ones. Remains and ashes of 600,000 inocent people. I took out a small bag from my pocket containing Israeli soil. I spreaded it all around. I filled up my empty bag with the soil of the extermination camp to take it with me to Israel. I said "Kadish" and then "El Maale Rachamim". All was quiet in Bełżec. Unbelievable quiet, but very clear, that, this was the way it should be. 600,000 innocent people,,I am sure have heard my prayers and acknowledged them in silence.

And standing like this in total silence, it came to my mind, that in this little forest I didn't see or heard any birds. Maybe their super-minds also told them to keep away from this place of extermination?

I was alone in the camp. Karol was waiting for me outside the gates. Later I asked Mr. Borek from Bełżec if anobody comes there to visit the camp. His answer was: Almost nobody come here. Only some Jews. Only once came here a large bus with American orthodox Jews with earlocks, in black coats (kapotas) and in fur hats. Two hours they prayed aloud and left. Sometimes an outing of school children arrives or two or three persons the most. Most of the time the extermination camp is empty.

On my way back out of the camp I noticed with wonder a man riding a bicycle on the path in the middle of the camp. I couldn't stop wondering if my friend from Warsaw wasn't right telling me that some day there will be highway here.

When I approached the rider I discovered that he was the local mailman. I asked him to whom he delivers mail in the camp? He answered that this path through the camp was his shortcut to the other side of the village.. In the fence there was a small door for people who needed the shortcut.

When I asked the mailman if he knew somebody who remember anything about those exterminations in Bełżec, he said that all the old ones passed away, and the young ones don't know anything. He recommended Stanisław Borek, whom I already mentioned and Wacława Kołodziejczyk, who maybe saw something and wouldn't mind to tell me.

Mr. Kołodziejczyk's house was not to far away so Karol went with me. He was a nice man and hospitable. During our conversation he said, that nobody from Bełżec ever was inside the camp and nobody didn't see nothing. The population guessed only about the activities inside, because cattle cars used to go in full of people and came out empty. And this was the case all the time.

An incredible smell (stink) used to spread out all over the village. The inhabitants couldn't sleep. They used to chocke on their food, and threw up constantly.

Chapter 100 (cont)

Another Look at the Past!
(Bełżec 600,000)

Before we left Mr. Kołodziejczyk showed us three oil paintings, which he painted himself at time when the extermination camp in Bełżec kept working full time.

The first picture shows inside of the camp. In the middle next to the fence, are the side tracks, and on them cattle cars with open gates, from which still all clothed ~~xxxxx~~ are coming out men, women and children. In the middle of the tract on a wooden podium an uniformed German is standing, making a speach to the people around him, who just left the cattle cars. In the background silvets of so called "Blacks". People of Bełżec gave them this name. Those were Ukrainians, and other former Soviet soldiers of Mongol ancestry, whom Germans mobilized from Prisoners of War Camps to help with extermination of Jews and wore black uniforms. In the pictures "Blacks" guarded the area, so nobody would try to escape. Behind the podium, there was a house (gas chamber).

Second picture shows a large place with scaffolds made from tracks of the torn down side tracks. On this scaffold hundreds of naked men, women and children laid out rather chaotic. From scaffolds hanging hands and legs of the deaths. Everything is burning in a great fire. "Blacks" are standing next with long thick sticks minding the fire and the bodies. On the left side a mechanical "digger" with long metal teeths, and in its claws bodies which anytime would be thrown into the pile of the burning "Martyrs". In the background open ditches.

Third picture shows two Gestapo men riding horses through Bełżec. Between the horses a local peasant, beaten with whips and bitten by dogs, because he was to curious, what was going on in the extermination camp. Gestapo showed the peasant off to the entire village, as a warning to others.

All three pictures were primitive, clearly showing amateurs hand. Evidently Mr. Kołodziejczyk have ~~x~~ been moved ~~with~~ German actions against Jews in the camp and felt a need of puting on canvas his personal emotions. To tell the truth what he imagened was very close to reality. I personally think, that some institution should show some interest in those pictures, apraise their historical value and buy them for display in a museum.

Next we went to see Mr. Stanislaw Borek, who greeted us in his garden under an apple tree, and treating us with apples. Mr. Borek acknowledged Mr. Kołodziejczyk's words, that nobody was able to get inside the extermination camp. Railroad workers heard voices and pleading for water from the passing by trains, voices of Jews locked inside the cars. But death penalty scared off everybody.

As I mentioned before the camp stood 150 meters from the station, and those railroad workers would be the best witnesses, but couldn't see to much.

Mr. Borek insisted, that railroad workers estimated, that 1,800,000 Jews were brought to the extermination camp, but I think that their count is little excessive. 600,000 is the official count taken from historical research.

Mr. Borek told us about his personal feelings and the ~~and the~~ entire village's feelings in connection with the terrific stench coming from the camp all the time.

It was a real scare for Mr. Borek, when a "Black" once came to his home and called him outside. Mr. Borek was scared to death, because a meeting with a "Black" ment death. Not wasting any time the "Black" asked Mr. Borek about the whereabouts of Partizans. Mr. Borek didn't know what to do. If he would tell him where Partizans were, their lives and his as well were in his hands. The same thing was true if he wouldn't tell him. How could Borek know if the "Black" don't act on German orders? The "Black" said that he want's to escape. Something in Mr. Borek's head was telling him that the man was telling the truth. He spoke Russian very good, and his features were Mongolian. He probably was a Tatar.

Mr. Borek risked his life, when he gave this man directions to the nearest Partizan hiding forest near small town of Biłgoray. The "Black" left grateful, saying, that he can't stand anymore his duty in camp. He had to run, because there was "Hell" inside. He left with a sign of silence.

Chapter 100 (cont)

Another Look at the Past!
(Bełżec 600,000)

Still after so many years Mr. Borek was vividly shook-up.

On Karol's suggestion we said good-by to Mr. Borek, and drove our car in the direction of the local Catholic Parish. Long before our visit in Bełżec, Karol while coordinating our trip made an appointment with the local priest.

The priest was willing to see us in his home, and as far as I was concerned, I was hoping to hear more about the period of time when the camp was in operation.

The Parish building was rather modest, which surprised me, because Bełżec, as a large village and the priest, in my mind in old Poland were expression of wealth of the population.

We recived a hearty welcome from the priest, who invited us into his living room. After introduction I explained to him the reason of my visit in Bełżec.

I told the priest, that few days before I arrived from Israel, and that I was born in Jasło, and that during the war in August 1942 all Jews from Jasło were deported to Bełżec, among them my parents and rest of the family, perished right there. I came to see this place of extermination, just to be with my thoughts near my closest and dearest.

I beg you Father: I interrupted a short meditation, maybe you would be able, to tell me something, about what was going on here, during the extermination of Jews. I asume that the local and from the vicinity population, confided in you their eye-witness impressions.

The priest felt sorry for me, because as he said, he took over this Parish just about 20 years before, and what I was interested about took place 46 years back. The priest knew only what people told him. Ofcourse, he asked questions, but answers were not accurate. One thing was sure no one person from Bełżec, was inside the camp, while exterminations went on. People used to be scared to death of Germans and their helpers the "Blacks", and never were in contact with them.

They all agreed about the terrible stench, during the existance of the camp, and during the cover-up during the liquidation (wipe out traces).

The priest also said, that after the end of hostilities the local population invaded the former camp to dig for gold and jewelery. The priest wasn't to happy about telling me the story, but repeated, what he was told by his parishoners.

On the wall in the hall of the Parish copies of Mr. Kołodziejczyk's pictures were hanging. This was a gift from Mr. Kołodziejczyk to the priest. It seems to me, that he was not only a painter but a good copier. And once again those pictures made a chilling impression on me.

Karol and I said good-by to the priest, who accompanied us to our car, and still inviting us to come back if we would be in the vicinity.

It was evening already, and again we drove in silence. Bełżec behind us. the silent extermination camp also behind us. Behind us as well, the place, where 600,000 perished in a worst way. Innocent beings, because they were Jews. Behind us silence. But I am with you my dearests ones. Always! As long as I am alive I will remember your "Martyrdom".

Chapter 101

Czechoslovakia!

Few minutes after leaving Polish territory Czech soldiers raised the ramp and we found ourselves in Czechoslovakia. A friendly post commandant said few words in his native language, and motioned with his head and hand for us to enter the guardhouse. As soon as we unloaded our bags from our backs and shoulders, Czechs wanted to know, what we have to declare. They were mostly curious about American cigaretts, nylons and chocolate. There was no inspection. As on Polish side a large contingent of "BRICHA" men was on hand. They still insisted for us to speak Yiddish. They also conducted a phony registrations and handed to us phony documents with on spot made-up names, and right there we became former residents of Kielce, where the pogrom took place back in July. So for time being we assumed our new indentities.

After an hour rest we loaded our bags and suitcases on waiting trucks. "Bricha" told us to form ranks, and we went on to an assembly building located in a small border town of Nahod, couple of miles away. Everybody was marching, even seniors. People on streets stoped to watch us. I guess this was a familiar sight for them. It probably remained them of marches under SS guards during German occupation.

The march was mostly up-hill, and probably tiresome for older folks. At last we arrived in this wooden house on the top of the hill. We unloaded our baggage and went inside. We took assigned places on the floor. There were lots more people in this building. Evidently they were putting a large group together for a train raid.

I was pleasantly surprised when I met there with my uncle Salo and aunt Dina from Gliniany. It was a real pleasure. After all last when I saw aunt Dina, the war still was going on. Her daughter Lusia was still alive, and her grandson George was a little baby. All this was In Bukhara, before they left for Tcharjou to work there in hospital. You remember, Lusia and her husband Sigmund were doctors. And as far as uncle Salo was concerned I saw him few weeks before in Craccow. He was an ardent Zionist, trying then to accomplish his lifetime dream, by going to Palestine. In meantime they left Warsaw to join their grandson and his father in Badgatstein, Austria. Sigmund Foerster was living there in one of those luxiury hotels, taken away temporary by Americans from their Austrian owners in order to Let Jewish holocost survivors to live there. As times went by Jews rightfuly so made a mess out of those hotels, and later International Refugee Organization paid millions to the owners to restore them to the former grandeur.

Back at the assembly building in Nahod, a young "BRICHA" man greeted us with an eloquent speech. We all were astonished with the text and language of this speech. The poor choice of words and filthy content, made us think twice about what we were getting ourselves in.

After all those were just instructions how to behave and what to do on that journey. At the time I hold him at the same level as guards in concentration camps.

A key instruction was to destroy and get rid of all our personal papers, IDs and even graduation diplomas, birth certificates, etc. Until today I think, that this was one of the worst advises I ever got. Maybe it seemed right then, but it backfired on us in the future. Grandpa Abraham went along and Threw away many important papers. The only document I destroyed was the ID given to me by Soviet authorities before Leaving Soviet Union. I kept my birth certificate. And I still have it. This torn already yellow piece of paper always remains me of home. The only thing left from those days.

I introduced uncle Salo and aunt Dina to the Leniower family. Since this day we had been together for few months until they joined their son in law and grandson in Badgatstein.

We spent the night in this building in Nahod, sleeping on the floor. As far as I remember we were fed with bread and salami, and a drink. Also there was a large warehouse loaded with all kinds of clothing for men and women. There was so much of it, that also was spreaded all over the dirty floor. But "God Forbid" nothing was distributed among the people.

Czechoslovakia!

The reign of corruption was everywhere. Whoever was in social services, with the enormous relief coming from United States, was bound to get rich. Because the attitude of these people was like all this stuff arriving from America would be theirs, and they were the ones doing us a big favor by giving us just the scrap. Exactly the same attitude, as of delegates in Soviet Union, and members of Jewish Committees in Poland.

Following morning we left Nahod, again in box cars. The train moved slowly traveling across Czechoslovakia from North to South. From Polish-Czech border to Czech-Austrian border. There were many stops. We had been on it whole day and night. Not until next morning we passed the Bratislava, near the Austrian border, the capital city of Slovakia. It became obvious to us, that our destination was Austria. The train finally stoped in an open field. It was easy to assume, that trains or trucks used to bring us as close as possible to the borders, but we always crossed those borders on foot, marching to the closest railroad station.

On one side of the field was a high hill, like a small mountain. On the other side was a large river. I think it was Donau (Danubia River). At this point Danubia was the border between Austria and Czechoslovakia. As on previous occasions we unloaded our bags. I also helped my aunt and uncle. And again we loaded those bags on the waiting trucks. Seniors were allowed to ride the trucks. The rest of us formed a marching column, and kept marching to Bruck a small railroad station on the Austrian side.

Our column slowly crossed the bridge. Czech and Soviet guards on the Czech side, and Austrian "Gendarms" (Border guards, because according to post war agreements Austria wasn't allowed to have an army) and again Soviet soldiers on the Austrian side. It seemed that as in previous crossing everything was preranged. Soldiers just kept openning the ramps.

We entered the territory of Austria occupied by Soviet Union. We marched on a very nice paved highway. Large trees and bushes on both sides of the road. "BRICHA" told us to keep quiet, and when asked to say that we were Greeks. When some body got restless, and spoke to loud our leaders kept whispering the Hebrew word "Sheket" (silence). In many places along the highway, behind the dence bushes we saw Soviet soldiers peaking out from behind them. I got an immpression, that Soviets left the highway and made available to our crossing. It was clear again, that some people took large bribes, just to let us through.

At Bruck, a passenger train was already waiting for us. For the first time we traveled on regular scheduled train, with Austrian passengers sitting among us. Soviet and Austrian guards were visible all over the place. The train was on the way to Vienna and stoping on every station,

We arrived in Vienna and stoped on some sidetracks, on the outskirts of this large metropolis. We were still in Soviet Zone. Many Soviet soldiers walked around giving us strange looks. One young Soviet officer, a little on happy side approached Frieda and asked her to sing Russian songs with him. She ofcourse played, like she wouldn't understand him. He became frustrated and left her alone.

In meantime a convoy of Vienna streetcars arrived to take us to our next destination. Again we loaded our baggage on and took places in the cars. This ride took us through the center of Vienna. And there it was; The Kaertnerstrasse, in Vienna's business district, and ofcourse the famous Ringstrasse, with all those historic buildings, which I so good remembered from the "Rundgang durch Wien" (Walking around Vienna) while learning German in gimnazium, and from my visit to Vienna in 1936.

Soon after we crossed from the Soviet zone to American Zone of Vienna It was a moment, we all were waiting for. The streetcars stoped in front of a tremendous complex. On the gate leading to the complex, there still was a sign: "Rothchild Hospital" A world famous facility founded by the famous and very rich banking Rothchild family.

Chapter 102

Rothchild Hospital In Vienna!

During the days following world war two, and many years after Rothschild Hospital served as shelter and Transit place for refugees from Eastern Europe, who tried to decide what to do, and plan their future.

In 1946, when the massive exodus had begun from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary, with one purpose only, which was to settle in then Palestine these building served as an assembly center for the new arrivals, whose leaders, decided there to send them. All of us had been like pioneers, a new breed of Jews, who wanted a new homeland for themselves in Palestine, but first needed to settle in Displaced Persons camps in Germany, Austria or Italy.

Before we entered the buildings, still outside, all of us got sprayed with "DDT". They stuck those hoses between our clothing and the body. First in the front, and then in the back. Inside we were assigned into nice and clean comfortable rooms, with beds. We rested there for couple of days. Ofcourse, there was a dining room, but not to much to eat. As far as I remember only soup was available. The real joy were clean bathrooms, restrooms and showers.

I didn't find my father in Vienna, as I expected. My mind kept working overtime, because there was very hard for me to figure out what went wrong. All kinds of thoughts besieged my head, but I was trying to block out the most important thought, that father was seriously ill again in hospital. I was even thinking about turning back. But there was no way I could do this. Legal traveling between Poland and Austria and West Germany, was almost not exist in those days. Without documents, not "Bricha" and anybody else would take me back to Poland. Suddenly I realized why those "Bricha" men told us to destroy our documents. We became people without a country. The Rothchild Hospital, life in Displaced Persons camps. This was the first fundation in the long process, to force the international public opinion to create a Jewish National home in Palestine. We all were pawns in a very big and important game, for high stakes. I was worried, but I was forced to postpone all efforts to find out about father, until the time, when we will be settled in a permanent place.

A proverb in Poland used to tell us that "Two Mountains can never get together, but people always have a chance". The surprise in Vienna was, when we ran into the families Schwartz and Parobek, whom we knew from Siberia. The families, who liked so much the Soviet system. Nobody would ever suspect, that these people ever would leave Soviet Union. Later in our travel, we came across many others like them, who left, but kept praising communism and Soviet Union as well. Those were the ones who made good there. The other big surprise was Grisha Weintraub. Yes he was in Rothchild Hospital also. Again walking around with his hands in pockets, trying to play a big shot. He made up a story, that he was a member of "BRICHA" with many responsibilities. Another big lie. I tried to stay away from him. Still I enjoyed the fact, that Grisha was visibly shaken, after finding out that Ela and Norbert were going together.

So the short rest in Rothchild Hospital came to an end. On second day in the evening, we found ourselves again on one of the many Vienna's railroad stations. And again we boarded a transport of box cars. I guess not so much human treatment we had to endure a little longer.

While waiting on the platform, Anna noticed her old friend from Jasło, Sala Altholz, whose mother was a very good friend of grandma Frances, before the war. Sala's mother was not alive anymore. She passed away in Soviet Union. We also met Sala's new husband Hersh Wrubel, an adopted son of Mr.& Mrs.Wrubel, Salas aunt and uncle. Mrs. Wrubel was the late Mrs. Altholz's sister. Very nice and orthodox people, but modern. Also with them was Sala's father, the very rich Mr. Altholz formerly from Jasło.

Chapter 103

From Vienna to Steyr!

We left Vienna, still unaware about our final destination. The station was in the Soviet zone of Vienna, and our journey continued through Soviet zone of Austria. This part of Austria is called Nieder Oesterreich (Lower Austria). We traveled all night long, a distance which normal train makes in two hours. And again as on previous crossing all was pre-arranged. The Soviets guards even didn't stop the train, before we entered the American zone. It was already mid-morning before we saw our first American soldier. Soon after our train rolled into the railord station of small picturesque town Steyr - Ober Oesterreich, (Upper Austria), part of the country occupied by U.S. Forces, only couple of kilometers from Soviet zone.

Steyr was and is over 700 years old, located on the River Enns, and surrounded by hills overlooking the town, with many ancient buildings still occupied by the local population. The old market place was also ancient, hundreds years old, also surrounded by old buildings, serving as local government offices. During German reign this market place was called "Adolf Hitler Platz". In a matter of facts most of Steyr's residents used to have fond memories from the Hitler era.

Nearby was the modern district of Steyr, with neat residential homes, gardens parks, cinemas and two soccer stadiums. As in other Austrian and German cities streets were extrimly clean, and one could feel and be overwhelmed with Austrian so-called "Gemüthlichkeit" (Relaxation). The town was half asleep every day between 1-3pm, and all stores were closed on Wednesdays afternoon. The main industry in Steyr was automobile plant, producing a very popular all over Europe small car, called "Steyr". In pre-war days a large detachment of Austrian Army was stationed in Steyr In "Franz-Josepf Artielerie Kasserne". (Franz-Josepf Army Fort). In our times the place was empty, later serving as living quarters for Jewish Displaced Persons. Another machinery producing plant also empty when we arrived was on the other side of town. There were many "Gast-Houses" (Hotels) in Steyr. The most elegant was taken over by American Military Government. Many coffee houses and reataurants, contributed to local beauty, mostly the outdoor establishments helping people to enjoy their "Gemüthlichkeit".

Two theaters, five moviehouses, dance halls, and two soccer teams "Forward" and"Amateurs"kept people happy mostly on week-ends.

The deputy camp commandant sergant Hodges, greeted us at the station. His American name really fooled us, because he was of Polish ancestry, and spoke, a good Polish. For us it was a plus, because it was easy to communicate with him. He was a nice man with lots of patience and understanding. And you can believe, patience was the one thing he needed most to deal with our Jews.

U.S.Army trucks were lined-up in front of the station to take us to our Reithoffer camp in the buildings of the former machinery producing camp. We enjoyed our first glimps of Steyr, the town, where we spent our next four years. The view was impressing, and we kept looking forward to see more of it later.

We arrived in Reithoffer late in the afternoon. It was night already after we un-loaded on a large plaza in the back ot the camp. We were un-comfortable, because of a cool September evening. It was well into the night, before our family's turn came to register in the administration building. I guess some people were settled already at Reithoffer, taking the all important jobs for themselves.

The management assigned our Szczecin group to a large room in a concrete building on second floor, with most of the windows broken. We covered them with blankets to keep the chill out. They gave us folded military cots, and more blankets. It wasn't to bad. We have seen worse. So it was good enough for our first night there.

Next morning we went out to explore the situation around the camp, and to find out, what was going on, or maybe find a familiar face, or a possibility of finding a job.

As for myself another urgent matter was to write a letter to uncle Ludwik and inquire about my father. I was anxious to know what was going on in Cracow.

Chapter 104

Steyr-D.P.Camp Reithoffer!

In comparison to my personal problems, other problems on hand, seemed to be minor. To settle in this new enviroment wasn't easy, but not difficult. Our first chore during the first morning in Steyr was to divide spaces amomg our group. Then all ladies took over to make the place fit to live.

In those days, more and more I was thinking, about asking my dear Anna to marry me. I think from now on as the story goes on I would like to call her, by her real name Hania, as I always have done. I would like also add to my parents names the tittles grandpa and grandma. They both as grandpa Abraham really deserve it, not having this priviledge, when they used to be alive. Well! Let this be a tribute to them.

Our D.P.Camp in Steyr kept over the name Reithoffer from the plant,,probably owned before by the family Reithoffer, was our home from September 1946 until June or July 1947. The structure occupied an large area, more then a half city block. It wasn't an idustrial part of town, but rather a pleasant neighbourhood, with small homes and gardens bordering with outskirts of Steyr.

The large gate in front was kept closed all the time. The security guard used to open the ramp for authorized vehicles only. Much smaller gate on the side opened only for pedestrians. In the beginning again only authorized personel was allowed to go to town, but after couple of weeks all of us recived green passes, and from then on we were coming and leaving anytime we desired.

The camp security was located in a two story building next to the gate. Next to the ramp was standing a booth for a policeman on duty. All members of the security used to be called in German "Lager Polizei" (Camp Police), even thou they didn't like to be known by these names, not to be compared with ~~with~~ the so much hated "Ordnung Dienst" (Jewish concentration camps police), who cooperated with SS and Gestapo.

Up-stairs in the same building was a beauty salon, operated by a young beautician on whom young single Jewish boys in camp operated lots of times, as they used to say: "Not for pleasure, just for revenge".

Next to the beauty salon was a spacious clinic and a small hospital, with living quarters on second flooer. Across the street from hospital was the American administration, with the head commandant, his deputy seargant Hodges and camp administrator, an Austrian who knew the buildings. In the same building, also there was the office of the Jewish "Lagerfuehrer" (Camp Leader), who was a very dedicated young man. His name was Shmulek. Nobody in camp knew his real family name. He was the only survivor from his large family. Offices of Shmulek's assistants, and other departments followed. All nice rooms on second floor were occupied by a lady liason from the "American Joint Distribution Committee"(AJDC), and other not American big shots, who used to live in town. Those were Jewish doctors, some heads of departments, and ofcourse all the corrupted all parties officials. A small contingent of U.S.Army was stationed inside the camp.

In a large warehouse nearby an enormous amount of all kinds of merchandise was stored, and always guarded by American soldiers. In this warehouse for the first time in my life I saw an American sitting in a chair and holding his feet on the table. I realized then that what I used to see in the movies was real.

In quarters above ordinary people like us used to live. Large halls all over the camp used before for manufacturing were converted into rooms, divided, either by temporary walls made from boards, or plain blankets. The masses lived in four or five large concrete buildings, and few wooden barracks.

In the middle of the camp was a large kitchen. A real kosher kitchen was located in a different building in headquarters of the Orthodox Aguda. Then there was a food warehouse, and coal and wood storage. The communal bath and mikva was squized between two barracks.

Restrooms in all buildings were in perfect shape, until those, who didn't see a real restroom before made a mess of them. They thought of them, as an old-fashioned outhouse. A small building across the large warehouse was a place, where people sitting behind desks took care of all the paperwork. A good job so-called lower eshalon.

Chapter 104 (cont)

Steyr-D.P.Camp Reithoffer!

Every day camp activities political and religious were controled by many Zionist organizations. As in today's Israel political parties kept xx quarrel among themselves, making only life miserable for camp's inhabitants. Ofcourse American administrators didn't interfere with their activities, to a certain point. In those early days the party of profesional people and inteligentia, (Ihud) dominated the scene. This was the party which brought us to Austria. Then there was the labor movement led by Gordonia. The party of the first prime-minister of Israel David Ben Gurion. Ofcourse now they rule together with Likud under the name of Mapam. Other workers organizations were Shomer-Hatzair, famous since the Warsaw Ghetto uprising because the leader Anielewicz was their member. At the tail of the labor slate were Poale Zion right and Poale Zion left. Betar was an extrime right wing party, xx slowly on the raise in those days. In late 1940s they emerged as a terrorist group fighting The British and Arabs in Palestine, and British only in Europe, mostly by blowing-up British military transport, under the banner of Irgun, and Menachem Begin the future prime-minister of Israel, LEADER SHIP

Aguda and Mizrahi kept spreading the religious words, and running the spiritual aspect of Judaism through their two synagogues.

To make the life in camp even more interesting, the former war veterans, organized themselves in their own party, under the name of Phahah, also staking their claim to the pot, with a slogan "We fought, we gave our blood". All of them insisted, as being tiresome workers on behalf of Jewish people, but they always, were first to dig into the pot to stuff their own pockets. And believe me their opportunities used to be countless.

Food supplies were very good. Besides the kitchen, where everybody could always get a delicious meaty soup and sometimes even meat, we used to recive all kind of foods from the camp warehouse at no charge.

Two weeks later uncle Ludwik, answering my letter informed me, that father was back in hospital with a severe case of pneumonia. My nightmare returned to me. Planes of being together with father blew up like in smoke. I started to explore ways how to get back to Cracow, just for a visit with father, but nothing came out of it. As I found out two weeks later, there was a transport leaving from Linz, with Poles, who decided to return to their homeland. One Jewish man in camp, who left his girlfriend behind, wanted to bring her to Austria, so he went with the Polish transport, with an intention to return. He even left behind with friends his 11 years old daughter. But this entire adventure was kept secret and nobody knew about it. All this came to my attention after the transport for Poland left. This was the last opportunity to leave Austria. If I would had known about it in time, I would travel with this man and also would return with him. He was back in 10 days with his girlfriend.

Your grandpa Jacob was a very ill man. For time being at the end of 1946, he was able to leave hospital, but his health didn't improve. I am not sure, but I think he experienced pains in lower parts of his body, pointing out to abdomen. His doctors concentrated on his kidneys, because grandpa told them about his previous kidney problems. To make a kidney X-Ray we sent to Cracow medication, not available in Poland. But kidney wasn't his problem.

As long as he could, grandpa wrote letters all the time, keeping us informed about his condition. He even found long lost cousin in Salzburg, and wrote to me about her. I wrote to her and also went to Salzburg to meet her, but was told then by my uncle Salo, who then already with aunt Dina was living there, that this cousin left town forever. Personally I never heard about her before.

In Cracow uncle Ludwik and Zosia Kahane took very good care on grandpa. In and out of hospital. In 1947 when his health deteriorated more and more, he still kept in touch. Prior to Hania's and my wedding we still kept clinging to our hope, that grandpa would make to our wedding. But it wasn't written. By the end of 1947 uncle Ludwik informed us, that it wouldn't make no difference if I come or not to Cracow, because grandpa was in bad shape, and wouldn't recognize me anyway.

Grandpa Jacob was in constant pain, and on heavy dose of morphine, which was difficult to obtain. I am quite sure that uncle Ludwik spent plenty of money, to get it for him.

Together with grandpa's worsening condition, letters stoped coming, and uncle Ludwik was our only source of information, until the time when on March 15, 1948 we recived a postcard from him, that after tremendous suffering my dear father passed away at 1am, the night of March 10 on March 11, which correspond with the Jewish month of last Adar to Adar II. Memory of this day and regrets of not being with father in his time of need will always be with me until my last day on this earth. "Blessed Be His Memory!"

Father was burried on an old Jewish cementary on Miodowa street (Honey), according to Jewish laws. There is a monument standing on his grave, also commemorating the death of my Blessed Memory Mother who passed away in Soviet Union in a village of Palasan, region Alti-Arik, province of Fergana on September 12, 1945 (5 Tishri).

Back in Reithoffer my first priority was to find a job. As always in my case, situation wasn't different. All good jobs and supervisory positions were taken over by people who took over the camp from American authorities.

With no other choice I took a job of loading and un-loading trucks. My consolation was, that I wasn't the only one. Imagene an architect Zauerman, who arrived with us, and was forced to put on overalls, and take a job as plumber's helper, fixing not only faucets, but unclogging the every stoped-up restrooms. At least my job included some traveling to Linz from time to time to AJDC to pick up food and clothing for the camp. On other occasions we collected trash, or traveled to locations to buy wood for camp's kitchen. Once when our wood was stored in Soviet zone, the driver and our American escort loaded the truck by themselves, because our passes wouldn't allow us to cross to Soviet side. Even with a valid pass we wouldn't cross, because of fear of being arrested.

Our first green pass was replaced by Americans with a Displaced Persons Card giving us permission to move freely in American, British and French zones. Still most of our jobs took place either inside the camp or around Steyr.

Small kids in camp used to get a tender loving care in a very well equiped kindergarden. Older children went to regular school, learning Hebrew, English and other important subjects. There was also a Hebrew, and English language school for adults.

Among my other duties one of my bosses let me work for a while as an assistant to a painter. This man was plain "nuts". He expected me to paint those walls like a profesional painter. We argued constantly. I didn't like at all to claim a tall ladder with bucket full of paint, and a brush in my hand. My work was sloppy, but most of all I was scared to death about the possibility of falling off the ladder. I was glad when my time came to return to the truck.

The hardest part of the job was to unload coal from railroad cars at the station. The job was demanding and dirty. We needed badly coal for the fast aproaching winter. When the coal warehouse was all filled up, we unloaded the loads in front of small basements windows, and then pushed all that coal with shovels inside.

Time was precious, because of shortage of railroad box cars, our coal needed to be un-loaded immediatly. On those days we even didn't go home to eat lunch. Instead our leader used to take us to the kitchen and served a good lunch for us. The reason for this was simple. People wouldn't show-up to work after lunch. Half a day of work was enough for them.

Our responsibility also was to keep the camp clean outside, every day including trash pick-up. All this wouldn't be bad if not for peoples carelessness and apathy. Instead to put trash in special containers lined up on the far end of a large plaza, they used to dump it all around containers on the ground. The same problem existed in restrooms, where they dumped their personal refuse outside of the stool instead inside.

My supervisors, and there were many, were impressed with my hard work. I was hoping for better offers, but they didn't come. One of these big shots, even had a nerve to ask me if I wouldn't consider A Job in his sanitation department. Ofcourse I refused. I was really upset with this proposal, but I kept my mouth shot, hoping that something better will turn up soon.

Again grandma Frances informed her relatives in America about ours whereabouts, and again they responded with money and generous clothing and food parcels.

So the daily routine continued.Once after spending a day in Linz, I returned home to find our room empty. I was surprised and disturbed. I didn't know what to think until grandma Frances found me and told me that we moved to another room in a different building, sharing it only with Amsterdams and the two boys; Sigmund Gleicher and Marek Astman.. The rest of our Szczecin group also moved. Few weeks later Marek discovered his lost sister in Stuttgart-Germany and left Steyr to be with her.

Still not everything went smooth. Grandpa Abraham got ill again, and the doctor put him in the camp hospital. As I remember, all this happened in the mist of High Holidays. Our first Rosh-Hashana and Yom Kipur in freedom. We had plenty cause to celebrate. Good American food and wine as much as everybody desired. At an emotional Yizkor services people recalled in their minds, holidays of the past, when families used to be together and those who perished. After the supper we went to hospital to visit with grandpa Abraham and toast him with wine and wish him good health. He left the hospital shortly after the holidays, but his health never improved 100%.

Few weeks later doctors in Steyr sent him to a Displaced Persons hospital in Gmunden. This was a hospital under supervision of American Military Government, A very good facility, well equiped located in a beautiful resort on a lake surrounded by tall mountains, with clear and fresh air. Grandpa remained in Gmunden for six weeks. He returned to Steyr just for few days to visit with us, and then he went back to continue his rest. When at last he was released his condition improved considerably.

According to Jewish calendar on 5 Tishri was the first Yahrzeit after my Blessed Memory Mother. Her brother uncle Salo went with me to say Kadish in the camp's synagogue.

We have had good relations with my uncle Salo and aunt Dina. Their room was just below ours on second floor. They shared it with a young couple and the husband's brother. We visited them often and played cards sometimes. During this particular time uncle Salo went to Badgatstein to see his former son in law Dr. Sigmund Foerster, trying to make arrangements so he and aunt Dina could move there to be together with their grandson Georgie. Needless to say there was no quarters available for them, so they settled for a D.P. Camp in Salzburg. They got a room in the same camp where Esther and Lipe Goldstein were waiting for the opportunity to go to Palestine and reunite with their children, whom they sent to Palestine as orphans back in 1942 with Polish army from Samarkand in Soviet Union. In meantime Lipe Goldstein got involved in camp's politics, and even elected to a post as "Lagerfuehrer" (Chairman of the Camp Committee).

Aunt Dina told me before their departure from Steyr, that single and widowed women were crazy about Dr. Foerster and wouldn't leave him alone. She also told me, that probably her son in law would marry his former sweetheart from Gliniany, who was coming from New York to take Sigmund and his son Georgie to America.

It was a sad situation for uncle and aunt. After loosing their son and daughter, Georgie was the last close family they had. Uncle Salo who all his life was a dedicated Zionist, finally had his lifetime dream coming through, and he wouldn't travel to no other place in the world, except Palestine, grandson, or no grandson.

So Dr. Foerster and his son went to United States. First the father as a new husband to his old friend. Georgie was forced to wait few months in Salzburg with his grandparents, until all the legal work was completed. Uncle Salo and aunt Dina went to Israel in 1948.

Chapter 104 (cont)

Steyr-D.P.Camp Reithoffer!

Payment for all working people in D.P. camps didn't come with money, but in extra food rations. It was important because working people recived products, which were not available to none working people. Our extra rations consisted of Hershey bars, Americanx cigarettes, cans with jam, corned beef and other can goods. You even can't imagene what dishes grandma Frances and Ela used to prepare from corned beef hash, like hamburgers, meatballs all served with all kinds of dried caned vegetables, and ofcourse caned fruit.

Still 15 months after the war, we the the former victims had all the food we needed and the "Herrenfolk" (Austrian and Germans) kept suffering. With my extra rations Hania and other women could go to Steyr or nearby villages and exchange chocolate and noodles for potatos or other fresh fruit and vegetables. Austrians then were hungry for luxuries, which only Jews could give them for a price ofcourse. With time trading with Austrian became a common occurence and throughout the years developed into a lucrative business for some people.

At last my hard work paid off, and I was awarded with a supervisory job. From then on I didn't have to work anymore, just to watch other people working. The first priority was to keep the camp clean. Each morning I practicaly draged my workers from beds to make them come to work. Not everybody wanted to work, with all that food being distributed for nothing. But somehow they did.

Norbert's friend Mr. Broder who came with us, took over the job as camp's agent in charge of bringing food from Linz. I assigned to him two men who traveled with him to load and un-load the goods. The rest of the workers performed as before. A jelousy developed, because going to Linz and pick-up food always had some advantages.

In meantime Norbert Amsterdam came-up with an idea to organize a social and sport club in camp. The leadership bought the idea and left him in charge. It all began with organizing a "Ping-Pong" team. Even since before the war Ping-Pong had a reputation as a Jewish sport. And it was true, because best players in Poland and rest of Europe as well were Jews.

Norbert needed an assistant, and seclected a young man shortly, I guess because he was a good ping-pong player. Until today I don't understand, why he picked the other guy, even not asking me if I would go for it. Granted I wasn't a good ping-pong player, but I had a very good background in sports, and I would had done a good job organizing the club. At least for the sake of our friendship I strongly believe, that it wasn't a decent thing to do, not to give me a chance, which would take me away from the hard work.

Chapter 105

Amsterdams!

Before leaving Szczecin Hania and I met Norbert Amsterdam. With Mr.& Mrs. Amsterdam we met before boarding the train out of Szczecin on the way to Austria. Amsterdams a very nice family with an outstanding Jewish religious background as ~~WE~~ spent their war years in Soviet Union. In those days Norbert's mother Mrs. Esther Amsterdam was impressive and good looking lady. A loving wife and a caring mother. The father Mr. Alois (Eliezer) Amsterdam was quite older then his wife. He loved his wife dearly, and there wasn't a thing, that he wouldn't do for her, and according to Mrs. Amsterdam he always acted this way throughout their marriage. Also with the family was Mrs. Betty Speiser, mother of Mrs. Amsterdam, a very nice decent and quiet lady.

Norbert was 23 years old in 1946. Before the war he was a student in gimnazium in Rzeszow, and if not the war he would enter lyceum in 1939, the last two years before graduation.

Mrs. Amsterdam"s family used to own land for many generations. Her father came from Raclawowka (probably near Rzeszów). His father was an owner of a large farm in Raclawowka. His name was Shulim. ~~M~~ Him and his wife had two daughters and four sons. During world war one the family was forced by czarists Russian authorities to leave their land because of death threats. Shortly after returning home Mrs. Amsterdam's grandparents passed away, leaving their entire fortune to their son Moses Speiser who used to live with them. Moses, his wife and only son died in Soviet Union, during world war two. Another son Bruno Speiser survived the war. He is now in his 70s and lives in Tel-Aviv.

Obviously Mrs. Amsterdams mother Betty Braff Speiser, married another of the Speiser boys.I can't help to think at this point if my maternal grandmother Zlata, whose maiden name was Speiser also, wasn't related to this family. Betty's husband was Israel Speiser. Her parents used to own a beautiful farm in Tyczyn near Rzeszów. Her father's name was Osias. Him and his wife had three daughters and two sons. One daughter and one ~~si~~ son came to United States long time ago. After Mrs. Braff passed away, Mr. Braff sold the farm and bought three apartment houses in Rzeszów, and moved to one of them with his son. He left everything to his children, but most to the son who used to live with him.

Mr. ~~AXSS~~ Alois Amsterdam, Norbert's father, came from Zawadka, also near Rzeszów. As Mrs. Amsterdam's family his parents owned lots of land. His father was Shlomo Amsterdam, and his mother was Speiser also. She was a sister of Norbert's grandfather on his mother's side. So as you can see Speisers and Amsterdams were twice related. After the world war two the only survivors of Mr. Amsterdam's family were his brother Sigmund and his wife Lola,,but their only son perished. Brother Adolf and his son Joe survived in Soviet Union, but Mrs. Adolf Amsterdam,Helen perished. Their daughter Sandra emmigrated to United States ~~x~~ in 1938 to live in Cleveland Ohio with her father's sister Mrs. Esther Wiesenfeld who was married to Leon Wiesenfeld, one of the leaders of Jewish community in Cleveland, a journalist, editor and owner of The Jewish Pictorial Magazine in Cleveland. Mr.& Mrs. Leon Wiesenfeld are not alive anymore. Rest of the Amsterdam family died in Soviet Union or perished in Hitler's Germany.

Three brothers of Mrs. Amsterdam; Lolek, David and Simon didn't survive the war. The fourth brother Calek spent long years in Soviet prisons, and came back to Poland much later then all of us, a sick man. He emigrated to Israel and even got married there, but soon after died of a heart atack.

Two sisters of Esther Amsterdam survived the war in ~~hidingin~~ hiding in friend's home in Rzeszow. A pogrom after the liberation forced them to leave Poland. One sister Sabina Fish with daughter Gerda (Sabina's husband perished) left for Germany. The second Gizella Schneeweiss with husband and son settled in Czechoslovakia. Adventually they all settled in Israel. ~~Th~~ Both sisters are not alive anymore. Sabina's daughter Gerda Feiner, had her own daughter now, and even a grandchild. Also Adam Schneeweiss, son of Gizella Schneeweiss still lives in Israel.

Mr. Alois Amsterdam Norbert's father was a successful bussinessman in Rzeszow before the war, and owned a fabric and piecegoods store there.

Amsterdams!

In September 1939, when German panzers and air force kept closing on Rzeszów, as Jews all over Poland, Amsterdams left their hometown, by means available and went East. They came to Lvov hoping that war will be over soon, so they could return to Rzeszów.

As we all know, it didn't happen this way. Germans won the war in Poland, and Soviet Union occupied the eastern part of the country.

While in Lvov Norbert continued with his education, and in those days Soviet education authorities even offered to Norbert and other students his age a deal to graduate one year ahead. And then came registrations. Either to remain in Soviet Union, and take out Soviet citizienship, or return to Rzeszów and live a fragile life under German occupation. Still refusing to believe the stories about German atrocties, Amsterdams registered and choose to return to Rzeszów. In those days most of the refugees in Eastern Poland valued more the wealth, they left behind, not realizing, that in few short months, not only their wealth will be all gone, but their lives as well.

As a result of the registration, at night on June 29 1940, Soviet NKVD loaded Amsterdams and thousands other from Lvov area and deported them into the depths of Soviet Union. To the student Norbert Amsterdam they offered an immunity. If he would continue with his education, he would be allowed to stay, but his parents, must go. Ofcourse Norbert refused and went with his mother and father.

Ural Mountains on the border between Europe and Asia, were the final destination of Amsterdams. At least not as far from the rest of the world, as in our case. From then on their home was a town or settlement of Lala in Sverdlovsk district. Working hard during the next ten months in many cases in deplorable conditions, they finally got their so-called freedom, when Polish prime-minister of the Polish government in exile in London signed a treaty with Stalin giving amnesty to all Polish citiziens in Soviet Union.

To get away from this God forsaken place Amsterdams travled south to a town called Azov and then to Omsk on Trans-Siberian railroad. The expected change in Omsk never came. Decent jobs weren't available, and still very cold Siberian winter didn't agreed with their health.

At that particular time Mrs. Amsterdam's brother Calel and her mother used to live farther south in an industrial city Karaganda in the republic of Kazachstan. Amsterdams obtained a permit to travel, and left Omsk during a terrible cold spell. Not equiped and dressed to travel in such chilly conditions, they hitched a ride on a large wagen loaded with hay.Sitting way above on the top of hay Mrs. Amsterdam, got so frozen, that she completely lost feeling of her body and fell of the hay all the way to the ground and got ran over by the wagen. She was badly hurt and not able to move. When at night they finally arrived in some small city, they found out to their horror, that the place was off limits to foreigners. At last they found the city hospital, and waited until morning to get in. The hospital was closed at night. Another obstacle occured, when, a sleigh was late picking-up Mrs. Amsterdam, who was suffering tremendously from pain and cold.

At least the doctor, who attended Norbert's mother was friendly and understanding. Examination showed no broken bones, but badly bruised parts all over Mrs. Amsterdam's body. The doctor risking his job left her in hospital against the rules. It was quite an ordeal for the whole family. Norbert and his father remained in town even thou they knew it was against the law. They kept hiding and slept at the railroad station. They were hungry, because they were afraid to buy food at the local bazaar. Esther Amsterdam shared her food with her husband and son, and they in turn visited with her when nobody was around and then ate the leftover food in the hospital morgue.

Few weeks went by and Mrs. Amsterdam felt much better, but the doctor still wouldn't release her. Still feeling sorry for her family, she decided to leave hospital. Both Norbert and Mr. Amsterdam looked horrible. Dirty, hungry and full of lice. After thanking the good doctor, through side streets they went to the station.

Chapter 105 (cont)

Amsterdams!

In fearing of being stoped by police, ~~they~~ AMSTERDAMS circled the station, and boarded the train from the opposite side, not noticed by anybody. With some luck, they finally arrived in Karaganda, where they remained until their departure to Poland.

Karaganda had been always known because of rich coal mines and other heavy industries. At last Mrs. Amsterdam re-united with her mother and brother. In the beginning there was rough going for all of them, but after looking around and some luck Norbert found a job as a director of bread distribution in a local bakery. As you already know from my previous writings bread in those days in Soviet Union was worthed more then gold. Anybody working close to bread as Norbert, could make a wonderful living for himself and family and other people as well. But the key word was "carefull". Being carefull and not showing off went a long way.

Amsterdams made many new friends in Karaganda. Some of them good ones, other not so good trying to take advantage of Norbert's good nature.

Being bold Norbert also took a stand against the Soviet authorities, meaning the powerful NKVD, when he refused their passport and forced on Soviet citizienship. He proved to them, as Goldberg in Fergana that there was a law in Soviet Union, that a foreign citizien was entitled to a "Besgrazhdansky Pashport" (Foreign Citizien Passport), while living in Soviet Union.. Ofcours NKVD didn't have other choice but issue such pasport to Norbert.

Amsterdams arrived in Szczecin from Soviet Union, at the same time as we did. We don't know to much about them, and their activities, except for Norbert trying to find a good job, and his father selling stuff on bazaar.

Once when Norbert needed a favor from someone, who he helped in Karaganda, this person refused, even thou Norbert knew that he was laying through his teeths.

Ofcourse Norbert's friendship with Ela, started the relationship, between our two families. During the next few years there were many ups and downs, and many disapointments, even a correspondence between Norbert and some girl in Cleveland, Ohio, whom Mrs. Esther Wiesenfeld Norbert's aunt tried to marry arranged to marry Norbert. Adventually everything worked out to everybody's satisfaction.

Chapter 106

Camp Politics!

Zionist parties dominated politics not only in Reithoffer, but in all Jewish Displaced Persond camps in Austria, Germany and Italy. Good men, leaders, some of them businessmen, lawyers and othef respected profesionals acted behind the scenes, without demanding compensations for their work, with one object in mind, which was to bring about a creation of a Jewish State in Palestine, as soon as possible. The other group used to be the visibles, the one who under an umbrella of patriotism, had their selfish desires in the first place on their minds. Each party have had many so-called leaders of the second group in their midst. Their purpose was to prepare the camp's population for immigration and future life in Jewish state. Jews with other plans were ignored, and some eager party leaders, if they would have their way, they wouldn't give any help to those who wanted emigrate elsewhere. They wouldn't give them jobs, and other privileges, by keeping those rations for themselves. On a tip from some concerned individuals Americans put a stop to this nonsense. As far as American Joint Distribution Committee was concerned, according to their by-laws every Jew in camp was treated equal.

Parties kept educate young people about the importance of a Jewish State in Palestine. A call went out to all the leaders of countries all over the world to support Jewish desire for an independent state, to prevent future occurence of another holocaust.

All these young people learned Hebrew, ways of living in a kibutz in a desolated areas, and selfdefence against Arab terrorists. Stiii it was obvious that the new future emigrants to Palestine, didn't have a desire at all to live in a desolated kibutz. They all were talking about Haifa or Tel-Aviv, and other larger population centers.

Each Saturday afternoon Oneg-Shabats took place all over the camp, with music, singing and indoctrination. Most visible was "Betar" the party of "Hawks" already in uniforms, with sticks replacing weapons, with an Jewish Blue-White flag, marching around the camp to show their strengh, and organizing small manuvers, from time to time.

The young leader Shmulek was very popular, and people respected him. Everybody felt sympathetic toward him, maybe because he was alone. Young women adored him, but he kept away from them. His second in command, was just opposite. He liked to go out with girls, and didn't take him long to find himself a bride. His wedding was first in camp.

Party leaders used to be privileged people. Not because of popularity, but because of greed and corruption. As it turned out later, most of them didn't have any intention to go to Palestine, and to Israel as well. Just few of them went. The others emigrated to America or Canada, including the militant members of Betar.

Anything; Food or clothing, which arrived in camp, those leaders divided among themselves first. The rest of it went to the people. Ofcourse the workers in warehouses were next after the leaders. Camp's population kept complaining, but not hard enough. All of us knew the score. Those who survived holocaust and the ones who came from Soviet Union knew exactly how corruption works.

Profesional people didn't worry about camp jobs. Ofcourse doctors and nurses worked in hospital and in camp clinic. Shortage of nurses was filled in by Austrian personal. Lawyers found employment in administration, and many others found desk jobs also. One of them was Norbert's mother. In those early days not to many people wanted to work in camp's security, so the rest of us, not matter how educated we were worked the dirty manual jobs, except painters and carpenters. Barbers, shoemakers and tailors formed a cooperative, and made pretty well, also doing jobs on the side in their rooms. But any job as long as you worked for the camp's administration was a political favor. without party affiliation, there was no job.

Despite the misery of living in Soviet Union, there also were many communists and sympatizers among our people. They used to medle in camp's affairs never satisfied, and believed or not some of them were members of the right wing "Betar".

Camp Politics!

And then, there were the rich ones. As I said before they worked behind the scenes for parties of their choice, mostly for the right wing movements. Besides being involved in politics, they haven't done anything else. They all kept together, enjoying themselves. As long as their health permited they traveled a lot to Austrian resorts, or to Linz or Salzburg. Seldom anybody traveled to Vienna, because of fear to cross Soviet occupation zone.

They always happen to know the right people who for their money would help them to emigrate earlier then other people. Having money made possible for them to live in better quarters, some even furnished with better furniture. Many of them used to live in nice apartments outside camps.

For some reason unknown to us, Americans wouldn't allow Jewish chauffeurs, on camp's trucks. The rather large fleet of American and German made trucks had been driven in those days by Hungarian, Yougoslavians, Poles, Austrians and "Volksdeutschen" (People from other nations, who during the war took on German nationality). It was commonly known, that Volksdeutschen were more anti-Jewish then Germans themselves. Jewish leaders upset with the existing situation, weren't able convince Americans to change the rule, until one cool November morning, a political confrontation errupted in our camp. The showdown had begun, when Jewish camp police closed the gate not leting trucks driven by none Jews leave the camp. In meantime Jewish drivers took over the rest of the trucks and the whole camp population went on strike in support of the drivers. For couple of days hardly anybody was inside. All men and many women stood outside cheering and demonstrating.

Trying to break the blockade Americans sent out a truck driven by one of the soldiers stationed in camp, with orders to break the ramp and drive away, which the soldier accomplished. Immediatly afterward MPs surrounded the camp, and arrested our camp leader Shmulek, for breaking the rules. While Shmulek was being taken away, a group of Jewish men surrounded the MPs leading out Shmulek. One of those men in a loud emotional voice speaking Yiddish, which sounded like "In dem numen oyf Yidishen Volk" (In the name of Jewish People) pull Shmulek away from the MPs, taking him into hiding someplace inside the camp. Later a large controversy errupted among camp's population, about the right of this man to act in the name of Jewish People. Many discussions followed until things got normal again.

Americans were flabergated. They didn't expect Jewish resistance, and it was to early after the war and holocaust to act mean against them. They didn't have another choice but to negotiate. Two high ranking officers arrived from HQ in Linz, and after a day or two talking reached a compromise with Jewish leaders. They agreed to split trucks even among Jewish and none Jewish drivers. But under no circumstances Shmulek was to remain as our camp leader. After he left, he came visiting, just once. After that nobody ever heard from him again.

Shmulek's deputy Moshe took over as the camp leader, but his job as a supreme leader didn't last to much longer. According to a new agreement between the Central Jewish Committee in Salzburg and American Military Government, elections would take place in each camp, and seven or eight men committees would rule the camps. Each party would have one representative on the committee. The representative with most votes would be the chairman of the committee and the camps leader, as well.

And so it was. A heated campaign developed between the parties and camp's population. Right wingers blamed left wingers and vise-versa. Left wingers kept making their points, that they were the ones who fought the war as members of partizan units, and that theirs was the leadership in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Lots of speeches and even blows took place, but at the end the right wing prevailed. Moshe Shmulek's deputy, got the most votes, and held on to his leadership post. Still he was under committees control and responsible to the bunch of greedy men, who fought among themselves all the time.

In October or November 1946 another large transport of Jews arrived in Steyr. A group of few hundred families took residence in an old Franz-Joseph army fort.

Chapter 107

Living in D.P. Camp!

The new Jewish residents of Steyr came from a camp in a small town Haith, also near Linz. Americans disbanded the camp because of many disturbances and rioting. Many inhabitants of the camp were deported back to Poland. Some families even got split. Most of the deportees after couple of months made their way back to Austria, and joined their famlies in Steyr at their new residence: Camp 231 Franz Joseph Artielerie Kasserne,

Reithoffer for time being, served as a transit camp for newcomers from Poland, Hungary and Rumania. After short rest and feeding they were relocated to camps in Linz or Salzburg, Most of them liked that way, prefering larger cities to Steyr.

But suddenly in November or early December, refugees stoped coming. Poland closed her borders, and crossing in those days became almost impossible.

With winter approaching, camp's leadership tried to make sure, that everybody had enough coal and burning wood. Every room in camp was equiped with an iron stove. Long lines formed every morning in front of the coal shed. Ofcourse to satisfy everybody rationing was necessary. Suspicious people wouldn't buy the rationing idea, and kept accuse our leaders of favortisim. Fist fights used to break out all the time between men waiting in lines. I saw all this, because for some time I was working in the coal shed, helping to give out coal and keep order. Thanks to my work there, we were assured of little more coal. We also bought wood from farmers, who delivered it directly to our doors.

Once or twice with another man we traveled to Linz to pick-up food from the AJDC warehouse. While wandering around the building we came across a large hall, with a tremendous amount of clothing spreaded all over the concrete floor. What a pitty. Thousands of people in camps around Linz could have used this stuff. During my five years in D.P. camps I never saw even a fraction of this kind of clothing brought in to camps and distributed among the inhabitants. It was obvious that all this clothing was sold for profit.

Standing in the middle of this un-guarded hall, my friend and I noticed a good looking navy sport coat. Without hesitation we decided to take it. I put it on under my regular jacket. The sport coat was to small for me, and I felt unconfortable on our way home. But back in Steyr the coat was fitting good the other guy. We appraised the coat for the black market value, and my friend paid me my share and took the coat for himself.

At last some clothing was distributed in camp. But what we got, was a far cry, from the merchandise I saw in Linz. The stuff there was of high quality, us simple folks recived "shmates". Cheap clothing made by tailors from the cooperative. I finally recived a grey suit. For the first time after 6 years I was wearing a real suit. I felt like a best dressed man in town, wearing also a navy golf cheap sweater. Later grandpa Abraham also recived a cheap brown tweed suit, and he let me wear it anytime I wanted, Once a shipment of leather jackets arrived in camp. Only few people recived them. But all members of the committee wore them. On some other occasion Hania recived a brown ladies suit made in camp and a blue overcoat.

Staying in camps this time around, didn't mean restrictions. Everybody was free to go, come and enjoy as much as possible. And the young ones and others who were healthy enjoyed their freedoms to the fullest. With some minor exceptions Americans were lenient and looked through their fingers on many infractions. But they didn't tolerate hooligans, theft and ofcourse black market, which actually was Austrian problem.

It was a real pleasure to see again Orthodox Jews all dressed up in their Hassidic clothing, and praying free, not being afraid of external interfearance.

The more religious Aguda prayed in their own synagogue. The rest of the population prayed in the Mizrachi synagogue.

The Rabbi in the camp was an old man, but still smart. Always dressed-up in his black coat and black hat, the kind Hassidic Jews always have wore. His long white beard and earlocks used to give that certain image a Rabbi should have.

Hania and I were married by this Rabbi. He passed away in Linz couple years later. But being smart didn't stop him of comiting, maybe a bigest mistake of his life. He forced his only daughter to marry a man of his choice, not paying attention to her opposition, because she just simply didn't like him. During their short marriage a boy was born. After the old man's death the couple separeted. I don't know if they ever got divorced while living in Austria, and the victim of their separation was this little boy. They kept stealing him from each other. A tragic, but on funny side situation developed once in Ebelsberg (camp near Linz) when the father needed to leave his room and locked in the boy inside. When mother found out about it, she hired the smallest man in camp, and made him claim through an open narrow window above the door and take out the boy from the room the same way. A tremendous crowd was watching the whole episod, but nobody told the father, who after returning found the room still locked up but empty.

Your grandpa Abraham is burried next to the Rabbi at the Linzer Jewish cementary.

There was kosher and none kosher food in camp. The kitchen was kept kosher, but the Orthodoxs, kept even more kosher kitchen. Few times in month we used recive some meat. On such occasions a shohet (kosher butcher) traveled to Linz and slaughtered cows there in accordance with Jewish laws.

During Passover, kosher for Passover food including wine was available from American Joint Distribution Committee. In our room we used to have two seders both days. One chanted by grandpa Abraham and the second by Mr. Amsterdam.

Black market flourished in all Displaced Persons camps. The main trading items were first of all canned foods, then noodles, Hershey bars, cigaretts (American ofcourse), nylons, tea, coffee and cocoa. Shoes and all clothing items were the last on the list, and let us not forget watches and jewlery.

At first Austrians used to snick in to camp to buy the stuff. But as years went by, everything used to get done in the open. With times even bicycles and motorcycles became available. As long as this business took place inside the camp, there was no problem. But outside was a different story. If caught in Steyr or Linz or Salzburg, those responsible were subjected to Austrian laws. Many got arrested and convicted. But on another hand the power of money, made their stay in jails or prisons very short ones.

Grandpa Abraham as long as he was healthy, kept in the room a small stock of shoes and clothing. He was good at it, and people wanted to buy from him because he was always honest.

Good times were on everybody's minds. We used to go out a lot, sitting in cafes, just for the heck of it, because in those days all they served was a bitter "erzats coffee". In restaurants without food cards only plates of potatos were available. After all those missed years we all wanted good times badly. Even Linz or Salzburg, have had much more to offer, for us Steyr was OK anyway. If some entertainment worthed to be seen occured in Linz or Salzburg, nothing was stopping us to travel there and see the show.

In 1946 and early 1947 Polish Jews hold a large majority in D.P. camps. Only a small percentage of the population consisted of Jews from Hungary. There was a tremendous difference between those two groups. Hungarians considered themselves as something better, Better educated, more sophisticated, and ofcourse more religious. But the most important fact remained, that Hungarian Jews didn't suffer as much as Polish Jews during Hitler era. In a matter of facts in 1943 when Cracow's ghetto was so savegely liquidated by the SS, an emmisary who came from Cracow to Budapest to inform the Jewish community of the German atrocities was scepticaly recived by the Jewish community's leader one Mr. Samuel Stein, who still in those days hold a seat at the Hungarian parlament, and dismissed the report as a fantasy, an insult to German culture, a reflection on the decency of the intentions of the Hungarian Government. Not until 1944-45 Hungarian Jews finally realized how true were the words of the emmisary from Cracow. To bad that a man with dignity and values of Raul Walenberg never arrived in Cracow, or Warsaw or Łodz for that matter.

Chapter 107 (cont)

Living in D.P. Camp!

Many great Rabbi's survived in Hungary. They used to live in Vienna and in D.P. camps throughout American Zone of Austria. Always surrounded by their followers and special entourage, who protected them from curious onlookers and passing-by women. Suprisingly young or old those Rabbis were married to beautiful women, so other Orthodox and Hassidic Jews from Hungary.

Hungarian Jews were the first who organized study houses (Heders) as in the old country. They were rich, and even in camps were involved in all kinds business deals. Hungarian-Jewish former land owners presented themselves as most prosperous. Anybody could compare them to nobility.

There was always competition between Polish and Hungarian Jews. A good Polish Jew always spoke Yiddish, even more thou then before the war. Many of them would not tolerate us the Polish speaking Jews, trying on every possible occasion to to tell us to forget Polish language and speak Yiddish. For them even Hebrew wasn't important.

The Yiddish language was one of the primary reasons why Polish Jews didn't like Hungarian Jews. They seldom spoke Yiddish among themselves. Always Hungarian. In their study houses they studied "Torah" in Hebrew, but listening from outside we heard their heated discussions about the interpretation in Hungarian.

Hungarian Jews used to have large influence, wherever they went. When time came to emigrate, and when the date of arrival in Austria was very important, they didn't have no problem to change later dates to earlier, leaving Austria for United States much sooner, Polish Jews who spent at least two years longer in D.P. camps.

Despite those many differences, many young people mostly from Orthodox families Polish and Hungarian didn't mind to marry each other, and lived happily ever after.

During and following world war two many mixed marriages resulted because od convinience and gratitude. Many Catholics in Poland married Jewish men or women, while they were hiding in their homes. From Jewish point of view, that was an act of heroiism on the part of the Polish family involved. Still most cases if the Jewish family involved was rich, Poles never regreted their good deeds toward them. Marriages for love survived, and both mates left Poland together. Some even converted to Judaism. Other Polish mates got lonesome for their country and families and left by a mutual agreement. There was a couple in Reithoffer. He was a blond Pole who saved his Jewish blond wife. Seeing them together we all thought how much in love they were with each other. Everybody respected him, and his involvement in Jewish affairs and camp's life. So it came as a shock to our camp's population, when we discovered one day that he left his Jewish wife and returned to Poland. Ofcourse the wife said, that iy was OK with her, and really they never were married.

The war and horrors of German occupation, still didn't make people realize, that we all were created equal. As soon as the invaders disapeared the old social standings surfaced again. There was no difference that all of us lived in D.P. camps sometimes cramped together in small rooms divided by blankets. The former high class kept to themselves, and the old-fashioned "snafu" was still in evidence. Also the new created leadership played "God". There was not United States Government or American Joint Distribution Committee, but those who had sit behind the desk who had nerves to say: "We are the ones who give".

So middle class kept together with middle class. Poor people remained poor. They even didn't think about United States or Australia or other country. They knew, that their only way was Palestine. The troublemakers and thiefs wouldn't stop at nothing to gain something. Those used to be the people who kept spreading rumors, and on many occasions retort to blackmail and violence.

A special group in camp were widows and widowers. Some of them with children. People still young in their forties of fifties whose mates perished or passed away in Soviet Union. They used to keep company with each other trying to get to know each other, so they could marry and spent their lives together and not to be alone.

Many men brought with them from Soviet Union Russian-Jewish women. Others married there to none Jews, not just Russian, but Tatafs and other nationalities as well. It wasn't hard for them to adjust to life in Western Europe.

I guess maybe the worst aspect of life in camp was when a nice well educated family shared a room just divided by a blanket with a family with lower standards. They never could get along with each other. The not educated family always envious of the other family, because of their knowledge, and of the better things they were accustomed. It always was a member of the none educated family who spread all kinds of gossip about their neighbours, causing them embarassment to hear from other people about their lifestyle and even sex life.

Memories of holocaust were still fresh in minds of all the camps population. Not until coming to the west we realy started to realize the magnitude of the destruction of Jewish people. Polish and Soviet media didn't report the atrocities as well as the western press. It was a real shock to hear for the first time about gas chambers, crematoria, medical experiments on Jews, about people like Eichman, Mengele and so on. Even living then among the people, who in many cases maybe took part in murdering our brothers didn't un-cover to much, because of "no hear, no see" attitude. Not only western press, but Jewish leaders and survivors who choose to remain in the west and not return to Poland, made us aware of the murderous activities of Hitler's clique.

My mother's old stories about Austrian way of life (Gemütlichkeit) always have fascinated me. Even as a child I always felt good about that country, and was always dreaming about spending some time there. It was hard for me to believe people like Austrian have joined Adolf Hitler "en masse" and helped him in their homeland and in occupied Europe as well. There were many concentration camps in Austria. The most notorious was Matthausen, where many Jews died or perished performing un-human work in quarries. There also was a small concentration camp near Steyr at a place called Munichholz. Many Jews perished there. People of Steyr remembered them marching through the town, falling on the streets from exhaustion, illness and malnutrition. At the end of the war some of those Jews were burried at the Steyr Jewish cementary in a mass grave. When we first saw it, it was just a pile of dirt and weeds. Some years later through an effort of all of us, who lived then in Steyr, we errected on this grave a magnificent monument in memory of those un-known Jews, and honored them with an religious ceremony, and gathering of many dignitaries Jewish and none Jewish attending. It was just one curious development, which mared this service. A counsul of the State on Israel in Linz, just 30 km away choose not to be present.

Camp's politicians prefered that young people do not go often for their pleasures and entertainment outside the camp. To stop them they tried to create somekind of social life. Their main purpouse was to organize youth groups inside each political movement. The idea didn't work, because of to much emphasis on politics, situation in Palestine, and how to get there sooner and faster. The old party regulars wanted us to be future Jewish soldiers, to be ready when such time will come to go to Palestine and fight the Arabs and their friends the British army. Besides few exception nobody of us, young people were interested to fight another war, so soon after a big war, even thou the existance of a National Jewish Home was at stake. Only the Womens International Zionist Organization was able to recruit many young women, and young men followed them, to their social events.

While talking about sports, among ourselves Norbert and I came up with an idea to organize a camp's sport club, with not only sports in mind, but somekind of social club as well. As I mentioned before, we already had a ping-pong section developed and functioning well, what would happen if Norbert would talk to the camp's leadership and tried to convince them to expand to other more popular sports, like soccer, boxing and basketball. A similar movement was already in progress in other camps, only at that time we didn't know nothing about it. Well, to make a long story short, camp leaders, didn't object, and soon we embarked on a brand new and successful venture.

The new organized club, was the first one to sponsor social gatherings for our young people, as weekend dancing and other activities. We always served good food and drinks to everybody's satisfaction. A local Austrian band for a fee, and food supplied the music. With time they learned music and words to many Hebrew songs. The highlight of the season was our 1946-1947 New Year's Eve party, attended by almost whole population of the camp. After all for many of us, mostly those who came from Soviet Union, it was the first celebration in total freedom.

We gave our new club the name "Hakoah". It was a proper name for a sportclub. Many Jewish sport organizations in Poland and other European countries as well before the war used this name. In a matter of facts a Jewish Sport Club "Hakoah" in Vienna used to be a power in Austrian soccer league in early 1930s. First nobody was against the name "Hakoah" but some people discovered that at the other Jewish camp in Steyr, they also had a club, operating under the name "Hapoel". These people members of left wing organizations, started to demand, that we also change our club's name to "Hapoel". They insisted that "Hapoel" was very popular in then Palestine, and as "Hakoah" in Vienna enjoyed much success against internationaly known soccer teams. They also promised that "Hapoel" would supply our team with so much needed equipment.

We didn't like the idea to change the name and directions of our club, and we didn't want to be conected with a left wing organization. Therefore not having a choice to keep political parties from a non-political organization, we have approached one Mr. Tennenbaum who was the camp's leader of "Betar", the extrime right wing. He was very happy to be associated with us, and his promises, were unlimited. Ofcourse all his assurances were just pack of lies. Still our stupid board members believed him. To show some progress we were able to obtain large quantities of equipment from Americans, and for the money we collected as entrance fees.

So our name "Hakoah" survived, no thanks to Mr. Tennenbaum, who also was the chief supervisor of the administrative office. The man was short, and his face resembled more the face of a monkey, than a human face. He was short, with long arms and short legs rounded like bagels. But still with all this ugliness, he was married to a good looking woman, and everybody in the camp knew, how much she loved him.

There were other important people in this office working under Mr. Tennenbaum. Ofcourse, there was Mrs. Amsterdam, Norbert's mother. Others were Mr. Broner and Mr. Winnitzer. By another coinsidence Mr. Broner was an uncle to Stephan Broner, one of my friends from Falat street in Cracow. Stephan was the boy with a very long nose, and so was Mr. Broner's nose. Like two people with the same face. Throughout the years Mr. Broner always was a very good friend of our family,,helping us with his influence on many occasions.

The second man Mr. Winnitzer, also was a good friend of ours. I don't remember if he was married before the war. All I know that he was desparate for a woman. Older women in camp tried to match him up with an eligible young woman, but none of those efforts materialized. The ones he liked wouldn't look at him, and the ones who wanted him, he didn't consider good enough. Because of his skills later Mr. Broner was promoted to a much better job with the American Joint Distribution Committee in Linz. I asume if somebody would come along, Mr. Broner would marry. At the end the two friends Broner and Winnitzer emigrated to Australia.

Our small group kept together all the time. Ofcourse I was with Hania, Norbert with Ela, and with us were those two German-Jewish boys Sigmund Gleicher and Marek Astman, who as later turned out was a Polish Jew, pretending to be German. As the story went they both liked Frieda, but she didn't know, which one of them she liked more.

Hania was keeping-up her relation with her friend from Jaslo; Sala Altholz (Wrubel). Grandpa Abraham enjoyed playing poker with his new friends. There was this shoe designer from Warsaw Mr. Sametman, who was there with his wife and daughter.

Grandpa's second partner was Mr. Gruenbaum. He was a single man. If he ever was married I don't know. In camp he was a supply manager, a job with many opportunities. It was a common sight to see Mr. Gruenbaum few times a week to leave the camp with a small suitcase to make deliveries to his customers in town.

And there was Mr. Neuman, a man who lost his whole family during the war. He was waiting for his papers to arrive from United States to join his relatives in New York. He was an older man, maybe in lower fifties in those days but he was rather direct, about his thoughts to marry my Hania, even thou he knew about our relationship. He survived in hiding someplace in south-eastern Poland.

Mr. Neuman came to Austria with his friends Mr.& Mrs. Nüssenbaum. All of them, Neuman and Nüssenbaums came from the same little town. Nüssenbaums survived as members of a partizan unit, hiding in forests surrounding their old hometown. Mrs. Nüssenbaum in those days wasn't to much older then Hania and I. She used to hang around us all the time. Whenever we went someplace to movies, theater or restaurant she always taged along. Her husband was much older then her, so no wonder that she enjoyed our company more then to spent evenings with her husband. Their financial situation was very good, and their relatives in Philadelphia and Califotnia promised to bring them over. At one time a rumor was circulating in camp, by people who claimed to know, that before her marriage to Mr. Nüssenbaum, Mrs. Nüssenbaum and Mr. Neuman were lovers. Eventually they went to United States. Neuman settling in New Jersey and Nüssenbaums in Philadelphia.

The fourth partner in grandpa's poker group was Mr. Gertner. The same man, with whom I could go to Poland to see my father but missed the opportunity by one day.

Mr. Gertner was a good looking and inteligent man. Being from Eastern Poland, he fought Germans as a member of the Red Army. He was shot in his left leg, and was walking with a limp with the help of a cane. With him was his 10 years old daughter, but his wife perished in holocaust. After being discharged from the Red Army, because of his wound, he settled someplace in Soviet Union, until time came to return to Poland. Coming back from Soviet Union, Gertner's good friend joined him in the journey. This friend came to Soviet Union without his wife, who stayed behind. It was nothing unusual in those days when wives stayed behind, assuming that Hitler's forces wouldn't touch women. While in Soviet Union this man met this beautiful Russian girl, fell in love with her, and thinking that his wife got killed by the Germans anyway, later married her. Ofcourse as a couple they both came to Poland, and as many of us planed to leave with the first opportunity. Everything would be fine, except for an un-expected development. The man's first wife survived the war. Hard to believe. But after all those years of separation, they found each other. Actually she found him, because she was trying hard to find him. He didn't try at all.

In meantime Mr. Gertner and his daughter left Poland, leaving the friend behind to decide, what he wanted to do. As it turned out Gertner's friend was a decent man, and his young bride a decent young woman. Without an argument, they parted (their marriage wasn't legal anyway). The man and his first wife left the city, and Anya (name of the Russian girl) remained alone in a strange country. Among many options available to her was to return to Soviet Union. But I don't thing she wanted to do this. I guess her or her former husband wrote to Gertner about her situation, and as people who knew said, that Gertner himself was in love with her. As soon as he found out about the new development, he wrote Anya to stay put in Poland and wait for him. And this was his reason to travel back to Poland. Few days later he was back in Steyr with Anya. Gertner's daughter never learned to like Anya. Nobody knew if they really ever married. Still they needed to produce a document before emigrating to United States. Their marriage was rather stormy. She was leaving him few times, but always came back.

Anya used to be a very good Frieda's friend, but Gertner didn't aprove of this friendship. Many people, who didn't have no businesss to do so mixed in, causing many problems. Gertners lived in L.A. where Anya finally left him.

Still I would like to go back to Mr. Neuman and the Nussenbaums. Mr. Neuman was helping us, as a true friend during grandpa's Abraham illness. As fara as Nussenbaums were concerned he became seriously ill and doctors diagnosed his illness as "Angina Pectoris".

In those days a movement was in motion to convince United States Government and Congress to let us come to America as soon as possible. But public opinion there and the mood of politicians still wasn't prepared to take a decisive action. It took quite few more years when first a legislation was approved for former concentration camps inmates and later for the rest of refuges from Eastern Europe. But anyway the rush to learn English and Hebrew as well was on. Many people attended courses organized by AJDC, others like Norbert Amsterdam took private lessons. The American ORT also taught young people usefull profesions.

Among many friends of ours, the Kremer family deserves more space, then just a simple mention. It took quite a while before we became friends. I am not talking about the older folks. They got along pretty good with each other.

The old Mr. Berish Kremer was from Przemysl, where he was a horse trader. Mrs. Ethel Kremer was his wife and much younger. Their oldest son was Hersh from a previous marriage. The other two sons Shlomo and Isak were from the second marriage. Alltogether they were nice and decent people always trying to be on the side of an underdog. Mr. Kremer in those days was already very ill with asthma and otherx problems restricted his movements, but he always was active and visible. He survived many close calls..He emigrated with his family to United States, and lived here for many years to come. Mrs. Kremer now 90 years old still keeps in touch with us.

In the beginning our relations with young Kremers weren't so friendly. We used to dislike them because of their attitude to stick their noses in everybody's business. Shlomo and Isak saw corruption all over the place, but trying to be righteous didn't stop them to push their older step-brother Hersh to become a leader of Phah (Jewish war veterans party) and later help elect him to the camp committee.

Shlomo and Isak worked for the camp security, and whatever Kremer brothers said was approved by the chief, who used to be a young fellow, member of Betar (opposite to Kremers) but to keep his job, he realized that Kremers were smarter then him, he went along with them. He always wore a long cape, because he thought that it (cape) gave him more authority. So the young Kremers snooped for police, and the older Kremer snooped on the camp committee. The truth was people like Kremers should have been appreciated a lot in those days, just for one reason: To keep the crooked leadership in check.

Shlomo Kremer was a dental technician, but the camp didn't have a need for his services. Some years later he opened his own shop, when people before emigrating needed new dentures.

Both brothers met in camp two very nice girls. Not nice looking, little on heavy side but "nice girls" who also used to be close friends. Shlomo's girl Clara and her parents survived the war with partizans. They used to be members of a unit, who tracked escapees from death trains. They used to wait along tracks in bushy areas or on the edges of dense forests and picked up those who dare dared to jump from death trains. Many perished trying to jump, but some survived. Clara and her helpers took them to save places in forests to hide or join partizans.

Isak's girl was Mania. She and her mother survived the war in a Catholic monastery among nuns. Mania's father perished. Her mother was one of those lonely widows who married a widower survivor in an effort to start a new life.

Yet the most visible personality in camp security was Bakerman. I don't remember his first name. He was a Rumanian Jew, a snapy dresser. He was a secretary of the department, but called himself "procurator" (prosecutor). I guess he was showing off. He liked his title, and the authority, which gave it to him. He used to be an often guest in our room. He liked to go out with Frieda. And ofcourse, he wanted to go to United States. People in camp THOUGHT that Frieda and Bakerman would marry some day.

Another not so pleasant memory arrived one wintry day in Reithoffer to visit his sister and her husband. Well! Who else would it be, if not my not so good friend from the Siberian settlement Grisha Weintraub. It seemed then, that the man kept following us, wherever we went. Who knows maybe deep down in his heart, he was hoping that Ela would take him back. Ofcourse Grisha's hopes never materlialized. Since then we never saw him again.

Overall besides living quarters life in displaced persons camps hadn't been to bad. It was a time of relaxation between the horrors of war and anticipation of the future. For Hania and me it also was a good life, and it would be much better if not for my Father's illness. Both of your grandfathers Abraham and Jacob suffered tremendously, but at least grandpa Abraham, had his family around him. Even thou I tried to go on with my life together with Hania to the fulest, your grandpa Jacob was alwys on my mind.

With the new Displaced Persons I.D. cards issued to us by Americans, our people invaded Steyr in all directions. Sightseeing, entertainment, travels to Linz and other places in Upper Austria. But the most common interest was; making contacts with local population, so they could do business with them. In a short period of time so-called businessmen started to leave camp with small packages or even suitcases to deliver goods sold to Austrians. From time to time one or another committee member playing like going out on town, trying to be un-noticed while sneaking out goods stolen from us.

Many young people were businessminded, and as such, having extra money to spent for pleasures, didn't have no problems to make contacts with Austrian young women. Ofcourse they prefered American soldiers, but still didn't mind to go out with Jews especially those with money. Besides love for money, many romances developed, and some even ended-up in marriages. In the beginning, those relationships were strongly condemned by Rabbis and Jewish camp authorities. Yet nobody listen to them, because these young men were the only survivors of their families. There was nobody close to them to stop them. On a positive side most of those marriages survived, because some Austrian women were good wives, and in many cases Rabbi's agreed to convert them to Judaism. Some even left with their men for Israel. Others went to U.S.A. None of Jewish women had relations with Austrian men.

Walking around Steyr we found not to faraway from camp a picturesque village called Garsten. The village was located at the foot of small hills on one side, and the River Enns on the other, with many beautiful Tirol style homes. On the bank of the river there was standing an old gasthouse and a cinema. This place was our first discovery. We used to visit this place a lot. Before or after the movie we liked to sit and chat at the gasthouse. Outside in summertime and inside in winter, even thou there was nothing to eat there without food cards, except black erzatz coffee or potatos. We love to eat their potatos, because, no potatos, were available in camp.

So for the next four years Steyr was our hometown. It wasn't hard to walk from one end of town to the other. Everything there was beautiful. Except Garsten there were other cinemas and reataurants. Nearby Reithoffer there was Volkstheater (Folk Theater), Lichtspiele (Cinema) and in the middle of town Stadttheater (City Theater). We also discovered in a beautiful old building a real theater, where they used to show the old favored Austrian operettas, like Merry Widow, Fledermouse and others by such greats like Lehar and Strauss. Movie theaters in those days used to present old Austrian and German movies, some even made in Hitler's era. Still very popular were pre-war Austrian and German actors like the brothers Hoerbiger (Attila and Paul), comiedians Hans Moser, and Theo Linden, and actressess like Paula Wesley, and Maria Andergast. Many famous Austrian actors returned to their country from America, where they performed during the war, Among them singer-dancer Lilian Harvey, and a famous actor Hans Jaray. A Other famous pre-war performers were Marika Roek, and Zarah Leander, both accused for colaboration with Nazis and love affairs with people like Goebels and Goering.

Theaters and movie houses shook with laughter of listeners of jokes by Moser or Linden. People at home enjoyed when announcer of "Radio Wien" (Radio Vienna) each Sunday evening was proudly annoucing "Der Theo Linden Schau" (Theo Linden Show).

The theater in Steyr was under the direction of a married couple: Trude Lorek, and Tauberg (no first name available). Both very good actors with an excellent suporting staff. Everything was going well until the time when a famous actress from Vienna Marianne Schoenhauer came to town for a guest appearence. During her stay in Steyr Lorek's husband was cheating on his wife with Schoenhauer, so she kicked him out from the house and theater. Needless to say without Tauberg the Steyr theater lost it's charm and was forced to disband.

Another popular item on the agenda was to see American pictures, missed so much during the war. The old movie idols from pre-war era with their old and new pictures still were very much in demand. We were able to see pictures made shortly before the war, and some made during the war. We used to be very much impressed with "Best Years of Our Lives" with Frederick March and Myrna Loy, and "Double Life" with Ronald Coleman and Greer Garson. Others were Wizard of Oz with Judy Garland, then many pictures with Mickey Rooney, and ofcourse war movies, when Americans were beating up on Germans and liberating Europe.

British movies hadn't been to much behind, about the glory of the empire, British aristocracy, mysteries and spy stories. James Mason before he became a Hollywood star, Stewart Granger and his wife Jean Simmons and a beautiful dramatic actress Margaret Lockwood, who never reached the real stardom used to be the tops. French movies weren't to much behind. I remember to see La Miserables we bought our tickets few days in advance.

Finally the eventful year 1946 as far as we were concerned came to an end. A year which we have started in Soviet Union, then celebrated our departure hoping to find our new life in Poland, which ended in fiasco after couple of months there, being subjected to repeated outbursts of Polish ant-Semitism. And then came the decision to leave Poland forever.

Even thou we came to a former hostile country, the presence of American Armed Forces, gave us so much needed security. After first few weeks trying to get settled, we became acustomed to the new living conditions. The living quarters didn't bother us, because we had seen much worse. But all of this was greatly overshadowed by the gained freedom. Freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of praying and freedom of simply doing anything.

That was, why we decided to celebrate the arrival of 1947. When we told about this to people around the camp, everybody was really excited, except the camp committee and ofcourse Rabbis. They informed us, that we have no business to celebrate the arrival of New Year, and as far as they were concerned our only New Year was Rosh-Hashana. But the public opinion was overwhelmed and on our side. For many of us, especially those, who came in 1946 from Soviet Union, this was first New Year in freedom.

Time was short, and it was a lot to do. Frieda, Hania and Ela were in charge of food. We ordered plenty of drinks, soft and otherwise. We engaged a band from Steyr, and when New Year's eve arrived all young people and many not so young showed-up. The success was tremendous. Nobody minded the charges for entry and for food and drink. These were our first money so badly needed to organize our new club.

But the good time and good feeling of the majority got interrupted when some men came with their Austrian girlfriends. Still nobody was upset when fights broke out between boys who came alone for favors of couple Austrian girls who used to work in camp. We removed them from the hall, but they continued to fight outside.

Another feature atraction of the evening was a beauty contest. Ofcourse the girl whose friends bought most of the tickets won. And there we had another small misunderstanding, when Sigmund Gleicher bought most of the tickets and Frieda won the contest.

As usually Kremer brothers protested. They insisted that the count was not accurate, because they also wanted one of their girlfriends to be the queen. Kremers didn't win the argument that time around and finally gave in.

So we greeted the New Year with dance, song, arguments and fights, thankful to Almighty for our blessings, for being well and around. For those short few hours we fergot what was happening just not so long before.

One thing was sure. With this New Year celebration we established ourselves as a force to organize entertainment different, then the ones supported by political and religious parties, and the camp populations was on our side.

Ofcourse the idea to expand was mine and Norbert's as well. He was the big talker and fighter with authorities. He was getting special rations for his work, and I was just a volunter, working with him for the sake of love of sports. His first assistant, who in the beginning have helped Norbert to organize ping-pong, slowly was pushed away into the background, just playing ping-pong. Both him and his mother shortly after left the camp, traveling elsewhere.

There was still winter and lots of snow on the ground, but our first priority was to put together a soccer team, good enough to compete against other Jewish D.P. camps. It didn't happened in Austria, but we were surprised to find out that in Germany those camps played games against each other for the D.P. soccer championship of Western Germany.

In those days there was in Reithoffer a large group of Lithuanian Jews. Most of them from Vilna. These people kept among themselves socialy and otherwise. I would say that most outstanding from all of them was this Ohrenstein family. Widowed mother, a very good looking son and a beautiful daughter. The young man was a avid basketball fan, and as he insisted a good player as well. Mostly because of his urging we decided to put together a basketball team providing, that there will be enough players available. All those future players, insisted that they used to be established soccer and basketball players before the war. Some of them even had nerve enough to brag about their soccer international affiliations. But later when the time came to play ball most of them failed on the field. One of them even thought that it was necessary to kick the ball with both feet at the same time.

In meantime we played ping-pong with Austrian teams around Steyr. Besides the former Norbert's assistant we used to have on our team Sternhartz. This man was very good in a international class. Later after settling with his family in Israel he won the championship of the country and represented Israel in European championships with very good results. Other two players on our team were two young Rumanian Jews, who even won games against Sternhartz. Our ping-pong team during winter of 1947 won all the games against Austrian teams. Those were the fun times. They mostly took place in local restaurants, with a table in the middle, and spectators sitting around, cheering and drinking beer. We recived from Americans for our club navy turtle-neck sweaters, and Ela and Frieda embroidered all of them with Star of David and our name "Hakoah". In a matter of facts, all three girls Frieda, Hania and Ela played a very important role in organizing and working for the club, without pay.

As I wrote before Americans helped a lot with giving us uniforms and some equipment, but again, there were our girls who helped out with sewing, altering our soccer uniforms, and basketball as well. They made our soccer socks from sleeves cut off from sweaters, and also made special lined with cotton trunks for our goalie, and many other things.

Then we were just about ready to organize our boxing club, but this particular venture required lots of money. Yes we had quite few people who wanted to box, but nobody wanted to be beaten-up without being paid for it. That why the New Year event was so important to us. Soon after we also became a social club. We started to provide entertainment on weekly basis, and our dance parties became very much popular. With no other choices available Kremer brothers and their girls also joined in the fun.

Still the main purpose of Kremers, joining the club was to check on us.

Besides our weekend dances many other Jewish and Yiddish speaking theatrical groups visited camps all over Austria and Germany. Many Jewish performers who survived the holocaust, and those who returned from Soviet Union organized themselves, and their perfromances were sponsored by the American Joint Distribution Committee.

So Jewish theater, drama as comedy as well, and Jewish music flourished in D.P. camps with a sprinkle of performances memorializing the holocaust. Many pre-war band leaders organized new bands showing off their talents not only for Jewish audiences. Take for example the Rosner brothers. Both known musicians in pre-war Cracow. They survived with their wives and children by playing walzes and other German melodies for Amon Goeth, the commandant of the Plaszow concentration camp, who used to kill Jews at random, while taking walks around the camp. Goeth paid for his bloody deeds, when Poles convicted him to death by hanging on September 13, 1956. Another benefactor of Rosner brothers was a rightious German industrialist Oskar Schindler who kept them and another 1200 Jews employed in his factories away from Goeth and his henchmen. The Schindler Juden (as they used to be called) made sure that Schindler's name is memorialized in Yad Vashem, as a rightious gentile. Also thanks to those Jews he was burried at a Franciscan Catholic cementery in Jerusalem. After the war Rosner brothers performed in our camp in Steyr.

There is not enough words to praise American authorities in Reithoffer. They gave us permission to remove walls on second floor of a four story concrete building, and change those rooms to a large all-purpose hall. The painters and carpenters and electricians have done the rest. Especially carpenters who had built a stage, which was easy converted to a boxing ring. The hall was also long enough to play basketball, with plenty room along the walls for our fans.

When a musical show came to Reithoffer and we needed a piano, Americans took us to an officers club, which before and during the war was a plush club for the elite SS officers. But the people who had run the club were Austrians and some of them were the same people who served the Nazis and still remembered the good old times. It took only few minutes to load this beautiful piano on our truck. The entire affair didn't go to well with the former Nazis. If eyes would be able to shoot, they would kill us all for taking their price piano away, Americans included. One thing was sure. They never got their piano back. We used it in Reithoffer and after the closing of the camp we took it with us to the other camp in Steyr, and by the time we left Steyr the piano wasn't fit to play anymore anyway.

Shortly after New Year we presented for the first time our basketball team to the interested camp population. It was an intra-squad game between "Blue" and "White" teams. As I said before our uniforms were altered and finished by Ela and Frieda. I remember playing for the "Blue" team and the younger Kremer was playing for the "White" team. It was quite an attraction with a good attendance. Never mind, that it was a low scoring game, but it was another first in basketball. The boards behind the baskets were still not ready, so we played just with baskets screwed to the posts. We had lots of fun, and believe me, probably half of the audience, who didn't have no idea how basketball is played, thought that this was the way it should be.

Because there weren't enough candidates for a boxing team in our camp, in order to put together a team we entered an agreement with the other camp in Steyr to operate one boxing team for both camps. To avoid other difficulties we agreed that in competition with Austrian teams we would fight under the name of "Hapoel" not "Hakoah". The main reason was that "Hapoel" recived good financing from leftist organizations in Palestine.

In those days to enter a team boxing competition we needed at least eight boxers, starting with feather weight up to heavy weight. In Reithoffer we had four men who claimed a pre-war boxing experience, and willing to fight. According to my calculations we actually had one "bona-fide" boxer. The other three probably fought a lot on streets of their former hometowns.

At Steyr 231 (the other camp) there were only two boxers. One of them used to be a member of Cracow Maccabi Boxing team. Before the war his name was Goldgluss, but in camp he went under Kremer (no relation to the Kremer family). Once during his carrier he fought the Polish champion in his class Rothholz from Warsaw, who also represented Poland at the Olimpic games in Berlin. The boxer from Warsaw was Treiband. He was a heavy weight and a member before the war of one of the Jewish boxing clubs in Warsaw. Anyway to make a long story short we picked-up couple of men who joined just for the sake of giving Germans or Austrians a good beating.

We tried hard to work out a conditioning program to keep those men in shape, but to no avail. They were just eager to fight no matter what. We arranged for friendly matches among our own boxers in the camp's hall, and fights among junior boxers. Many people used to show up for those workouts, enjoying themselves, except of few religious fanatics, who couldn't stand the sight of young kids beating on each other. Few of them jumped into the ring, separated the boys, and forced us to cansel future exhibitions.

Finally this winter of 1947 we concluded negotiations with two Austrian teams. Both matches took place in Steyr 231. The first match was against "Lasta" - Lambach a small town on the highway between Linz and Salzburg. We presented a following line-up; Cypel from Lodz (former street fighter) and first cousin to the famous Hollywood star Deana Durbin, who used to correspond with his mother and sent them money and parcels. Nachteiler was Cypel's brother in law who never boxed in his life but wanted to take revenge on Austrians. Then was Diamand who insisted that he was a boxer, but we didn't believe him. As it turned out later, some people who knew him before the war took him to West Germany, where he became a famous fighter. So really he was telling the truth.

The fourth one was Kowarski from Vilna. I guess he was a real one, with a big mouth, and wouldn't fight at all if not for money we have promised him. Ofcourse Kremer and Triband, and two other boxers whose names and even faces I no longer remember.

This first such a confrontation between Austrians and Jews was a tremendous success financially and as a show. Never mind that the team from Lambach was a small potato, much weaker then our men even without any training. They got such a beating, that even I felt sorry for them. It was obvious that those Jewish boxers and the public ofcourse were looking for blood not a sportmanlike fight. The crowd was ecstatic, cheering wildly and yelling in Yiddish "Give it to them, for mothers and fathers, for our brothers and sisters". Kowarski the man from Vilna was the big hero of the match, winning by "K.O." in the first few seconds of his bout.

So at the end everybody was satisfied. The boxers won, and the public had their money worth.

Two months later there was another boxing match against much better club; Boxing Club Vorwarts from Linz. (Forward). Our club won again with an enthusiastic support and participation of both camps. With the exactly same kind of jeering. But this victory wasn't as easy as the first one, and much lower score. Some of our men got beat up pretty bad especially Nachteiler but xxxx stood up to the challenge even in the loss. Still the second victory was more meaningful, and cries from the audience for revenge much louder.

With spring and summer approaching we turned our activities to soccer, volleyball and basketball. Yes! Those two sports used to be popular and played in Europe outdoors in summer and indoors in winter.

During spring a man in his fifties arrived in Reithoffer with his much younger Austrian girlfriend. He was Mr. Saffier who presented himself as a representative of the Central Jewish Committee in Salzburg for sport affairs. He was a native from Vienna and we welcomed him with open arms, hoping that he would help in our efforts. When we requested shoes for our soccer team, he brought us a pile of junk, but we took them anyway. We found out later that Saffier offered those shoes to the club in Steyr 231, but they declined to accept them.

Chapter 108

Salzburg!

Saffier visited many camps offering them the same bunch of old shoes. Everybody knew, that he pocketed the money from the Central Committee for the purchase of brand new shoes. After shoemakers in Reithoffer made the necessary repairs those old shoes served out their purpose.

Still we had to give some credit to Saffier for some accomplishments. He organized a meeting of all Jewish clubs in Salzburg. I and the basketball player Ohrenstein represented Reithoffer. It wasn't easy in those days to get on a train. We recived from Americans special authorisations, stating that we were traveling on camp's business. From Steyr to Linz we traveled on a bus, because to get to Linz on train we would be required to cross the Soviet zone, and we wouldn't want to do that. Even with American papers we encountered plenty problems in Linz before we got our tickets. The train to Salzburg was already in motion, and to board it we had to chase it. Luckily we made it.

It took us two hours before we reached Salzburg, still in daytime. We went straight to Franz Joseph Kasserne (Former Austrian Army Fort), but then one od few D.P. camps in Salzburg area. Leniowers friends from Fergana, the Tepper family used to live there. Mr. and Mrs. Tepper were very nice people, even thou Mrs. Tepper wasn't a healthy person they let us spent two nights in their corner. There were no family rooms at Franz-Joseph, just long dormitories occupied by many families. For me it was for the first time to meet the Teppers and their daughter Sala. The other two daughters were already in Palestine or trying to get there. Thousands of people used to live in Franz-Joseph Kasserne, and it used to take quite a while to stay in lines in washrooms each morning.

Next morning before going to the meetings I visited my cousins Esther and Lipe Goldstein in a camp in another part of Salzburg. Esther and I had a nice reunion and she served Ohrenstein and me some good food.. They also lived in a large dormitory.

Our meeting took place in the building of the Central Jewish Committee of Upper Austria and Salzburg. Mr. Saffier was the presiding officer, but not everybody showed-up. After some deliberations we all agreed to hold all Jewish D.P.s games in a resort town of Bad-Ischl in early April. The sport club of Badgatstein from the luxury camps of the early D.P.s liberated by Americans offered to be hosts of the games. We all agreed to compete in soccer, basketball and ping-pong. Basketball was included because of Ohrenstein and another guy from Badgatstein who also was a basketball frick. This man was tall, and limping, but insisted that he plays an excellent basketball, and bragging how good their team was.

This was my first visit to Salzburg followed by few more. I always was fascinated by this beautiful city, and I enjoyed very much each of those visits.

Salzburg is a capital of a west-central province of Austria, also called Salzburg. The city has a population of 100,000 in a largely mountainous region, on the Salzach River, and is a cultural, commercial and manufacturing center. Originaly a Roman trading center post in the 8th century Salzburg became an autonomous principality under archbishops who continued to rule until 1802, when it was annexed by Austria. Bishops constructed there Fortress-castles, cathedral buildings, and palaces in renaissance and German baroque. Salzburg the birthplace of Mozart, is most noted as a music center. It's music and drama festivals originally inspired and directed by the great impresario Max Reinhardt, are still held in August. After world war II, Salzburg was occupied by United States Armed Forces.

Salzburg remained me so much of the old narrow streets of Cracow. In Salzburg as in Cracow, wherever you turned you could see history in front of your eyes. One of the most impressive of all Salzburg's castles is the Hellbrun castle on a top of a mountain also called Hellbrun, almost in the middle of the city, with a modern restaurant next to the castle. To get there an elevator is going all the time up and down. In Hitler's era Hellbrun was a favored place of High Nazi officials.

Sala Tepper who didn't leave her parents was a good Friend especially of Frieda. In Salzburg she went out with two young men, but wasn't sure, which ONE OF THEM TO MARRY.

One of those Sala's boyfriends was Zylek Goldstein, whose brother and his family used to live in Reithoffer, and we knew them very well. This family didn't remain to long in camp because some relatives of theirs brought them over to Australia early. Goldsteins didn't like there and hardly a year passed, when they came back to Steyr. The other boyfriend of Sala was also a nice young man, but on a religious side. Sala didn't choose him and later married Zylek.

But in meantime while in Salzburg I, Ohrenstein, Sala and Zylek have had a very good time. We saw couple movies, toured the city and attended a performance in Salzburgs Staattheater. The star of the play was a famous pre-war Austrian actress Magda Schneider, whom I saw and admired in many movies when I was 15 or 16 years old.

Soon after our return to Steyr Saffier informed us that people from Badgatstein weren't able to keep their commitment to hold the games in Bad-Ischl. The Central Jewish Committee moved the games to Salzburg, and Norbert and I went to Salzburg again. And again the Tepper family let us stay in their corner.

Back in Steyr we tried hard to assemble a best team possible. We had plenty candidates, but from talking and bragging to playing the game was a big difference. And as I said before the bigest bragers were Hungarians.

We put together finally the soccer and basketball teams. It was obvious that Sternhartz and the two Rumanian boys would represent the camp in Ping-pong. The games were scheduled for the Passover week in Salzburg, and our quarters have been assigned in Camp Beth Bialik on outskirts of Salzburg.

At that time I finally gave up the idea that my father will ever be able to join us in Steyr, so at last I decided to ask Hania to marry me, which I should had done a long time before. I waited for this day through many miseries, and some happiness, and when Hania said "Yes" I was the happiest man in the world.

The day of our wedding was set for April 21, 1947 (Lag-Baomer). The only days Jews are allowed to marry between Passover and Shvaout, which was two weeks after my return from games in Salzburg.

We left Steyr to travel to Salzburg one day in advance, because our driver didn't like to drive on Yom-Tov. As I look at this whole affair I am surprised that Rabbis in those days didn't object to those games taking part at all. I guess they didn't pay to much attention to what was going on in sports in camp, right under their noses.

Camp authorities assigned to us a truck completly enclosed without windows. To breath freely, we kept a small back door open all the time. We always used to compare those trucks, to the ones Germans during the war gased Jews, while they transported them to imagenary labor destinations. Our truck was similar to those traveling gas chambers. Russians used to call them "Dushogubkas" which means "Choking or Gas Chamber".

Frieda went with us for a few days visit with her friend Sala Tepper. Also on the truck with us was a representative of the Central Committee in Salzburg, who came to Reithoffer to determine if Reithoffer should be closed in near future and people moved to other camps. The name of this man was Weinstein and Leniowers used to know him from Fergana. Weinstein came to Reithoffer again to supervise the resettlement and the permanent closing of our camp.

After three hours of riding we arrived in Salzburg. First at Franz Joseph-Kasserne wherr Frieda and Weinstein left the truck.

To our disapointment, there was nothing ready in Beth Bialik for all those players expected for the games. Right there Norbert and I agreed that this was a beginning of a total disaster as far as the games were concerned.

A kibutz at Beth Bialik put us up for the night. Norbert and I shared an army cot. There was a very cold night in Salzburg, and we thought we will freeze to death under a thin blanket. We only added to our misery when we put on the top of our blanket a rubber Norbert's raincape, which wasn't cold resistant at all. In the morning in order to wash and make ourselves presentable we had to run across the camp to the communal washrooms.

It got warmer during the day, and walking around the camp I met some people from my past.

Salzburg!

First of all I came across couple of people from Zbaraz, and then somebody told me that the Scheinman family who was with us at the settlement in Siberia was also in Beth Bialik. Their oldest son was already in Palestine fighting the Arabs. He was a member of Haganah and once on patrol Egyptians caught up with him and kept him in prison. And all this still was long before the creation of Israel.

The tournament was also a failure as far as participation was concerned. Only handful of teams came to Salzburg. Besides us, there was a soccer team from Steyr 231, then a soccer team from Beth Bialik, and from Braunau (Hitler"s bithplace). What an irony there was a Jewish D.P. camp in Hitler's hometown. And ofcourse there also was on hand the basketball team from Badgatstein under the leadership of the limping man (the great basketball player).

To sweeten the pot, Mr. Saffier brought with him not only his young girlfriend but a N Jewish profesional soccer team from Linz as well. They used to play in Upper Austrian minor league under the name of "Hakoah" with quite a good success. I will write about this team later in a separate chapter. By bringing "Hakoah" to Salzburg under a fictious name "Bar-Kohba" Mr. Saffier made himself lots of money. He only upset the entire tournament, because all of us were amateurs and didn't have skills to compete against those experienced players.

Finally sometime during the day whoever had run the show put us up in a dormitory, with beds, blankets and pillows, but the arrogant players of "Hakoah" or "Bar-Kohba" call them what you wish made our lives miserable, by playing all kinds of tricks on us throughout the night. They stole blankets and even tried to steal peoples private property, so they could sell this stuff on black market. I was forced to keep my suit and other things under the pillow, to find out in the morning that they all were covered with lint, which I spent almost half a day to remove. And this wasn't all. On the day of the tournament the camp security wouldn't let us out from camp looking for those stolen blankets, and ofcourse they never found them. We arrived two hours late at the ballpark, and the rest of the games were just Mr. Saffiers cover-up. We played couple of 30 minutes (shortened games) and we lost them both.

All this have begun with a meeting in Beth Bialik's social hall. I wrote a nice speech for Norbert about meaning of sports in D.P. camps, but he didn't get a chance to speak anyway. Like everything about this tournament was phony, so the meeting was phony as well.

We came to Salzburg to have fun. Saffier promised us good Passover food, but only once they fed us with a lousy soup, and made us wait for it couple of hours. One of the Hungarian boys on our team started to raise hell, because to tell the truth he was hungry. Stephan Roth (his name) was yelling in Hungarian like a damn fool, because he didn't know any other language. He made the president of the Jewish Committee in Salzburg very much upset, because he was from Poland and didn't understand a word in Hungarian. He demanded to know this boy's name, so we told him that the boy's name was Danko Pishta, which really was a name of a Hungarian Gypsy who used to be a hero of Hungarian peasants, because a princess fell in love with him and married him later.

As far as basketball was concerned there was only one game on the agenda. We played against the limping man's team, who played as lousy as we were playing. Our opponents won the game by the lowest score in Basketball's history 6-5.

While in Salzburg I visited again with my cousins the Goldsteins. Lipe was then alredy the camp's committee chairman (Lagerfuehrer). I also visited with my uncle Salo and aunt Dina, still heartbroken after parting with their grandson Georgie who went to New York to join his father and his father's new wife. Keeping up with my love for theater I also saw another play in Salzburg's Staattheater. They played "Madam Pompadour" based on a novel by French writer Dumas.

Our visit to Salzburg ended on the last day of Passover. Before leaving some of us went to Franz-Joseph Kasserne to take part in an very emotional "Yiskor" service.

And an emotional service it was. A service for lost families, victims of holocaust, and heros and martyrs who fought and weren't afraid to stand-up and defend the Jewish honor.

Never in my life, before and after I have saw such an outburst of ~~feelings~~ EMOTIONS from the participants. I assume that the reason for those emotions, were all the horrors of the war still in peoples minds, and memory of their loved ones who perished still very fresh. Those few minutes in this room in Franz-Joseph Kasserne left me with an unforgetable impression, and until today I think of that particular service often.

On the way back to Steyr we tried to figure out an explanation to people in our camp, about the disaster in Salzburg and the reasons behind our doing so poorly in the tournament. Still we left Salzburg with our heads high, because after all what we saw, we came to a conclusion, that our organization was the best run and disciplined from all the others. We even came to Salzburg with a blue-white Jewish flag, hoping to make an impression during the openning day parade, which we missed because of the search at the gate in Beth Bialik. But at the end the hard work, and games played in Steyr against Austrian teams by our ping-pong players paid off. Our man Sternhartz won the tournament's championship.

We arrived home late that particular evening. Ofcourse the only winner in Salzburg was Mr. Saffier, who was alredy planing another tournament in Linz. I was really happy to see Hania, and she was happy to see me, even thou she was little upset. After all our wedding was only couple of weeks away, and I was wandering around Austria.

Chapter 109

The Sigmund Gleicher Story!

Sigmund Gleicher was a young man our age. The only difference between us was, that he was a German Jew, and was subjected to discrimination by the Nazi regime long before us, since the day Hitler came to power in 1933.

Sigmund was a son of a well to do Jewish family in Dresden, which today is located in the territory of The German Democratic Republic (East Germany). The Gleicher family settled there, when Western Poland was part of Prussia under the reign of Kaisers and Hohenzollern dynasty. Even thou Germany came on bad times after loosing world war one, the Gleicher family prospered and considered themselves more German then Jewish. It never occured to them, that during all those years, they never actually became German citiziens. According to German new Hitler era laws, because their roots were in Poland, they were "Ausländers" (Forigners).

Since 1933, like other German Jews, they were subjected to all kinds of persecutions and humiliations, but managed to stay out of concentration camps.

Finally in winter of 1938 German government deported all those Jews to Poland, even thou most of them never saw or been to Poland. But never mind. This was Hitler's decision and German just dumped them all off into Polish territory near small border town Zbaszyn.

Surprised Polish authorities put all those Jews in filthy barracks, as reports said about 68 people died of pneumonia. When an American representative to the League of Nations demanded that something be done, the Polish ambasador labeled the report as Jewish fabrication.

Because of a very cold winter little by little Jewish communites from all over Poland absorbed the new refuges. They left their fortunes in Germany, but some were able to smugle out jewels and money. So the wealthy, as always were better off.

Polish Jews took their German brothers with open arms, forgeting even about the inferiority tag, German Jews put on them since many generations ago.

I don't know to much about Gleicher's family. All I know, they came to Cracow, and somehow managed to make a living. After German invasion Gleichers as other Jews in Cracow were resettled in Cracow's ghetto. During the liquidation of the ghetto Sigmund Gleicher because he was young and strong was transfered to the nearby Plaszow concentration camp, where many Cracovians lost their lives. Sigmund worked outside the camp in a quarry. One day he saw a chance to escape and walked away from his work detail un-noticed. Because of his prison uniform he kept hiding and walking around Cracow's outskirts for few days, finally reaching home of his Christian friends, who took him in, fed him and also gave him decent clothing. Somehow Gleicher was able to obtain a false German "Ausweis" (I.D.) and traveled to his old hometown Dresden. An idea stroke him, that the only place he would be safe, will be the German army. He followed-up on his thoughts and for a while all was well. He joined the army, went through the basic training, and after some more conditioning his unit was shipped out to the Soviet front. Ofcourse all this went on under an assumed name, as on his falsified passport. But the good fate wasn't on Sigmund's side. while waiting in a White-Russian village, and resting before being moved up to the frontlines, he noticed a soldier watching him rather closely. Leaving and coming back all the time. Intrigued Sigmund, started to worry. Looking from his cot at the direction where the soldier was sitting, Sigmund finally realized that he knew this man from someplace, and not until, the soldier aproached him, he knew that they used to be schoolmates in Dresden many years before.

The German youth recognized Sigmund at the first sight, but couldn't figure out, what a Jew was doing in Hitler's German army. Sigmund's pleading for silence didn't help at all. The guy reported him to military authorities, and Sigmund was arrested immediatly and shipped out to a concentration camp.

He went through many camps, and was liberated by the Red Army in Stuthoff a notorious camp on Baltic Sea, where many Jewish inmates perished, simple by being thrown into the sea. To make his life a little easier Sigmund found out later that the boy who reported him was killed in fighting on Soviet front.

After liberation Sigmund came to Cracow, where if I am not nistaken he have had a emotional re-union with his sister. Later he moved to Szczecin in anticipation of leaving Poland. I think his sister left before him. In Szczecin Sigmund met Marek Astman, who claimed to be a German Jew from Rostock a seaport city on the Baltic Sea in East Germany not to many miles away west from Szczecin. Marek spoke perfect German, the kind of German that nobody would suspect that he wasn't German. In Steyr they both registered as "Reichsdeutsche" (Citiziens of Germany). As such they recived financial help from German authorities. Besides this, they found employment in Steyr, and also collected relief help from AJDC and the Camp Committee.

Sigmund and Mark occupied bunks next to each other. They always spoke German among themselves. Sigmund new some Polish and used it only if it was nessecary. When other people in the room spoke Polish, those two pretended, like they don't understand a word. They used to laugh and joke, making fun of us and our conversations. When together with Amsterdams we moved out to a smaller room, they went with us.

Sigmung and Marek parted when Marek discovered that his sister was alive and living in Stuttgart (West Germany). Shortly after he left to join her there.

Both Sigmund and Mark were in love with Frieda. It was up to her to choose among them. And as you know Frieda, it was a tough choice for her. Well at the end she had chosen Sigmund, even thou Mark was better looking. For Sigmund and Mark it was a sad good-by. But they promised each other to keep in touch and try to get together again.

Sigmund kept living in our room, and went on with his life. And what a life it was. Not in widest dreams, we would suspect, what we were just about to find out. A double life of Gleicher. One as a nice young man, working and in love with Frieda, and the secret life as a thief.

We noticed that Sigmund used to spent lots of time by the window, when he was home. We thought nothing about it, because there was there such a nice view. First was the Enns River, and on the opposite bank, as far as we could see a landscape of gentle and some high hills, all green with trees and picturesque old homes, still in very good condition, with people who used to live there for many generations.

At the same time it occured to us that Sigmund started to live much better, and money were no object to him anymore. Curious Grandpa Abraham asked him once, about the business he was in, and if it was such a good business, maybe Sigmund would consider to give grandpa a chance to make some money.. Sigmund's reply was, that grandpa wouldn't be interested in whatever he was doing.

Still from time to time Sigmund used to give grandpa some valuable things to sell, like for example leather briefcases. There was nothing to hard to obtain for Sigmund. He was bringing home cans with fruit, jams, and other high priced foods treating Frieda and himself to things we could only dream about in those days.

Suddenly the bubble burst. It didn't take to long for us and the entire camp population to find out about the source of Sigmund's good fortune. One day an Austrian policeman who by law wasn't allowed to enter the camp accompanied by our security chief (the young man in cape) entered our room with a search warrant. They went through Sigmund's belongings, but didn't find a thing.

The Austrian policeman told us that Sigmund was caught robbing one of those homes across the river. Finally we realized why Sigmund was standing so many hours by the window, trying to pick his spots to rob. He was doing his stealing in daytime, while the owners were at work. He not only stole merchandise, but food as well, including apples, which people used to put away for winter to make Austrian apple-cider (most). Our people in camp cooperated and gave back the briefcases and other merchandise to avoid problems.

This particular day police waited for Sigmund, and gave him a very hard time during the arrest and during the interrogation, and I understand that they gave him a pretty good beating, and hurt him even more, because they knew that he was Jewish.

Gleicher spent one year in prison in nearby Garsten. I think Frieda saw him when police transfered him to prison, and after they re-leased him. Both times there was hardly time for them to talk. During Sigmund's stay in prison Frieda made sure that he recived his full ration from the camp committee, and packages from AJDC as well.

We met Gleicher and his friend Astman on the train from Szczecin to the Czech-Polish border before leaving Poland. They both seemed like such a nice young men. As far as Sigmund was concerned, why he went in wrong direction, nobody knew. Even Mark was shocked after Frieda wrote him about his friend's exploits. My thinking about the whole affair is that Gleicher was looking for a revenge on Germans or Austrians, for what they have done to him and his family, but the desire for revenge backfired on him. He got caught because of poor planing, coming back all the time to the same general area, only to get himself arrested.

After his re-lease from prison and their short conversation, Frieda never saw him again. He settled in Ebelsberg camp, near Linz. Once while I was there I came across him. He was working, and then left for Israel, where he married. No other country would take him because of his prison record.

Mark Astman used to write to Frieda for a while. And only then in one of his letters he explained to her in perfect Polish, that he wasn't a German Jew, but Polish from Lvov, and there it was convinient for him at that time to hide his real indentity.

The memory of Sigmund Gleicher still lingers in my medicine cabinet, where on a shelf his personal shaving brush is remaining me, that long time ago a young man, a victim of Hitler's war machine tried to rebuild his life, but failed. I hope that he made good in Israel.

Chapter 110

Our Wedding!

Our wedding took place as scheduled in Steyr April 21 1947 on "Lag-Baomer" the only day permited for Jewish marriages between Passover and Shwa-out.

This wedding was the culmination of Hania's and my long friendship, courtship and romance under very difficult and trying conditions. I finally achieved what I was dreaming about all these years since I first saw Hania in Siberia and told myself, that this was the girl I would like to spend my life together.

Since our first meeting we seldom were apart. The longest and worst separration was when our families decided to go different ways from Siberia to the warm south of Soviet Union. Sometimes in those days I thought that we will never see each other again, and took few months of writing and searching before we met again. The hard and cold Siberian days were much easier to overcome with Hania around, and our togetherness, helped to forget the misery and hunger in Palasan.

Our wedding day was a very happy occasion for both of us, and would be much happier if my dearly departed Blessed Memory Mother could see our happiness. She would be enormously happy seeing Hania and me getting married. Also my father being ill in Cracow hang over me like a nightmare.

Marrying Hania was the best thing ever happened to me, and in grandma Frances and grandpa Abraham I found second parents who always made me feel, like I would be their own. Frieda and Ela were like two sisters I never had. I was lucky coming into such good and caring family.

To keep up with Jewish tradition on the Saturday before the wedding I went with grandpa Abraham to synagogue, for my "Aufruf" I was called to the "Torah" and grandpa hosted a "Kidush" for the congregation.

Under trying circumstances and poor living conditions our wedding was a success. It took place in our room. Grandma and grandpa made sure that plenty food was available, and the camp committee also donated their share, as it was a custom for all the weddings in camp. We invited many friends. Really new friends, whom we met in the past few months, There was no close friend or relative present. My relatives the Goldsteins and Speisers were un-able to attend, even thou my uncle Salo and aunt Dina sent us 100 Austrian schillings. There was nobody from Leniowers or Salomons, because they all perished in holocaust.

Mention names of people who attended, wouldn't mean to much, but all of them used to be good people, and whole ceremony took place in a "heymishe atmosphere" There was nothing fancy, but our tradition was preserved, with a plain "Hupah" held-up by four men, a very old orthodox Rabbi with a long white beard assisted by his son in law, and all guests holding burning candles in their hands We were accompanied by so-called "Unterfuerers" Hania by her parents and I by our closest friends Mr. and Mrs. Amsterdam. No maids of honor and bridesmaids and no groomsmen as well. Hania circled round me seven times, then I said "Harai At" broke the glass and put a ring (donated by grandpa Abraham) on Hania's finger, and that was all. Mazel-Tovs and other good wishes followed, which concluded with a reception.

We started out with nothing. Simply said we were poor, but since this day we lived and still live happilly. We still love each other very much, and have a wonderful and beautiful family to prove it.

The camp committee assigned to us a small room on our own. And this was our beginning as man and wife. We didn't have a honeymoon, but we tried to create one in our minds. After all the life after holocaust, and the few months in freedom, even in D.P. camp was like a long sought honeymoon. We ate good, nothing fancy, but enough. We recived from organizations some new clothing. So we didn't have first class accomodations, but we had each other, and this was a tremendous accomplishment by itself.

In this little room in Reithoffer our new life together had begun. It took lots of hard work, and help from a caring family to bring us out from the ashes, and we are extrimly gratefull to families Rosenblum and Pearlman for bringing us to this wonderful country The United States of America.

From cold and snowy Taygas of Siberia, through the heat and hunger of Uzbekistan to the beautiful Kansas City. Life was awfuk bleak in those dark days of early forties. We never thought even once that we will survive to see the eighties. Feeling sorry for ourselves mkx we also didn't realize how much better off we were not knowing about gas chambers, ovens and the xx SS murdering our brothers, sisters and children.

Chapter 111

Linzer Hakoah!

Austria always had a rich tradition in sports. They excelled in winter sports because of their mountains and cold winters, and deep snow in those mountains. Their superiority in winter sports still continues.

But as much as they enjoy winter sports, Austrians love for "Fussbal" (soccer) is even greater. Soccer season starts in Austria in early March and runs until December. It is an universal sport and every male since his childhood kicks the ball. Every Sunday stadiums all over the country are filled up to the last seat by soccer fans, cheering loud for their home teams. Throughout the years Austria managed to put together great teams which used to win many international games and tournaments. In early 1930 their national team for exploits in stadiums all over the world earned a nickname "Wunderteam" (Wonderteam).

The only Jewish soccer team in Austria during pre-war era was Vienna "Hakoah". This team not only made a tremendous mark in Austrian soccer, but on international scene as well. I remember "Wiener Hakoah" playing couple of times in Cracow. No Polish team was a match for them. With their unique style of playing, they performed magic over their opponents. That used to be their era, and no wonder, couple of times they managed to win Austrian championship.

Hakoah ceased to exist during the Nazi rule in Austria. Many of its famous players perished in holocaust, and others left the country.

After the war the surviving Jews made an attempt to bring back the famous Hakoah into existance. But shortage of Jewish players, and good players as well prevented Hakoah from competing in major league. The team was forced to drop to Vienna's class "B" in minor league. Only few Jewish players remained on the team, most of them were gentiles, and even not Austrian but D.P.s from Eastern European countries. The club paid good salaries to those players with help from AJDC, to keep the team going.

After the liberation in 1945 many young Jews chooce not to return to their native countries like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Rumania.. Even many nationals wouldn't return, either being afraid because of the crimes they comited there during the occupation, or just wouldn't like to live under communism. All they settled in D.P. camps in American occupation zone (Upper Austria and province of Salzburg). In those days there was nothing else to do but to recurate from the misery of concentration camps, or get involved in black market. Another favored pastime was searching for missing relatives.

In Linz Americans took over many buildings previously occupied by Nazi authorities. In Bindermichel a suburb of Linz, a large comlex, few blocks long and wide, all buildings 4 or 5 stories tall, where SS was quartered during the war was handed over to surviving Jewish D.P.s. And there in Bindermichel an idea was born to organize another profesional soccer team Hakoah in Austria.

Actually the plan came from a phisical education profesor Lipski, who before the war taught in Linz's school system. Profesor Lipski was Jewish, a survivor who used live in Linz all his life. Like many Austrian he loved soccer, and thought a lot about the glory days of Vienna Hakoah. For him, it was a dream, that maybe, just maybe he could bring to life another great Hakoah. You can believe it or not, but profesor Lipski almost succeded.

He used to live on the right bank of Danubia River in district called Urfahr. You see the right bank of Danubia was under Soviet occupation. The city of Linz was divided. We always used to watch the streetcar being stoped in American zone, so the passengers could disembark and walk the lenght of the bridge to show their passports to Soviet guards. American MP's used to let everybody through without checking peoples passports. The streetcar always continued on the bridge empty.

Lipski's task wasn't easy. It was difficult to put a team together good enough to compete in one of the classes of Upper Austrian Soccer Association, which was also a member of ALL-Austrian Soccer Association. Young people were eager to play, but most of them weren't good enough to play in serious competition.

Linzer Hakoah!

With plenty of difficulties finally profesor Lipsky put together a pretty well balanced team. All players on this team were men survivors of holocaust, or just ~~war~~ war as well. All of them used to play in organized soccer in many European countries before the war.

The bulk of the team was represented by few Jewish men like, Adam Elbaum who used to be a reserve player on the Maccabi team in Cracow, There was another Maccabi's reserve player whose name I no longer remember, and Heniek Silberstein who played soccer for some Jewish team in Warsaw. Another was half Jew from Hungary who was the star of the team. His name was Pushtay. Later with the help of AJDC Lipski was able to bring to Linz from Vienna Hakoah their best player a Viennesse Jew Lustig. I shouldn't also forget Herman Korzennik who before the war was a member of Jewish Workers Sport Club Siła (Strengh), in Cracow. Rest of the team consisted of Gentiles like Simko and Gerber from Yougoslavia and few others.

Hakoah was admitted to plays in class "B" of Upper Austrian League, with the right to play for championship of this class and then participate in playoffs and if succesful to move up to class "A".

Hakoah competed in Upper Austrian soccer from 1946 to 1949, with a very good results. As years went by profesor Lipski traveled around the camps looking for promising players. When Hakoah played their championship games in Steyr or another town where Jewish camps were located people like me and others used to play on Hakoah's reserve team against the reserve Austrian team located in this particular town. This was Lipsky's way to try us out, how would we react under real games conditions.

In 1947 two internationally known soccer players one from Rumania and the other from Czechoslovakia joined Hakoah. The Rumanian Farkash was a Jew and the man from Czechoslovakia used to play for the famous team from Bratislava, under a name "Kubala" After joining Hakoah he started to use his real name which was Katz.

1947 was a year when Hakoah became a force in Upper Austrian soccer. The Jewish population suported the team with all their hearts. We used to travel all over Upper Austria following the team. We rented busses and wherever Hakoah played, we were there with our vocal support. Our noise used to bother not the players but Austrian fans, and many time through loudspeakers leaderships of some clubs tried to intimidate us asking us to keep quiet, but we kept to drive those Austrians crazy. Who knows, maybe thanks to our ~~x~~ yelling Hakoah was victorious most of the time.

1948 was Hakoah's banner year. They won the championship of class "B" and the right to be in playoffs to move-up to class "A" They even played teams located in Soviet zone, traveling on special passes, and winning games without us their fans, They eliminted their entire oposition and reached finals to play a team from Gmunden. Hakoah won the first hard fought game in Gmunden 3-2, and tied 3-3 the second game played in Linz which gave them 3 point advantage to 1 point of Gmunden. So Hakoah became class "B" champion and advanced to class""A"

Winning the championship ~~was~~ was the beginning of the end of Hakoah. There was no way that Austrian soccer authorities would allow a foreign team to compete on class "A" level. They were clearly afraid that Hakoah would win in class "A" also, so they passed a law that each competing team in class "A" and higher must have nine Austrian citiziens on the team and only two foreigners. Until such time Hakoah was allowed to play as an un-official entry and their wins or loses didn't count in championship games. This resolution actually spelled out the end of Hakoah. Their status was as a status of a suspended team. But still having and supporting Hakoah was wonderful as long as the the team lasted.

Even before the end of Hakoah Mr. Saffier pushed the hard working profesor Lipski out. Adventually he became the sole leader of the club, again filling up his pockets with money. I saw him many times before the games selling tickets on the side, stoping people before they reached the ticket windows and pocketing the money. THEN THE SECOND REASON OF HAKOAH'S DOWNFALL WERE ~~FRONTLINE~~ PLAYERS LEAVING FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCES IN ISRAEL AND U.S.A.

Chapter 112

Who Was Who in Reithoffer!

The camp life was real good for grandma Francis. Even thou she always worried about her family, but at least the food problems went away with the past.

A D.P. camp in those days was like a "shtetl" in pre-war Poland. Almost everybody knew everybody, and grandma during her life used to like very much a small town enviroment. So as in old days in Tuchow, Jaslo, Gliniany at the settlement in Siberia and in Uzbekistan she had many friends who were delighted to keep company with her.

Among the old friends were Mrs. Wrubel, sister of grandma's former friend from Jaslo, Mrs. Altholz. There were many others and all these ladies used to meet for tea or coffee at meetings of "WIZO" (Womens International Zionist Organization) to discuss womens role in future Israel, which usually turned into old-fashioned "klatch".

Another favored place of womens meetings was the camp's bakery. On each Friday afternoon they gathered there to bake halas and coffee cakes for Shabat. While waiting all kind of conversations made awaiting their turn more pleasant.

Most everybody tried hard to keep busy, and as long as health permited, the population was happy. Ofcourse everybody had a goal to reach which was either Palestine or another country. Still any kind of emigration in those days was far away. Only few single cases, when some chosen people left camps existed. Terror still raged in Palestine, and immigration bills in United States Congress were long way from being introduced.

In early days of camps existance Saturdays used to be like any other weekday. Rabbi's didn't presure the population and the administration, and many of us used to work, at least half a day. As times went by all this changed. Not only we started to observe Shabat, but besides the security people, camps were surrounded each Saturday with religious watchers so-called "Shomer Shabat" who made sure that no business took place inside or nearby outside the camp.

Another friend was Mr. Chulew who was brother in law to Mrs. Wrubel. His wife (another Mrs. Wrubel's sister) also passed away during the war. Mr. Chulew had three very good looking sons. Meny, Baruch and Ezra used to be so-called businessmen, dealing in black market, except Ezra who was driving camp's ambulance. Mr. Chulew himself was secretly engaged to one Mrs. Kremer, a relative to the other Kremer family. She was there with a little boy from her former marriage. They got married in 1950 or 1951 before leaving for United States. Baruch Chulew met in camp a very young and beautiful Rumanian girl. He fell in love with her. After their wedding she wouldn't leave her family, so Baruch was forced to go with them to Israel. They had twin girls and later joined the other Chulews in United States. Here in Chicago they operated a successful furniture business. With Chulews also was a young man, not their relative whom they took in, because he was alone. In Soviet Union he became Chulew, but In Austria used his original name. This young man got married at the same time as Hania and I. He left the Chulews and with his wife and son who was born few days later after our Jack went to Israel.

Due to many different circumstances, some families were forced to split before leaving camps. Some went to Israel, and other members of families went to United States. One of them was Shlomo Kremer who went with his wife Clara and her family to Israel, but later joined his family in United States.

It would take a long time to describe habits and behavior of camp inhabitants. There were all kinds of them: Rich and poor, nice people and bad people. Some of them easy to get along, others snubs and arrogant. People who before the war in Poland didn't have money to live on next day, but made good during the war and in camps and for some reasons saying how rich they used to be before the war. There were thiefs, high class, low class, working people, black marketers, white collar workers, blue collar workers, camp administration, police and many many others. But let us also not forget the "Learners". Those who studied "Torah" and those who claimed to know everything and never waisted any time to get their point across right or wrong. The real intelectuals behaved in dignified ways. You could recognize them, by their beards, clothing and capes or coats hanging over their shoulders, LIKE CAPES

Another group who deserve a mention in this story were old maids. There was quite a number of them in Reithoffer, and most of them tried to find a man. Some of them were old and even didn't try to make an effort to look presentable. Those were the ones who gave up. Others used to walk around with their heads high feeling proud, all dressed up with plenty of make-up on their faces. Some of them were less proud without scrupuls, hoping to reach their goal. And ofcourse the younger generation of old maids who used to date all the time, but couldn't make up their minds whom to choose, because nobody was up to their standards.

Take for example one Miss Dolgopiaty, a sister to one of our soccer players. A tall not so young woman anymore. With heavy make-up on her face still was very good looking, but she still for some reason was carrying a chip on her shoulder. She dated many man, and some of them good looking, inteligent, but not good enough for Miss Dolgopiaty.

Another not so young woman who hold her head high was a pharmacist from Rumania. She was petite and good looking, and was in camp with her mother. I no longer remember her name, and no man was good for her, and many of those men gladly would marry her. We met her and her mother in Salzburg before we left for United States. At that time both her and her mother were very happy, because in Salzburg she met this wonderful man whom she decided to marry as soon as they arrive in New York. Her fiance was scheduled to leave Salzburg few weeks later. Hania and I met the man when he came to the station in Salzburg to say good-by to his future wife. When we saw him then we both thought; "Oh! boy. What a drag". In Bremenhaven Hania and Jack shared a room with this mother and daughter, and they couldn't stop talking about this guy, and how wonderful he was. To make a long story short, after the guy arrived in New York the pharmacist changed her mind and broke her engagement, and dumped her wonderful man.

In spring of 1947 one Zlotogorski arrived in Reithoffer. He was the oldest brother to the Zlotogorskis from Alti-Arik. He was from the same small town in Poland as the Dolgopiaty family. In this little town before the war the Dolgopiatys and Zlotogorskis used to carry some kind of a feud. Zlotogorski was a good soccer player, but Dolgopiaty wouldn't play with him on the same team, or viseversa. At the end Dolgopiaty withdrew. We never were able to find out about the nature of their feud.

I used to work in camp with a heavy and tall man, whose name was Katz. Also with us on the same working team was another man, whose name was Katz. The second Katz was small and skiny, and there was no relation, between these two men. The big Katz used to talk and holer a lot, and the small Katz was bashfull and quiet. The big Katz was a married man, and the small Katz was still single. The big Katz's wife had a sister who was short and fat, and Katz wasn't happy, because his wife's sister had hang around them. A dream one night gave him an idea to convince the small Katz to marry his wife's sister. The small Katz fought like a lion for his freedom, but he didn't have no chance, against the big Katz, and finally gave in. He married the big Katz's sister in law and became his brother in law, and what was most important big Katz got rid off his wife's sister. And this was how the two Katz's became related and lived happily ever after.

Once during a walk around the camp, two young men approached grandpa Abraham, and asked him all kind of questions about himself and family. At first grandpa couldn't figure out, what it was all about. His curiosity was satisfied soon, after those men introduced themselves as Stein brothers from nearby Tuchów. They remained grandpa about the days many years before, when their family was very poor, and how grandpa helped them to survive with milk and food he used to give to their family. Their entire family in Poland perished in holocaust. Both men were married and the older had a cute little boy. They never fergot grandpa's good deeds toward their family. They huged and kissed him, and since this meeting would do for grandpa anything.

We all became close friends with Stein brothers and their families. Those two men tried very hard to show their gratitude to grandpa Abraham all the time. Later the younger Stein even played soccer on our team. Earlier then anybody else Steins discovered long lost relatives in France and left Reithoffer to join them in Marselle.

The first of May (workers holiday) was celebrated in Austria as a national holiday. On this day all workers (socialists and communists) united under their red banners, marched and hold political mass meetings. In Reithoffer and the other camp Steyr 231 the left wing Jewish parties hold their own celebration. In Steyr 231 there was this man Handelman, one of the leaders of "Poale Zion". On May first he came to Reithoffer with a red flag accompanied by few followers and proposed that Jeiwsh socialists should join Austrians in their May Day parade, in a show of international solidarity of the working class. Well! They went to see the Austrians but made only fools od themselves, because Austrians refused to march with them. It was a slap in those Jewish socialists faces, but it served them right, because they didn't have no business to talk to those Austrians in the first place.

The same day in the afternoon Fischer (Austrian Jew) and the leader of Austrian communist party hold a big political rally on Steyr's Market Place, with thousands of people listening, and among them many Jews from both camps. After their miserable lives in Soviet Union, they still didn't learn their lesson.

During a casual conversation grandma Frances' friend Mrs. Wrubel, who always knew what was going on in both camps mentioned that in Steyr 231 a young man from Jasło was living, and she would like very much to invite him to come to Reithoffer and meet the Leniower girls. Ofcourse at that time, Frieda was the only one available.

And this was how we met Victor Połaniecki for the first time. Victor's family in Jasło before the war used to be in business selling grain. His father passed away still a young man. His mother later re-married. Victor's mother and his younger sister perished in holocaust. After the first meeting with Frieda, Victor like what he saw, but wasn't to often around for next year and a half. Their real courtship didn't develop until late 1948, and became more serious in months to come.

Camp or not camp, the rival Orthodox factions as in the old country before the war fought each other all the time. Besides the old Rabbi who performed our wedding ceremony, there was this Rabbi Goldstein, a little younger but also with a long grey beard, with a large family, which he wasn't able to control all the time. His two good looking sons, didn't have orthodoxy on their minds, only good looking girls interested them, and the Rabbi's daughter married a man who before the wedding was forced by the Rabbi to swear that he wouldn't sell ham in his foodstand.

Both Rabbis used to be smart and well learned, but the old man won the job, as Chief Rabbi of Reithoffer. Still he encountered plenty problems with his own daughter who married a man her father choose for her, a man she couldn't stand. A real hell broke out between those two after the old man's death.

In the early existance of camp Reithoffer a big sensation was a romance between an Austrian nurse, who worked at the camp's clinic and a Jewish man Soyher. The nurse's husband never came back home from war, and Soyher's wife and children perished in holocaust. His only surviving brother was with him in the camp. Both were good looking men, but the younger Soyher disaproved of the romance. Still the love of Soyher and his nurse was sincere, and maybe under different circumstances he would marry her. During the four or five years in Steyr, they were always together, and it was a real heartbreak for both of them, after Soyher left Austria.

Both Soyher brothers used to deal on black market, buying and selling sacharin which was against the law. They used to bring this stuff from Salzburg and then distributed in Steyr.

On one particular occasion while waiting in front of Linzer railroad station for bus to return to Steyr, I witnessed a situation which disturbed me very much. An Austrian policeman was holding-up the departure of a bus going to Steyr, while harassing a Jewish man who wanted to travel on the bus to his camp in Enns. First he searched him and then kept making fun of him to the delight of Austrians who gathered around. The man was scared to death but nobody have had guts enough to speak out and confront the policeman.

As all this developed I noticed that already inside the bus was Soyher's brother and his partner, who told me later, that both of them were upset as some other Jews on the spot, but couldn't intervene because all over their bodies they were covered with small bags of sacharin. Now-a-day looking back on this incident I feel ashamed of myself, not having enough nerved to open my mouth in this poor man's defense, but I guess I was scared as much as the other Jews around. The policeman finally let the man board the bus and continue with his trip home. I am quite sure if any of us Jewa would speak out, we also would be searched or even arrested.

So life in and outside the camp wasn't dull at all. Many small and large events kept the camp's population going. There were happy times and sad times, but all those things kept us going and bringing us closer and closer to our final goal, to come to a place, which we would call our home, and will be able to start as normal life as possible.

Another interesting and politicaly prominent family in Reithoffer was the Kukawka family. Three inteligent brothers, each one of them with different political views. I think the oldest Mr. Kukawka was most different from his other brothers. He was single at the time. I don't know maybe he lost his family during the war. He seemed to be a loner, always walking alone, a man in deep thoughts, his coats always hanging over his shoulders. His arms never inside sleeves. He was a member of Betar, supporting violence against Arabs and the British as the only way to insure the creation of a free Jewish State.

The second Kukawka was a family man, married with two teen-age daughters. Kukawka and his wife used to be very close with each other, and very much in love, sometimes even neglecting their daughters. He was also involved very much in Zionist politics, and held an important post within Ichud (Democratic movement) the party which brought us out from Poland. He never served on camp's committee but his words always counted. It was obvious, that when such time will come the family would emigrate to Israel.

Needless to say, almost exactly when their time came to leave camp and travel to Israel Mr. Kukawka was stricken with a massive heart attack, and for time being was burried on Steyr Jewish cementery. Mrs. Kukawka was devasted, and their journey to Israel was postponed. And after the one year long mourning period was over, Mrs. Kukawka didn't leave her husband at the Austrian cementery. His body traveled with his family and was re-burried in Israel.

The youngest of Kukawka brothers was a member of Aguda. A very religious orthodox Jew, was always dressed up in traditional orthodox clothing. He was married and blessed with three very good looking sons. Their orthodoxy wasn't as important as their father would wish. They dressed like ordinary people, used to go out with girls, going to movies and ball games as well. At the time when the older Kukawka passed away, his religious brother was recovering in hospital from a stroke, so the family kept secret passing away of his brother. Later when he recovered he said that he knew all along about his brother's heart attack and his death as well, even thou the family insisted that he was all well in Israel.

This part of the Kukawka family went to Israel also, except their older son, who decided to go to United States. He arrived in New York in the midst of the Korean war, and even not being U.S. citizien was drafted promptly, but he refused to join, and explained to the draftboard, that if he has to go to Korea, he rather would go and fight in Israel. Shortly after this incident, the young Kukawka left New York and joined his family in Israel. If he fought in Israel, I don't know.

Shortly after our arrival in Steyr Norbert went to Linz to visit with his fathers brother Mr. Sigmund Amsterdam who was liberated by Americans in Austria. Mr. Amsterdam used to live in Bindermichel in a complex formerly occupied by the SS. His wife Lola also was a holocaust survivor and at that time was living in Sweden in order to recuparate from Nazi atrocities comited on her. Sigmund and Lola Amsterdam used to be parents of only one son, who probably now-a-day would be my age if he wouldn't be taken away from his parents and later murdered. Both Amsterdams had been waiting to be admited into United States. Eventually, they settled in Cleveland, Ohio, with help of Mrs. Esther Wiesenfeld, who was Amsterdams sister.

When Mr. Sigmund Amsterdam came visiting with his brother Alois in Steyr emotions took over the re-union. Both brothers were very happy seeing each other after all those years of the horrible nightmare. They spent couple of days together reminiscing and enjoying themselves. I think in 1948 when Norbert's father passed away, Sigmund Amsterdam was already in America.

At the same time Norbert kept corresponding with a young woman from Cleveland. They had been introduced to each other by mail through Norbert's aunt Mrs. Wiesenfeld, who didn't know, that he was already involved with Ela. So the pen-paling lasted a very short time.

Grandma's Frances cousins kept helping us all the time. Also the food from AJDC was geting better and better, even thou it was in cans or jars. People got spoiled, while enjoying this good living. Many of them didn't like this kind of food, and didn't even try to keep quiet about it. For example. All camps were swarmed with jars and cans of gefilte fish. All that fish used to be round in shape, like balls, and at first some people didn't know what it was, and after they found out, they didn't like it. Because the stuff was round, ~~they~~ they used to call it in Yiddish "Ridelah". Other delicacies were peanut butter and jam. Those Jews used to like jam, but not peanut butter, until Mr. Amsterdam got an idea to mix them both together, creating so popular in America, peanut butter-jelly sandwich.

When rumors surfaced in Steyr, that there was a friction between our sport leader Mr. Saffier and his young Austrian wife, we knew for sure, that pretty soon Saffier will show up in Steyr to promote another sport event, so he could get rich on it again. And so it happened. Soon enough he called for another meeting and announced another soccer tournament to take place in camp Wegscheid near Linz, on the highway between Linz and Salzburg, but without participation of Linzer Hakoah.

We agreed and spent in Wegscheid few days competing in soccer and one friendly volleyball game. The competition took place at the nearby stadium of an Austrian club "Westbahn". We had much better success than in Salzburg, and the atmosphere was much friendlier. At least nobody searched us for stolen blankets. There were speeches and parade with white-blue flags before the tournament. Food situation as well was much better then in Salzburg, because the elder of the Kremer brothers who was Reithoffer's committee member, gave us food and money before we left Steyr. When I got lonesome for Hania I traveled on the bus to Steyr and came to Linz back next morning. We all had a good time, and Mr. Saffier made plenty money to satisfy himself and his wife.

This tournament in Linz was the last "hooray" for our club at Reithoffer. It seemed then, that the rumors about closing Reithoffer would became a reallity in very near future. The "Wandering Jew" among us, came up again with the centuries old question: "And where now"?

Back in camp, when I went to collect my working man's ration, the oldest of the Chulew boys Meny, who was then the head of the employment office, refused to pay me because I spent few days at the tournament. I was shocked, but for once I wasn't bashfull. In few chosen words I explained to him that during those few days I probably had worked much harder representing the camp, then every day in the camp. (I didn't say nothing about having fun). Chulew reconsidered and gave me my regular ration. I guess he didn't like to listen to my retorics.

~~ANYWAY THE WOULD PAY ME. AFTER HIS FATHER WOULD HEAR THE STORY FROM GRANDMA~~

Who Was Who in Reithoffer!

A mail call in Reithoffer was an adventure by itself. In a small room half of the camp's population gathered every morning expecting all kind of news from their relatives from all over the world. Some of them used to get food and clothing parcels from their relatives, others recived money drafts from America. With great deal of anticipation they kept opening letters marked "official" telling them of being accepted by some country, or informed about a denial. Some of the recipiants of letters either praised their relatives in United States, and others cursed them with worst curses imagineable.

Once waiting for mail I discovered that there was another Mondschein in camp. His name was Bronislaw Mondschein, also from Eastern Poland coming from city of Stanislaw. We have had some conversations about our families, but never were able to establish a relationship. They left for places unknown to me after closing of Reithoffer.

Grandma Frances recognized a man from Tarnow, who arrived in Reithoffer to join and marry his fiance, one Miss Kloper. She was the oldest of three sisters. The entire family left Steyr for Palestine, even before the State of Israel was established.

And then, there was this man "Goldfarb". We didn't know him at all, but once, like droping from the blue sky, when the door to our room was open, he just walked in sit down by the table and begun to talk. Since this day he became a regular in our room. He survived the war in Soviet Union, and lost his family in holocaust. His hometown in Poland was Radom, not faraway from Warsaw. He was a big talker and a little on the "meshuge" side. The whole camp used to make fun of him, but everybody agreed, that he was loaded, carrying all his money on himself in a money belt. But being "Meshuge" didn't stop him from pulling a trick on Austrian government, which brought him even more money.

According to eye witnesses (Jews included) who traveled with Goldfarb on the bus, his behavior prior to what heppened was rather strange. He was involved in a bizarre accident on a bus owned by Austrian State Bus Lines, on a stretch of highway between Steyr and Enns, at a point where the two lane highway was narrow, leaving not to much space for vehicles traveling in opposte directions. While Goldfarb was toying with his left hand outside the window, another bus coming from Enns to Steyr cut off his index finger, from the outstretched left hand. Goldfarb being in terrible pain lost his consciousness and was taken to hospital in Linz. He recovered, and then collected from Austrian government quite large compensation, and monthly pension as long as he resided in Austria, and who knows, maybe even longer after he emigrated to United States. In meantime he took lots of kidding and rubbing in from the Jewish population, as many of them were quite convinced, that Goldfarb worked the whole thing out in his nutty head.

Among the large population in Reithoffer, there were those two men, whom I knew from long before in Zbaraz. I used to buy cigarettes on black market from one of them, long after Poland ceased to exist. In Zbaraz after the Red Army took over both of them were employed as supervisors in sanitation department. In Steyr they hold the same job in camp. They also told me about the ordeal my uncle Nysio and his family went through, after their partizan unit was discovered and captured by Germans. As you alredy know my uncle choose to take poisen instead of giving himself up.

The two introduced me to another man from Zbaraz who at that time used to live in Steyr 231. I recognized him right away as one Mr. Wilner an uncle of my good friend Misko Wilner, and also a very good childhood friend of my father. After the war he married a woman from a very important family from Tarnow, whom grandma Frances used to know well. The only problem was that in Steyr he wasn't Wilner anymore, but changed his name to Mr. Kalish. Once even the Central Jewish Committee from Salzburg, sent a man to Steyr to investigate his wartime activities. I guess with the help of those two above former residents of Zbaraz, Kalish was able to explain his behavior during the war in a satisfactory manner, because since then investigators never bothered him again.

If not then Schulew would pay me anyway later, after his father would hear the story from grandma Frances.

Before closing of our camp we played a friendly basketball game with Steyr 231. We won on our outdoor court, with many difficulties, because the place was full of little stones, and the ball kept making funny bounces. It was a hard played game, and one of their players Sasha Fleschler, a big fellow, whose idea of playing basketball was hiting hard the other fellow injured and dislocated my right shoulder. Few weeks after the game I still wasn't able to move my right arm, and Hania helped me to wash and dress.

When I was leaving the court some stupid fans yelled at me calling me all kind of names "coward" included. As far as they were concerned I should have stayed in the game and play even with pain. Those jerks probably didn't see a basketball games in their lives. For them leaving the court was like to abandon a country in need.

We lost couple of weeks later a soccer game against Steyr 231, and I didn't play because my shoulder was still sore.

Workers who used to work for me, probably were the hardest working group in camp, so from time to time they demanded higher working rations. Never mind that from time to time they liked to quit at noon, or either prefered not to show-up to work at all. During the May 1 holiday the camp needed to be cleaned-up as each day of the week. The hard line socialists or communists didn't work , but others who worked grumbled all day long for being forced to work as they put it "on their holiday".

The camp committee always refused better rations for working people, so finally it came to a confrontation, when one morning they tried to sent our brigade to unload coal from railroad cars at the station. The workers went on strike. Americans decided to keep out from this dispute, but committee members started to run around, yelling treats at the strikers. The lady from AJDC joined the yelling with her squicky voice. Committee members tried to round up their relatives to board the trucks heading for the railroad's yards. The worst of them was one Mr. Knebel, a member of "Poale Zion" and socialist himself. Insted to protect the workers, he tried hard to sent them back to work in an ugly manner. The excitement was over next morning, when they all went back to work without any gains.

A small group of Jews used to live outside the camp in Steyr. There was this young man from Modlin in Poland, who was the only survivoer of a large family. He made rather large bundle of money in Steyr and married one of the most beautiful Austrian girl in town. They also had two very nice looking children, Needless to say he lost all his money gambling, and was forced to give up a very nice apartment in town and take one of those not so nice rooms in camp. Later with other D.P.s they emigrated to United Sates.

The other Jewish young man was smarter and more careful, and much better off. he also made money, and married an Austrian girl and had children with her, but he knew how to manage his affairs. He settled in Steyr and never left Austria.

A middle aged German Jew was also living in Steyr. He was also married to much younger Austrian girl, and had children with her. I think he was wealthy and was waiting for his papers to come through so they could go to United States.

Another Jewish D.P. camp got closed in Braunau, Adolf Hitler's birthplace. Only one person from this camp came to Steyr. Everybody knew him by his first name Marian. Nobody knew his family name. He was tough and very good looking. He used to live in town, and had a job in motor pool of U.S. Armed Forces in Steyr. With his conections he was able to buy military scripts and exchange them later for real dollars and Austrian Schillings. He was a wealthy man, a survivor of few concentration camps. Even in camps he kept his money and valuables hiden in his abdomen. He also was living with an Austrian woman whose husband never returned from war. Marian was always rough on Austrians, and never passed an opportunity to let them know how he felt anout them with words and on some occasions using his fists. His girlfriend took over his business after he left for United States.

Chapter 112 (cont)

Who Was Who in Reithoffer!

War created many strange bedfellows. Situations among men and women developed which seldom would have taken place in normal living conditions. Many couples got together not having anything incommon. Mostly inteligent women have married uneducated men, because those men usually had a better chance to succed in business and black market assuring the women of a better and worry free life.

Another group used to be "couples" who continued to hang around among the surviving families of their spouses. There was such a couple in Reithoffer. Mr. Dachinger and Mrs. Dachinger survived the war in hiding. Mrs. Dachinger used to be a wife of Mr. Dachinger's brother. She lost her husband and their two children. After the war they decided to live together. The wife with her brother in law. Both very nice and inteligent people. Despite this situation many other women wanted to marry Mr. Dachinger, and many men were after Mrs. Dachinger. Still deep down in their hearts they wanted to stay together. They married shortly before emigrating to United States.

Rumors about closing Reithoffer soon became facts. Sometimes at the end of April 1947 Americans notified The Central Jewish Committee about their intention to close our camp. No final date was announced but general feeling was that it would happen sometime during summer. Such was a final decision of the Military government, and nothing anybody could do to change it. After the initial shock people went on with their regular daily lives, but reserved their rights to protest for later.

Again Mr. Weinstein from The Central Committee in Salzburg arrived in Steyr to supervise the closing. Choices had been given to everybody to transfer to any camp in Linz or Salzburg area. The authorities prefered for people not to choose Steyr 231 because of the overcrowded conditions, but many people liked to live in Steyr and wanted to stay there. We were among these people who would like it to get a decent room at Steyr 231. One year later it turned out, that we made a mistake. Those who went elsewhere improved their financial situation, And besides this, who from us could have forseen grandpa Abraham's illness, during which he spent most of the time in D.P. hospital in Linz. How much easier would it be for grandma Frances to avoid the long bus rides from Steyr to Linz.

In June 1947 when closing of Reithoffer was just to begin our Jews decided, that the time was ripe for demonstrations. Mass meetings of the entire population went on for few days. Our leaders kept talking and urging us to demand, and express our desire not to move anyplace except to Eretz Israel.

Slowly but surewith each passing day, less and less people remained in Reithoffer. Some went to Wegscheid near Linz. Others with money and influence moved to apartments in Bindermichel. You can imagene their disapointment when two months later Americans closed Bundermichel and moved all the inhabitants to another suburb of Linz Ebelsberg. It wasn't a bad change, because Ebelsberg was a very nice apartment complex as well as Bindermichel. Formely quarters for the notorious SS and after the liberation a fort for U.S. Armed Forces.

Another small camp on the road between Linz and Steyr took few families only. The rest went to Wells a town on highway between Linz and Salzburg or to many other camps in Salzburg area. The most notorious camp there was "Parsch" located exactly on the border between Austria and West Germany. Headquarters for black marketers, smugglers and other shady elements. From there all the goods used to be distributed to all parts of Austria.

Our family, Amsterdams and few other friends, were the last ones to leave Reithoffer. Thanks to the intervention from Mr. Weinstein whom Leniowers knew in Fergana we got permission to move to Steyr 231. It was an early Friday evening when we arrived. There were no rooms available at that time so our party "Ihud" let us move in and made ourselves comfortable in their office for time being. We didn't mind at all, because it was a very nice room in a barrack, and we hoped, that the party would let us keep this room, which we shared with Amsterdams.

Chapter 113

Steyr 231

Camp Steyr 231 was located on the other end of town, on the edge where highways met going in four different directions. One of them was the highway going from Steyr to Linz. Camp 231 was a pre-war and through duration of the war an Artillery Kasserne, a military fort named after the former Austrian Kaiser Franz Joseph. It seems to me, that all forts over Austria used to be named after their most famous Kaiser Franz Joseph. After the war Austrians named the street where the camp was standing after the American president Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After Germany's defeat in 1945 Austria suffered as well as former German Ally, even though Austrian maintained their innocence, claiming being victims of Nazism as any other European nations. So as Germany Austria haven't been allowed to rearm herself, and the only force permited by the Allies was national police and so-called "Gendarmerie" to protect the countryside and guard Austrian borders along with Americans, British, French and Russians. In one building on the camp's territory a Gendarmerie school was located to train new recruits.

The main gate to the camp 231 was on Franklin D. Roosevelt street, with a ramp and a large wooden guardhouse we used to call "budka" (shack). One long road ran across the camp, ending at a large plaza, part of which was a basketball court. The plaza was surrounded by eight barracks and a concrete patio used sometimes for outdoor dancing in summer, and an iceskating ring in winter. There were buildings made from bricks and concrete on both sides the main road. On one side of the road in those buildings camp's population used to live in large rooms dormitory style. People who used to live in barracks around the plaza used to live more comfortable in rooms one per family. On the other side of the road there was the administration building with offices on first floor, apartments for big shots on second floor, P.X. and bathhouse and mikvah in the basement. Rest of the buildings on this side of the road were stables converted in our time to social and theater halls, restaurant run by former war veterans, food warehouse, fire station, ORT school, motor pool, and excercise hall for security men and young people preparing to join Haganah (foruner of Israeli Army) and fight the Arabs in Palestine. Behind the buildings on one side was the kitchen, and on the other side soccer field and the"Kosher-Kosher" kitchen.

The camp's government was have functioned as the government in Reithoffer. Seargant Hodges and his few soldiers took over the American supervision at Steyr 231, assisted by an Austrian man who was like a camp manager. But soon he was relieved of his duties, because somebody spoted his picture in an old SS yearbook all dressed up in their uniform and insigia. Under the investigation he denied any wrong doings, but was fired anyway and replaced by an Austrian Jew, former Steyr resident, who pointed the finger at his predesesor in the first place. The secretary also an Austrian from [illegible] Steyr Mr. Hinterreitner hold on to his job after closing of Reithoffer. As in Reithoffer most of the power was in hands of the Jewish camp committee, whose chairman was Mr. Hertz from "Ihud" with his clique of men representing other parties.

The camp was "protected" by a barbed wire, which was removed soon after our arrival, because of the insistance of the entire population, stating that we saw enough barbed wires to last us for our lifetime.

Once or twice a month we were counted by the Americans, not only in Steyr,but in all camps over Austria and Germany. American authorities always insisted on a live count. To do this a detachment of soldiers used to come to camp assisted by camp's security, usually at 5am, when everybody was still in beds. They visited each room,getting a clear picture of the total population. Camp's security always tried to confuse the soldiers in order to make the count higher, to increase the population by adding people who actually weren't there. They used to call them in Yiddish "Meluhim" (Souls). None existant people. Increased population count ment increased rations for the real population, also ment more stealing by the departments heads, some priviledged workers and committee.

MPs employed the same method when looking to arrest suspected black marketers. But they never succeded, at least not in our camp. Once a man sliped out in his night garments through the open window, right behind watching MP guard.

All those camps in Austria and Germany were like "Naked Cities" if you would like to use the title of a prominent TV show quite popular many years ago. I guess more appropriate name would be a "Naked Shtetl". In the television show we used to see somebody's story one at a Time. In camps one family's story was everybody's story. There was no room for privacy.

We registered and recived our rations cards. Looking around I came to a conlusion, that quite few families came over from Reithoffer and settled in camp 231. At the registration Frieda didn't forget her former friend Sigmund Gleicher. The man in charge wasn't to happy about puting Sigmund on the list, but he didn't have an other choice. After all, even thou Sigmund was still in prison, he needed food more then all of us, and Frieda kept sending packeges for him all the time.

Yet the most important priority was to find a decent job. As always before, the good jobs were already taken by residents who were there before we came. I decided to wait, and one Mr. Fertig, who was the head of "Ihud" and Amsterdams friend from Rzeszow promised to let me know as soon as something appropriate wouls be available. Fertig wasn't an angel. He was in habit of doing many silly things, like for example; Anytime he needed a room for a meeting, and as you recall we used to live in former Ihud's office, he had a nerve to tell us to vacate the room for the duration of the meeting, no matter what we were doing at the time.

In meantime AJDC organized a kniting circle for interested women. Frieda was one of the first to apply for the supervisory position and was hired, because of her experience in this field. Many young women joined, and AJDC supplied wool. Hania and Ela joined as well. Frieda taught the circle, about the styles and ways of kniting. The finished sweaters later were sold at the camp's PX. Ofcourse particpants had been paid for their efforts.

Steyr 231 used to have, as all other camps different way as Reithoffer to pay their workers. It was a formula worked out between AJDC and the Amerivan administration, and was similar to the method American personal collected their salaries in Europe. Each worker in camp recived so-called "scripts", according to scales. One "script equaled one dollar. As far as I remember our girls used to collect 20 scripts twice a month, which was a good salary. With those "scripts" workers bought all kinds of merchandise and canned food in PX, and cigaretts. "Scripts" were not transferable. Only people on the list were permited to buy. Ofcourse everybody could sell their merchandise on black market.

Grandpa Abraham continued as in Reithoffer with his buying and selling business, and had done rather well. His real pleasure was to buy new things for his daughters, including gold watches for each of them.

Still looking for a job, through a friend we got a message, that jobs were available in camp Wells. Those friends were the Stein brothers, who for some time before leaving for France used to live in Wells. They aked us to come over, and even consider a move to Wells. We accepted their invitation and spent few days in Wells. A very nice old lady invited us to stay with her. She was alone because her daughter went to Palestine to re-unite with her husband whom she found there after being convinced that he perished in holocaust.

The Zlotogorski family from Alti-Arik also lived in Wells. Mr. Zlotogorski changed a lot since his communist ways in Alti-Atik. In Wells he was the leader of the Labor Party, whose name in those days was "Gordonia"a foruner of today's Labor Party in Israel. When we came to see him, he just arrived from a trip to Italy, where he left his wife and children to be ready for future journey to Palestine. He promised jobs for Hania and me, but under a condition that we switch parties from "Ihud" to "Gordonia", which wouldn't be a problem if Wells would be to our liking. At the end we decided to stay in Steyr.

We went home to Steyr with a group of people going to Palestine on a first organized transport with approval from Americans, using Army transport trucks. At the railroad station in Linz we said good-by to some of our friends from Steyr who traveled on the same transport.

Steyr 231!

A truck driven by American soldier took Hania and me back to Steyr from Linz, traveling on a 50 miles per hour highway, speeding over 100 miles per hour. We hold on to each other and the rail with all our strengh, fearing of being blowed away from the truck by this incredable speed. Another one of those crazy and unforgetable experiences.

The Jewish camp committee at Steyr 231 performed no different as the committee at Reithoffer. Their principal aim, was to fill-up their pockets first, and then feed or supply the population. The same stories circulated in all camps in Austria and Germany, about the corruption in camps, but nobody have had nervs enough to do something about it.

Mr. Hertz, the chairman of the committee in Steyr 231, was a good man, but he was practicaly forced to cooperate with the rest of the committee. Ofcourse a king was Mr. Locker, a religious Jew, a member of Aguda (orthodox party) who was a head of all foods coming in to the camp from all kind of sources, but most of it from AJDC. And food in those days was a very important item. Canned goods, and noodles used to be the main products which found their ways to Austrians. Butter was a seldom commodity in camp, and at those times when it finally arrived for disctribution, half of it went somewhere else, and what was left over, Locker always used to make an announsment with a large fanfare that he was the one who was giving us butter, like he would be the lord giving us this butter from the goodness of his heart. "Haint geb ich putter" Locker yelled in Yiddish (Today I am giving you butter).

Another crook was the socialist Mr. Handelmann. Not just a crook but a bigamist as well. Housing was his department. And who didn't pay, didn't reside in better rooms. After Americans have bilt a new barrack, and while Hania was pregnant I approached Handelmann, about a room in this new barrack, because the one we lived in was being destroyed by some not so nice people who kept tearing off boards from it, in order to use them as heating wood. At first Handelmann didn't say anything. I guess he expected a bribe. In those days Victor Polaniecki started to hang around our family more often. He knew Handelmann well and after I asked him for a favor to talk to Handelmann, he didn't just asked him. Victor said to him, that he will move in with us, which he really didn't after Handelmann agreed to give us the room. But he couldn't resist to tell me that if not for Polaniecki we would never get a room in the new barrack.

As far as being a bigamist Handelmann was married to two women, both in camp with him. With his first real wife he had two or three children. During the war in Soviet Union he met this other woman, much younger then his wife, also Jewish. So he married her according to Soviet law, which required their signatures only. When time came, Handelmann and his two wives and two more children from the second wife left Soviet Union and came to Poland. After few months in Poland the whole Handelmann clan arrived in Austria and settled in Steyr 231. Being a crooked politician, soon he became a big wheel in camp's politics.

The Handelmann saga, finished when his first wife presented him in Steyr with another child to everybody's surprise. She was one of those women, who didn't show during her pregnancy. In 1949 the the happy Handelmanns left for Israel. It would be nice to know, how Rabbis in Israel handled this case, and how come that a man like Handelmann a bigamist was able to serve as a leader of a community.

There were many others. Some maybe not as bad, but bad enough. A person with clean conscience could never make it with this crowd.

The Hapoel group in Steyr convinced Norbert to join their club. I think at first they made him their treasurer. We donated to their club all our equipment, and few of us who earlier participated with Hakoah in Reithoffer, became members of Hapoel. Soon after this the political ball started to roll. Ihud's leader Mr. Fertig from Rzeszow called Norbert to a long meeting with other rightists leaders, trying to make him to take some radical steps, and lead some kind of a purge, meaning changing Hapoel to Hakoah. It wasn't an easy task, because Hapoel was better organized, and recived help from headquarters in Tel-Aviv.

Steyr 231!

After heated discussions and verbal fights the two groups finally reached an agreement on a bypartisan proposal to avoid such names as Hakoah or Hapoel and give the club just a simple name like "Jewish Sport Club Steyr 231". A lot to do with this change has had an article in Yiddish language weekly in Linz, which I wrote (actually it was the speech I wrote, which Norbrt never delivered during the tournament in Salzburg). The editors of the weekly translated the article into Yiddish, and published it with Norberts name. Norbert took lots of criticism from the leftists, but at the end everybody accepted the change. The only time when the name "Hakoah" was used since then, was when our players or mostly boxers participated in games or matches contracted by Linzer Hakoah.

With the new name in place, first Herman Korzennik was our sport director, but when he left to play permanently as a fullback of Linzer Hakoah, Mr. Soyher, the man with the Austrian nurse from Reithoffer took over the leadership. And what an excellent leader he was. There was a discipline on the club. He arranged for many games for us to play, on our field in Steyr 231 and all over Upper Austria. Our team was good, and we won many games. When Soyher left Austria, Korzennik took over again, but then people started to leave Austria in masses, and sports in camps ceased to be popular.

But before all this sporting excitement blew over, three inportant boxing affairs took place in Salzburg, Linz, and on a tour, when our boxers went to compete against Jewish boxers in camps through Bavaria in West Germany.

The Linzer Hakoah boxing team was invited to box against "Salzburger Boxing Sportverein" one of the better Austrian boxing Teams, who have had on their team couple of Austrian champions. There were four boxers from Steyr on this team (Kremer, Treiband, Diamand and Nachteiler). Others came from Linz, and among them Wagschlag, another fighter from Cracow Maccabi a teamate of Kemer (then Goldfluss). To make this team even stronger Hakoah engaged a heavyweight from Steyr an Austrian who used to be a member of The Amateures from Steyr, but suspended from his club because of some misunderstanding, and then released. He couldn't resist the good money Jews paid him, and this made much easier for him to put on an uniform with the "Star of David" on it.

Such Occurences weren't un-familiar in those days. As I said before gentiles played in blue-white uniforms for Linzer Hakoah, and the Vienna Hakoah. Star of David on sportsmen chests or boxers trunks used to be so popular, that big Time American and other international promoters werent bashful at all to sign to a contract a non Jewish fighter and promote him as Jew for better profits.

Such was a case of Austrian heavyweight amateur champion Joshi Weindlinger, who after winning profesional European championship was signed by American promoter to fight in USA. Well! Things went sauer for Joshi Weindlinger in America. He couldn't win,and introductions to Jewish circles as a Jew and survivor of holocaust didn't help either, including the blue trunks and white Star of David. The farce ended after an article in Austrian press exposed the whole shamefull charade.

Going back to our game in Salzburg, with the help of AJDC, Hakoah hired a profesional boxing coach, who as he claimed used to be a ranking boxer in European rings. Norbert and I traveled to Salzburg with the team for this important event. In Linz we switched to transportation from AJDC. It was rather cold day, and traveling in an open truck wasn't to pleasant. Therefore after we arrived in Wells the coach decided to leave the truck and travel the rest of the way to Salzburg by train.

The rest of us went for a short visit with our former friends from Steyr, who after Reithoffer's closing settled in Wells. There I met a sister of Mrs. Zlotogorski from Alti-Arik. I didn't know her then, but she recognized me and asked, about Frieda, Hania and Ela and rest od the family.

In Salzburg we stayed in one of those bunker hotels, converted to cheap living quarters after the war from former underground shelters from Allied bombings. Ofcourse the place didn't have windows, and in each room there was nothing but beds up and down, but it was nice and clean, enough to spent a night or two.

The whole Jewish Salzburg was buzzing with anticipation of the coming boxing event.People in camps from all over Salzburg, especially the ones who been there since the liberation in 1945 agreed, that they were waiting for such an occasion since that faithful May the 8th 1945.

We spent in Salzburg only two days, so I didn't get a chance to visit my family, but I ran into Lipe Goldstein during the match.

The match against the Salzburg team wasn't as easy as the previous match-ups against the Austrian teams. It was obvious those boxers were much better and experienced fighters. Both sides fought hard, but Hakoah kept punching back and hold on to a small margin victory. The Jews of Salzburg were extatic, and Hakoah made their day. The match took place in Mozarteum, under the open skies. The famous Mozarteum, named after the famous musician Mozart, a place of many international music festivals including the "Salzburger Festspiele" (The Salzburg Festival). I bet you that Mozarteum never heard so much noise and yelling in its history dominated with familiar Jewish slogans of "Give it to them, for mothers and fathers, our brothers and sisters".

After the match we attended a reception given by the Salzburgers in honor of Hakoah. Boxers mingled with each others, and everybody had a good time. After another night in Salzburg, next morning we left for Steyr. Many weeks after the match was over Jews in Salzburg still celebrated the victory.

Next event was the tour of our boxers in Bavaria, with their Austrian coach, to fight agains Jewish boxers there. That time around even the coach put on his gloves and the blue-white uniform. There was no glory on this particular trip. When the team came back home, nobody said a word, because they were ahamed to open their mouth' The story was "losses, losses and some more losses. Even their Austrian coach, and Holzer the Austrian boxer from Steyr were blown out off the rings by the Jewish boxers in Germany. Those two guys, even thou fighting on a Jewish team, got really paid"for mamen and taten".

Saffier's last hooray as sport director came when he engaged a midiocre boxing club from nearby Linz small town to box against Hakoah. We in Steyr knew, that this was a weak club, because they were the ones who got such a tremendous beating in first boxing match ever in Steyr.

Saffier knew about it, but the public in Linz wasn't aware of the circumstanves. Saffier get this match a terrific build-up, and rented a sport hall in Linz to accomodate a large crowd. Evidently he was short of money again, and his young Austrian wife probably wanted to leave him, for who knows what time.

Jews from all over Linz area came to see the fights, all ready for some more blood and their standard battle cry. They anticipated hard fought rounds and excitement. But they didn't know that the Austrian team wasn't as good as the others, and on the top of everything, they showed up without their two best fighters.

Saffier didn't loose cool at all. Chances are that he knew in advance about the missing boxers, because somewhere nearby, he kept two Jewish-Rumanian strong and good bilt young men who for a small fee agreed to join the Austrian team just for this one match. Under assumed names Saffier introduced them with the other team. Hakoah won handy, with a big score. Public was happy but disappointed. They didn't see Austrian blood running. This boxing match finished Saffier's carrier as a promoter. He still hung around until Linzer Hakoah soccer team, ceased to exist, and then left with his Austrian wife for New York.

Our interest in Austrian soccer continued. One of the two clubs in Steyr eventually won Upper Austrian championship, and then playoffs and advanced into Austrian State Soccer League. One year later another Upper Austrian club from Linz won the championship and advanced to the Austrian State League.

Besides being involved with the sport club, Norbert have had a job with camps "Kulturamt" (Cultural Department). Their office was in the administration building, with a public address system, broadcasting all over the camp all kinds of interesting news, political and otherwise, and ofcourse important announcements concerning camp's business. They used to engage and supervise entertainment Jewish and none Jewish. Among others they had their hands in bringing the post war edition of the Rosner Brothers orchestra from Munich, Germany, famous before the war in Cracow and all over Poland. Their music brought pleasant memories of the past and tears as well.

Norbert's co-chairman of this broadcasting booth was Rabbi Potrzebowski. An inteligent man who gave up the rabbinate, because he lost his faith when he lived through his experiences during holocaust. He was tortured many times by the SS and Gestapo. Still he didn't give up praying and going to synagogue, but couldn't make himself to serve as a Rabbi.

At Steyr 231 Amsterdams found their old friends from Rzeszow Mr.&Mrs. Schuessel They were very happy with each other in the beginning, and even decided to live together in one room. For some reason after a while they all decided to split and go their own ways. Norbert also succeded in getting a room in the same new barrack as Hania and I, Soon after the rest of our family also moved in to their own room in the same barrack.

Another good news came when Mr. Fertig kept his promise and offered a job to me with camp's security, as a secretary. First few weeks on the job I was forced to work as a regular patrolman, until my predecesor left for Palestine. I was very happy with this opportunity and took the job right away. My pay was 28 scripts per half a month. So with Hania's 20 scripts finally our income improved. Scripts were just scripts in camp to purchase merchandise in PX, but those merchandise could be turned very easy into real dollars elsewhere in camp or outside the camp.

There was not an honor to work for camp security, or police department. Call it whatever you want, atrocities of the Nazi era and some Jews helping them out, still were clear in peoples minds. As far as I was concerned, and other members working at the security in DP Camp, it was just a living to be made in difficult times, and for the first time in so many years I didn't perform a hard phisical work.

In reallity we weren't police, like a city or town police department. We always were on friendly terms with the camp's population, and our main aim was to protect the camp from the outside un-desirable elements. We didn't carry arms, even thou we were required to carry police sticks, but we never did. Among other duties we protected the food warehouse, PX, motor pool, kitchens and borderlines between the camp and adjoining streets. Vandalism inside the camp was our main concern, and should have been reported to American authorities, but keeping in mind previous acts of vandalism in other camps, for which authorities deported the guilty ones back to Poland we always tried to solve those problems among us Jews. There was such a precedent, when people of Steyr 231 used to live in camp Hiath, and one of those deporties from there was back in Steyr, and again with some of his friends was on a rampage destroying barracks even with people living there, because he needed wood for his stove. He even destroyed our barrack and grandpa Abraham tried to deal with him, but to no avail. This incident was one of the reasons that grandma, grandpa and the girls got a room in the new barrack. So in a way our security protected this man from another deportation or Austrian jail. After the pains of war, decent Jews would never report to authorities on another Jew.

There were two working SECURITY shifts, 28 men, each, keeping watch around the camp, 24 hours for each shift, with next 24 hours of rest. Each man from the shift used to work 4 hours at night and 4 hours days. In addition each shift had a man working 24 hours at the main gate. The head of the department was a "Chief" a "Deputy Chief" who served as a "Fire Marshall" as well, and ofcourse a secretary, the job i was going take over shortly.

Chapter 113 (cont)

Steyr 231!

Chief of security in Steyr 231 was one Joseph Fiebert, a man in his late forties. He was a profesional barber, but since coming to Austria, never cut anybody's hair anymore. His native town was someplace in Southeastern Poland. He spent his war years in Soviet Union, and was alone, without family. Nobody knew about his past. Some thought that his family perished in holocaust, others insisted that he left his family behind in Soviet Union or Poland. He was a good chief, but his conduct wasn't as would be desired for a man in such responsible position, even if it was only a DP camp. He was a heavy drinker, but never drunk, played cards for money in Austrian establishments, and associated only with Austrian women, because no Jewish woman would have him.

Shortly before our coming to Steyr 231 Fiebert got into somekind of trouble with the Jewish administration, which demoted him to the post of Deputy Chief.

The Jewish committee made one Janek Kleinmann the new Chief. He was from Cracow. He was little younger then Fiebert and educated and inteligent as well. Back in Cracow his cousin Tadek Kleinmann was my good friend. Janek Kleinmann was a serious man and his behavior rather subdued. He was the only survivor of his large family, being transfered many times from one concentration camp to another, and holocaust left a deep mark on his personality.

Quickly he gained lots of respect from all the members of the security, The buddy-buddy situation as it was with Fiebert ceased to exist. There was no monkey business anymore.

Kleinman became a good friend with our family. He used to visit us often, and it was obvious that he was desperate to be with a family and belong. He mentioned many times about his desire to go to America, and courted Frieda for quite a while. If he ever would marry Frieda, there wouldn't be a problem at all for him to emigrate to United States. Needless to say lack of communication on both sides let to their parting. Earlier there was Marysia a girl from Cracow in Kleinmann's life, but she left him and got involved with another man, later she was a girlfriend to Herman Korzennik the soccer player, who in turn left her. At the end it was Marysia who introduced Kleinmann to her friend from Vienna. Kleinmann left Steyr and married this woman in Vienna. Even before leaving for United States they had a child.

When the secretary's job became available after the former secretary of security went to Palestine, they still didn't let me have it right away. They insisted that because I didn't write Yiddish I would have to wait little longer. in meantime they put me at the guardhouse to mind the main gate. It was a better job, then patroling around the camp. The secretary's job went to a young man Noah, and he was single. All this happened at the time, when they needed young men to go to fight Arabs in Palestine. When called before the committee young Noah refused to go, so they took the cushion job away from him and at last gave it to me. To compensate to Noah's family, the committee gave a job to his married brother as a patrolman. This guy was a religious Jew, who spent the war years in Uzbekistan. He was like Hania's uncle Eisen, who used to spread religious words about Judaism among the Uzbeks, Evidently Uzbeks respected their believes and called both of them "Mullahs".

As far as the camp committee was concerned us the security men, were their "schikyingels" (errand boys). When the Jewish Agency for Palestine through their representatives in camps and their helpers in camp committees, preasured young people to go to fight in Palestine, we from the security used to be the bad boys running around most of the time at night to get those boys to report for the so-called draft. Only a small percentage answered those calls.There wasn't to many candidates ready to go and put their lives on line only few short years after the war.

A story of one of those young men who went to Palestine, because he was an idealist comes to my mind, all the time. His name was Hershelson. He used to work as patrolman for camp's security. He was a son from a very nice family. He was the older one. Their second child was a girl. He was inteligent and well educated, and always wanted to go to Palestine and fight for Jewish homeland.

Hebrew and Jewish history was Hershelson's hobby. He had a slight speech difficulty.He was a stutter. He went to Palestine with a smile and a joy in his heart. His love for a Jewish state, turned into tragedy, after news came to camp that he gave his life for the future Jewish state. Our Arab enemies killed him shortly after his arrival. After creation of Israel his parents and sister, were the first ones to leave Steyr. Only his father knew that his son was dead, and he never told his wife and daughter as long as they lived in Steyr.

My first couple of weeks on my new job were rather trying. My first post was along a street which bordered with three barracks, and as I said before, there were no more fences between the camp and neighbouring streets. I was given strict orders not to let any outsiders inside the camp. But what was I supposed to do, when all residents of those barracks used to run a black market operation. Austrians from Steyr and vicinity used to walk freely in and out not paying attention to my objections, because those Jews in barracks told them so. Even an Austrian policeman on duty never interfered with his own people, because those Jews paid him off. Later when Kleinmann took over as police chief, he told me to look through my fingers, because there was no way to stop the operation. I am quite sure that men on duty at this particular place before me, also took certain cut from the black marketeers. I was being taken advantage of, because I was"green".

Once on another post in the back of the camp for the same reason I got into an argument with a man whom I considered a nice person, because I wouldn't let in his Austrian friend inside to do business with him. This man went running to the chief who told me again to forget it. So from then on I was just standing there like a pawn.

Even duties at food store, PX, and kitchen weren't easy. At the food store the biggest mess occured when fresh meat arrived in camp. According to the rules people supposed to stay in lines and await their turn. But not such luck. They used to let in front of them their relatives, friends, while the others kept waiting. The worst were the big shots, who like in Soviet Union used to enter the store to collect their oversized rations, not paying attention to those on the end of the line, who many times went home without meat. There was no way to stop them, and no use to even try without becoming a laughing stock of those hoodlums. Other patrolmen standing on the side wouldn't wing their fingers as well. So I learned my lesson and became a silent bystander. But later when I took over as secretary, which gave me a little power I iniciated a number system to stop this un-just procedure. Any person going to the store during meat distribution was obliged to stop at the station to obtain a number before going to the store. This way everybody in camp recived his or her's meat ration, but this didn't stop the big shots from taking their meat through the side door.

Working for the security gave me an opportunity to learn alot about people living in camp. I discovered that in Reithoffer I really didn't know people at all. But spending many days and nights patroling the camp and later sitting at the station at Steyr 231 I learned to know peoples habits, their families and social standings. Who was a "mensch" and who was a crook, and also about peoples behavior during the war.

The leader of my shift was Leibish Rapaport. A simple man, and basically a good man. He met Joseph Fiebert someplace in Soviet Union, and since then was riding on his back. Wherever Fiebert went Leibish was not to far behind him. He knew how to sign his name, but had difficulties to write and read. His wife was a holocaust survivor in Majdanek. He picked her up someplace along the way with a little girl, who as people said even wasn't from a Jewish man, but Leibish used to love this little girl very much. Later in camp they had another girl. Leibish was poor, without a soul in the entire world. I used to write letters for him to relief organizations all over America, and believe it or not, they responded to those letters with tremendous generosity by sending to Leibish many valuable parcels with food and new clothing.

Because of his wife's status as a concentration camp survivor Leibish Rapaport was eligible to go to United States much sooner, then any of us. And again I was the one who filled out their applications and many other reports nessecary for admission to United States. I helped Leibish and his family because he was helpful to me as much as he could to get a good start with my job with security.

The leader of the second shift was Heller. He was not only smart, but a good businessman as well. Together with his younger brother who worked for security also, they made lots of money, dealing with Austrians. Their family perished during the war, but their relatives in United States wanted to bring them over. Still the older Heller wouldn't wait, and left for Canada rather early with construction people (gentiles only). He was the only Jew among them. His contract was for one year only, and then he was free to settle anyplace in Canada. The younger Heller remained in camp few more years. For time being he kept working for security, but was cut from the roster because of refusal to go and fight in Palestine. He had plenty of money and didn't need the job anyway. He kept an Austrian girlfriend, a very good looking young woman. She used to live with her family in a apartment complex across the street, but spent more time in Heller's room in camp. As his brother was a good looking man, the word "ugly" was the only one to describe young Heller. Many people wondered how his girlfriend could live with him, and Heller himself seriously concidered to marry her, but he did not, and finally left camp to join his brother in Canada.

It would take another book to describe all the characters working for security. Some of them were decent men, other always looking for a fast buck, and two or three of them were shady characters who in Warsaw before the war used to be associated with Jewish mobsters. Another already an older man was getting ready to join his brother on a cattle ranch in Texas. To prove his intentions he proudly wore in camp a cowboy hat his brother have sent him. There was also this patrolman who was buying and selling stuff. Once he came to me with a beautiful set of ladies underwear. With my last 400 schillings I bought this set for Hania. Ofcourse he cheated me, because this set wasn't worthed this much money, and grandpa Abraham had a frank talk with this man, but I never got the over-charge back.

I have chosen to describe here only two men who used to be members of the security. Not because they were good or bad, just because they both had big mouth' and one of them was a thief before the war in Warsaw.

Sigmund Dickerstein was from Rozwadów, a shtetl near Tarnobrzeg where my relatives used to live before the war. Dickerstein's family before the war was orthodox and wealthy. As a young man Sigmund attended "Heder" and public schools as well, and was familiar with all the secrets of "Talmud". His parents used to own in Rozwadów a clothing store, and some knowledge of tailoring helped Sigmund later to survive. When Germans took Rozwadów Sigmund went east to Lvov, In Summer 1940 Soviets deported him as many of us to Siberia to a camp near Siberian city Tomsk. There he took part in a rebelion against the Soviet authorities, hoping for improved living conditions in the labor camp. I already wrote about this rebelion before. Sigmund's parents, brothers and sisters perished in holocaust.

After the end of the war in 1945, NKVD transfered Sigmund to a small town in the Ukraine. It was there, where his tailoring came handy. He became a menager of a small tailors cooperative. With his limited knowledge he taught there young women how to sew. Dickerstein was desperate in those days. Hungry and dressed in rags he even didn't imagene that help was just sitting at a table in front of him. He noticed that one of those young women kept looking at him constantly. Anytime he raised his head, there she was just staring at him. Someone might say, that stories like this happen only in fairytales, not in an Ukrainian small town. Finally Dusia (her name) didn't hesitate anymore, she stood up, walked up to Sigmund and told him. that she was in love with him. Sigmund pinched himself on his cheeks. Him an orthodox Jew, from home and an Ukrainian girl, a product of a nation who always felt hatred toward Jews.

Dusia was from a nice and important family. Her brother was a highranking NKVD officer. For Sigmund Dickerstein this was a break, he could never expect. Dusia took him to her nice home and insisted that he lives with her. For Sigmund there was nothing else left but to accept the invitation. Dusia and her brothers were orphans and their grandmother have had run the household.

Sigmund Dickerstein new how to handle the old lady. He was always ready to help her with chores, and to show his appreciation he kissed her hands, like men do in Western Europe.

Dusia wanted Sigmund to marry her and go with him to Poland, but Sigmund knew in his heart that his religious up-bringing wouldn't allow him to marry Dusia. Deep in his heart he kept hoping, that someone from his close family would be alive, and there was no way he would present them with a gentile wife.

One night while having trouble sleeping Sigmund dreamed up a little scheme. He invited his Jewish friend from a neighbouring town to come and visit him and Dusia. He presented this friend to Dusia as a Polish consul. Nobody there knew that Sigmund was Jewish. In a matter of facts when the family celebrated Easter Sigmund was sitting at the head of the table and presided over the procedings like an old "Greek-Orthodox".

The phony Polish consul explained to Dusia in detail all the requirements of traveling to Poland. By the end of the conversation he kind of casually mentioned a fact that with the power invested in him as a Polish consul he can marry Sigmund and Dusia. Well! Dusia almost flip. She couldn't believe her own ears. She was so happy with the good news and insisted to be married immediatly. Ofcourse Sigmund agreed without hesitation. The consul was short of words to praise Sigmund's scheme, and couldn't get over the way how Sigmund was able to create the good life for himself.

After a frank talk with Dusia's brother the NKVD officer, who spent some time in Poland after the liberation, they agreed that Dusia after her good life in Soviet Union would just suffer in the un-stable post war Poland. He advised his sister that while she was already married to Sigmund, the best way for them would be for Sigmund go to Poland first and settle there, and then sent after Dusia. At first Dusia was concerned about Sigmund's leaving alone, but finally accepted her brother's advise.

On the day of the departure she went with Sigmund to the station. For her the separation was an agony. It was very hard for her to let Sigmund go. Slowly the train was leaving the station, and Dusia stood there until the train disapeared behind the curve, and at that curve Sigmund standing at the open door of his car, saw Dusia for the last time in his life.

Soon after returning from Soviet Union, Dickerstein went to Rozwadow, his old shtetl. First of all he paid a visit to his childhood Polish friend who then was a monk in the nearby monastery. The monk greeted him friendly and invited him to stay in the monastery. He confirmed what Sigmund already knew, about the fate of his parents, brothers and sisters. So there was nothing else to do for Sigmund in his former hometown. To top the bad news Sigmund was forced to hide most of the day and night in the monastery, because units of the so-called "Land Army" who fought Germans during the war, but opposed the post war Polish government, and killing Jews as well was visiting Rozwadow.

When Sigmund left Rozwadow, he took with him two other POLISH childhood friends, who as Sigmund wanted to leave Poland. First they crossed over to Czechoslovakia, then to Austria and came to Rothchild's Hospital in Vienna. Sigmund introduced his two friends as Jews and even helped out some very religious Jews with their "Minian" who needed two men, so they got Sigmund's Polish friends.

In Vienna Sigmund met his future wife. Her name was Morgenstern from a German Jewish family who perished in holocaust. In D.P, camp in Upper Austria, Dickerstein parted with his two friends. Many people in camp assumed that Sigmund's wife was German, but this wasn't true, because I saw her documents, when I helped them to fill out application for admission to United Sates.

Dickerstein and his wife had two daughters. The older one was Esther Sara, and the younger was ~~Adele~~ Adele, who had been born one week earlier than our Jack.

Since we met Dickerstein and ~~I~~ WE have always been good friends, but I disliked his behavior in many situations. There was impossible to have a friendly discussion with Sigmund. His way was a must way. He yelled a lot and criticised the authority. In our case the camp committee, who deserved all the criticism possible. He and his wife were always short of money, even thou, his relatives from New York supported them all the time with food, clothing and dollars. Sigmund never wore any of those suits he recived from America. He used to sell them as soon as they arrived. To keep up their crumy room they employed an Austrian maid, no wonder that he had nothing to wear except the security's uniform, made from blankets for the winter, and linen for summer.

Sigmund Dickerstein was a communist, despite of all his problems in Soviet Union before he met Dusia. Yet in camp he joined "Betar" a right wing party. He always defended Soviet actions, and loved to talk with Soviet representatives when they visited camps trying to convince former Soviet citiziens to return to Soviet Union. Very seldom anybody voluntary returned to Soviet Union. The early returnees in 1945 found themselves as soon as they arrived in Siberian labor camps. In later years kidnapings by Soviet secret agents of former residents of countries behind the iron courtain became a daily routine.

During the Korean conflict Dickerstein was the one among others like him, who supported the North. Him as the others insisted that the Soviet idea was dear to them, but when asked if they would consider to go back there, they always said "no".

Dickersteins left for United States earlier, because his wife was a victim of concentration camps. They left really poor, without a penny to their name. Hania and I wished them well before their departure. We bought them a pack of oranges for their girls.

Last time I saw Sigmund Dickerstein and his family was in New York in 1951. He worked in a garment factory. Had an apartment in Brooklyn, and told me that he was doing, pretty good. Since then I never heard from him again.

The other patrolman worthed to be mentioned in this story was Kornmendel. He was a rough character and people in camp used to call him "Grobe Yink" (fat fellow). Men without inteligence and with bad manners used to be called by this name in the olden days by their Jewish neighbours.

Kornmendel was from Warsaw and grew-up with Jewish underworld. He was a thief, enforcer and informant. He lost his family including wife and children during the holocaust, but saved himself in Soviet Union. Nobody knew anything about his activities there. People who came with him on the transport back from Soviet Union had told a story about their train being attacked by Polish anti-government forces. After they boarded the train they terrorized and robbed those Jews aboard, threatning some of them with death, but the big hero Kornmendel kept quiet, and shaking like a leaf tried to hide in the farthest corner of the car,

He not only was rough on people in camp, but was as well rough on me during my first days in the department, showing off his thoughness. When once during Passover Hania on my suggestion backed a cake for then chief Fiebert Kornmendel laughed and accused me for seeking Fiebert's favors, which never entered my mind. Himself Kornmendel called ~~it~~ HE presented himself as inteligent person, but after he discovered a cousin in United States he always asked other people to write letters to her. He liked to show off in front of Dickerstein with his wallet and the 300 Austrian Shillings in it. Just a little tease to make fill a man bad who never had money on himself. Besides being a patrolman in camp, Kornmendel carried chickens for the chicken-man who brought them to camp from an Austrian farmer for sale among the religious Jews, FOR SHABAT.

Kornmendel re-married after the war. His wife was as fat as him. They always argued and she called him "Stephan", not because it was his name. It wasn't. Stephan was a nicknme of an Ukrainian roughneck, AND FITTED KORNMENDEL PERFECTLY.

Kornmendel's boys from his second wife since their childhood were as rough as their father, and very though on other children, who rather stayed away from them, then play. They fought all the time, and using language not fit for boys their age.

Kornmendel and his family, went to Israel, and before they left he planed to find for himself and family an elegant home abandoned by Arabs. I am quite sure, that he have found such a home.

As a secretary my countless reports on fires in the kitchen or disturbances around camp were written in German, just opposite to my predecesors who used to write them in Yiddish. Among many small disturbances in camp, most dangerous was by a man Schulmann, who came to camp in later years with some returnees from Israel. Back in Lodz-Poland he left his wife and a child. Either drunk or crazy or both he kept running back and forth along the main camp's street with a knife in his hands threatening people passing by, and his Hungarian girlfriend as well. It was a tense situation, until couple of strong men overpowered him and took his knife away.

Another problem was to control the black market traffic, by so-called wholesalers. Those were the men in camp with lots of money who used to bring truckloads of merchandise and then distributed them to the small retailers. We couldn't stop them, and the silent code about Jews not to report other Jews to authorities prevented us from reporting on them. To make harder on them to bring the stuff in we imposed on them a form of taxation. Anytime new merchandise arrived Fiebert as chief took 1/3 of the top. The rest of the tax money was divided among all the members of the department evenly. Still some people Kornmendel included wanted to cut my share of the tax, because I didn't take part in surveillance. My answer was either full share or nothing. Afraid of the wholesalers who sooner or later would find out about, and wouldn't pay nothing to the rest of them, Kornmendel and his bunch didn't have no choice but to give me the full share.

Let us leave now for time being my life with camp security, and concentrate on the Rabinate. Rabbi Frenkel was the religious leader at Steyr 231. Before we arrived from Reithoffer he was the "king". But with us came Rabbi Goldstein and challenged Frenkiel for the leadership. The old Rabbi who married Hania and me went to Linz. Goldstein was much smarter, and knew the law much better then Frenkiel, who at the end was able to hold on to his post.

Rabbi Frenkiel knew how to prosper. Never mind that he was opposed to mixed marraiges. Never mind the holocaust and the six million victims. When an opportunity presented itself for a certain fee, Frenkiel didn't mind to convert Austrian women to Judaizm, so they could marry Jewish men. Even his wife collected an extra fee for teaching those women about "Yiddishheit".

One of many was this Jewish barber Paul, a man 40 or 50 years old. A young Austrian girl maybe 20 years old who worked for him and was desperatly in love wanted Paul to marry her. Ofcourse Paul wanted a Jewish wife, but no Jewish woman in camp would marry him. So Paul and his Austrian girlfriend went to Frenkiel, and told him a story, about her being poor, from a broken-up family, and mean father. Frenkiel believed them and converted the girl. She got her hair shaved off and took lessons from the Rebetzin. Then Frenkiel gave them "Hupa-Kedusha" before they left for Israel.

Rabbi Frenkiel converted many other women to Judaizm: Russian, Polish women and Tatar as well. They all came with Jewish men from Soviet Union. They all took the same Jewish name "Sara". So there were quite few Saras in our camp.

There was this man from Lvov Singer, from a nice and rich family who perished. Singer was the "chickenman" about whom I wrote before. Kornmendel's boss. The same Kornmendel who teased Dickerstein with his 300 Shillings, who in fact had more knowledge in kis foothell, then Kornmendel in his whole thick head. Singer got married in Soviet Union to this Tatar woman, who already had a teen-age daugther. A young man from Betar fell in love with the girl and married her as well. Ofcourse Rabbi Frenkiel made sure that she was converted as well.

The husband of Singer's step-daughter was a member of the "Irgun" group, who attacked and blew-up a British army trains in British zone of Austria, all in the name of liberation of Palestine. Finally he got caught and sentenced to two years in prison. They let him out after few months. He returned to his Tatar wife, and later a baby-boy arrived to much happiness of "grandpa" Singer and his wife.

An old friend of Singer's back from Lvov, from a nice Jewish family as Singer, also brought with him not only a Tatar wife, but two small children as well. When time came, they all emigrated to Israel.

Rabbi Frenkiel and his family went to New York. Being not to smart they took with them a large suitcase all loaded with canned foods, which they accumulated during the years in D.P. camp. I guess they thought, that there was food shortage in New York. The immigration authorities took Frenkiel's cans away from him, because of a law which forbids the new arrivals to bring food into the country.

Besides Singer there was another chicken man in camp, but he didn't buy chickens, he raised them in front of his barrack. His name was Yankiel Sukiennik, from Kałuszyn in Poland as the Sukiennik family here in Kansas City, who are related to Yankiel's wife who was a Sukiennik as well. Yankiel Sukiennik was a patrolman. Him and his wife had to boys. The older not well, and on a retarded side, the younger w/as very smart. Actually the mother in law was running the show. Sukienniks made lots of money selling chickens. Both Yankiel and his wife used to wear gold and diamond rings on all of their ten fingers, and there was plenty more hidden in their feather comforters. The AJDC sent then to Texas, where Yankiel have worked in oil industry and developed "Emphysema". He is not able to function without the help of oxygen day or night.

Most families in camp kept together, respecting each other, keeping up with old traditions and choosing their new friends carefully.

Others used to be divided by constant internal misunderstandigs and family arguments. Some couples always were on a verge of a divorce, but for some reason they never seperated. Some husbands and wives with small or grown-up children never spoke a word to each other, yet they spent all these years together living under one roof.

And then there was the so-called camp aristocracy. Yes there were few of them. some walking around with their heads and noses as well high, but most of them learned during the war that being a Jewish aristocrat didn't save them from concentration camps, and those who perished went to the gas chambers of Auschwitz or Bełżec all along with the poor. Being an aristocrat for those who found themselves in Soviet Union was like a straight ticket to Siberian labor camps.

Mr. Kalish, formerly Mr. Wilner my father's childhood friend from Zbaraz, became a member of such a prominent family from Tarnow. Grandma Frances knew them very well. Mr. Kalish was a married man back in Zbaraz, also from a nice family, who used to walk around town all dressed up with pride on his face, like half of Zbaraz would be his own. His wife and children perished in holocaust. The new Mrs. Kalish being from such a nice family fitted perfectly with her new husband. He was so loving and attending around her, always walking close and holding her under her left arm. To bad that she wasn't feeling well. Her brother a lawyer was a gentleman, married with a young son maybee six years old, who as many boys his age born in Soviet Union and during German occupation, who survived went through their circumcision at this tender age, suffering a little so they would become real Jews.

The last survivor of this family was the youngest sister, who was a widow with a small child. She was a very inteligent person, and for some reason people in camp kept linking her with the soccer player Herman Korzennik, because they saw them dancing few times together. Not that Korrzennik was from a bad family, but this woman and him would never match, because Korrzennik was a women chaser.

Still going back to circumcisions Rabbi Frenkiel was the one who arranged the ceremonies and all the details and procedures with Mr. Fisher a profesional "Mohel" from Budapest.

Herman Korrzennik and his two sisters survived the war in Soviet Union. His older sister was Mrs. Lichtig a widow with two children. She was very nice and inteligent lady, and many men in camp would be proud to have her as their wife. I guess it was her choice at least for time being to remain single. Korrzennik's other sister was single. All these years in camp she kept following a very good looking man, few years younger then her, until she finally caught him. His name was Leopold. We used to call him "Poldek". Another of those educated men from a solid and wealthy family in pre-war Poland, who perished in holocaust. Poldek was the only survivor. In camp he was in charge of many profesional shops which produced all kinds of merchandise. After their marriage him and his wife got blessed with a set of twin boys, but she had very hard time at birthtime. Poldek had a large family in New York, who brought him and his family over. I saw him last time in New York in 1951. He told me then that his rich family wasn't treating him right, keeping him as an elevator operator in one of their establishments. Poldek wasn't a happy man then. I found out then that one of his twins passed away. Few years later Poldek joined his son. He passed away still a young man.

Korrzennik led a happy life in camp. Besides playing soccer he was changing girls, nice women and not so nice like gloves. Sometimes people wondered where he was getting his strengh.

There was in Reithoffer this Hungarian "shohet" from Budapest who kept his job after we moved to camp 231. He used to have lots of kids, and his oldest daughter was already a divorcee. I know for sure that Korrzennik would like very much to go out with her, but she was one of those women playing hard to get, and ofcourse Korrzennik wasn't the type she would like to have for a husband. But nothing in this world is impossible. As some religious Jews that what is "Bershert" (what is written) would come trough, so did Korzennik's dream came through. This Hungarian woman and Korrzennik came across each other some years later in Canada and finally tied the knot.

Korrzennik's good friend in camp was the boxer from Cracow Elkune Kremer. Goldfluss before the war in Cracow and no relation to the other Kremer family. He was not an aristocrat, and no high class, not even close to plain people. His wife who was an orphan since she was a little girl was from Cracow as well. They also had couple of children.

Because of being a boxer and a good one, Kremer played big in camp and considered himself important, having the ability to beat up on Austrians and Germans, taking a revenge for fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters. Besides all this he was no good, cheating on his wife all the time. Many times they were on a brink of a divorce, but somehow they survived together. They used to be one of those people who employed an Austrian maid to keep their one room clean. Even thou this girl was married, it didn't stop Kremer from making her pregnant. And who do you think took care of this maid after she had the baby? Kremers wife ofcourse.

Besides the religious Hungarian Jews, there was spreaded in camps all over Austria the Jewish-Hungarian aristocracy. Those were the rich and elegant people who menaged to keep their wealth for a long time, refusing to believe that one day Hitler will turn on them. It happened in 1944, so there wasn't enough time for the Nazis to gas all the Hungarian Jews. When time came to leave Hungary and abandon the land and business, those Hungarian aristocrats still were able to take out their money and other assets. The big Jewish landowners from Hungary kept their tight relations with national Hungarians aristocrats even abroad, with connections to former Hungarian leader Admiral Horthy.

Before vandals destroyed our barrack for fire wood, there were few nice families living there in small rooms with walls made from boards, so practically everybody knew what was going on in everybody else's family.

One of our neighbours was Leon Rosenfeld, a high class tailor from Rzeszow. He was married to Ronia, and their little daughter Frieda was a cute and a very smart child. She was a darling of all the neighbours, so lovabale that no one could resist her. Rosenfeld made a good living as a tailor, and was very proud of himself when an elegant tailor shop in Steyr wanted him to work for them. Ronia his wife was a good looking woman, but her sight was slowly deteriorating, she was almost blind. They emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. Years later they had another child, a son, who once visited grandma Frances here in Kansas City.

Once Rosenfeld wanted very much to make a suit for Norbert, but both him and Norbert didn't realize that there was not enough fabric in the piece of goods Norbert bought himself to make a suit for a person tall as Norbert. Ofcourse everybody expected an excellent job from Rosenfeld, who should have noticed the shortage before cutting-up the material. You should have seen Norbert in his new suit. A longer jacket was in style in those days, but pants were a disaster. They were way to short, like from a much younger brother. It was really funny for all of us, but not for Norbert.

Then there was the Dachinger family. The brother in law with his sister in law. For time being after our marriage Hania and I shared a room with them. In another room used to live a young couple. One of those late arrivals from Rumania. Our neighbours from across the hall were the Langenthals. He was a religious man, and even didn't work, except the two hours twice a week without pay, a mandatory chore for all none working men to help to keep the camp clean. Men with money who didn't want to work were obliged to pay a certain fee to camp committee. So Mr. K Langenthal was leading a life of Riley. In reality he was a nice and quiet man. Mrs. Langenthal was a smart and educated woman. They had a little girl whom they adored and tried to shield her more then parents of other children, because they lost their first child to an illness in Soviet Union. Their relatives in United States supported them all the time. The thin wooden walls od their room couldn't hold those many noises coming out of their room. So rumor started around the camp that the Langenthals kept making love day and night. In United States they settled in Washington D.C. where Mrs. Langenthal finally divorced her husband.

As in small communities all over the word one family's tragedy affected the entire camp. Ofcourse there were illnesses and few deaths. But the tragedy of one man and his wife deserves to be mention here, because of religious fanaticism. An older couple was expecting their first child. They acted against the advise of a doctor who worned them about the affects of the pregnancy, which might cause this woman's death. Ofcourse the doctor was right. The woman became seriously ill and passed away, with the baby inside her. A full scale feud developed between Rabbi Frenkiel and his orthodox bunch and the rest of the camp. Those religious Jews refused to release the body for burial until, as they insisted the baby would leave the woman's body by itself. Ofcourse everybody in camp knew that such noncense would never happen. In meantime the poor brocken down husband was standing in front of his barrack waiting for somekind of a miracke to happen, so he would be able to burry his wife.

As expected by normal people baby never left the body, and after many days of waiting the fanatics gave in, and funeral took place to everybody's relief.

During this period of time Leniowers got news from Their relatives the Apterbachs who returned from Italy where they survived the war to Belgium.

I also found my cousin Irma Schlafenberg and her husband Bruno in Lourdes, France.

Apterbachs settled in Antverpen with their two children. Esther's mother Regina was with them with her granddaughter Mania whose mother Janka remained in Italy with her new husband.

In meantime cousins of grandma Frances from San Francisco and New York continued to help us with their generous parcels, food, clothing, cigaretts and money. Patience was the key. Our chances to go to United States were still in the air.

Our family enjoyed a very good reputation throughout the years in camps. We went through many ups and downs after return from Soviet Union in Poland and Austria as well. But no matter what was happening we always used to have people around us who actually sought our company, who would trust us not only with some of their family secrets but with their welth as well. Many businessmen would gladly have grandpa Abraham join them, but as long as he was healthy he prefered to work for himself.

During grandpa's illness Mr. Gertner who used to play cards in grandpa's group and the same man who traveled back to Poland to bring to Steyr his Russian girlfriend, took over as the leader of the party of Jewish war veterans. This party established in camp a small restaurant and snack bar, which turned out to be a very busy and successful place, and left it in care of the Ratner family (members of the party).

After Gertner took over the party, he asked grandpa Abraham if Frieda, Hania and Ela would consider to take over the restaurant. Ofcourse this was an excellent opportunity, with and excellent pay, but with very hard schedule. Our girls not realizing how difficult their lives would be accepted the Offer. Soon they found out that there was no easy money in restaurant business. Long hours from early morning to late at night took a toll on them, especially on Hania, who was in the first few months of her pregnancy. Besides serving and selling, the other chore was to keep the place clean, and to make sure that plenty food was always on hand, and cope with the remarks of the Ratner family who got to be our worst enemy.

As we learned later Gertner removed the Ratners from the restaurant, because he didn't like them. After our girls resigned from the job, nobody else would touch it, so the only choice available to Gertner was to give the restaurant back to Ratners.

Another small eating establishment was standing on the main street of the camp. The owner of this stand was Mr. Goldrosen, a friend of Janek Kleinmann, also a former resident of Cracow. Goldrosen was married to a girl from Cracow. His partner in the business was the man who later married Rabbi Goldstein's daughter. The Rabbi used to call him "Treyfe Goy" because he have sold ham at his stand, but didn't have no choice, but let his daughter to marry the man, who promised him, not to sell ham anymore, but never stoped. He kept it hidden in a secret place, so Rabbi wouldn't see it when he was coming there to have a "Schnaps" (drink of vodka).

In United States Goldrosens settled in Denver. He was educated in Jewish law and with good singing voice. A synagogue in Denver hired him as their cantor.

Another opportunity for girls to make some money presented itself, when the demand for sacharine was at peak. To sell sacharine even before the war in most European countries was illegal, because the sugar industry was under governments monopoly. Sacharine in Austria got to be popular after the war because of sugar shortages. Our friend Mr. Neuman was one of those people who delt in sacharine, among other things. The girls job was to separate broken pieces from the whole ones. Broken pieces were sold for less money. This job have brought us good income as long as it lasted.

Sometime in early 1948 Frieda and Ela went to Salzburg to attend the wedding of their friend Sala Tepper to Zylek Goldstein. Hania choose not to go, and I went just to talk to the un-known my father's cousin who wrote letters to him in Cracow. But my uncle Salo informed me that she was already gone from Salzburg. She left mad at me because in my letters I didn't call her by her first name. My other cousins the Goldsteins also left Salzburg already to travel to Palestine to reunite with their children.

Sala's wedding was a very nice affair. Ela and I left early, but Frieda remained in Salzburg with her friend. I remember how Ela and I almost missed our train, and how Ela got sick after our return because of exhaustion from running.

Steyr 231!

Steyr 231 had a very well staffed clinic. There were all the time two doctors, nurses and two dentists. One of the nurses was Izak Kremer's wife Mania. One dentist was Dr. Horowitz. A married man, but always frustrated because his wife wasn't able to have children, which didn't contribute to well being of their marriage. Camp swingers used to tell stories about Dr. Horowitz having good times around Steyr. But all that ended when Mrs. Horowitz after many tries finally gave birth to a healthy baby-boy.

The other dentist was Dr. Schwartzbart. He had a nice family, wife and children, but demanded respect from people, because as he used to say, it was due to him because of his title. Many of our Jews resented his attitude, and just in spite in conversations with the good doctor, refused to call him "doctor" calling him simply "Mr. Schwartzbart". It made them happy to see the doctor mad.

For internal medicine and other more serious problems there was Dr, Garfinkel. A man in his late fifties or early sixties, who after the war married a young and a very good looking woman, who in camp presented him with a baby. And again in this case some people used to make sarcastic remarks about sexual abilities of Dr. Garfinkel. In reality they both were a very nice couple and he was a good and caring doctor.

Dr. Muenich was the second doctor in camp. He was from Czechoslovakia and not Jewish. He couldn't return to his native land because during the occupation he and his family became so-called "Volksdeutchen" (people who took up German nationality). He was a good man and a very good doctor. His wife and children used to live in West Germany. He wasn't allowed to practice medicine in Austria, only in D.P. camps. He applied for Austrian citizienship, and after reciving such and pass some nessecary exams would be permited to practice medicine in Steyr or anyplace in Austria. Being a good doctor he was a personal phisician to Mr. Kremer, who was very ill with asthma. The Kremer family always remained gratefull to Dr. Muenich for taking good care on their husband and father. Both families became good friends, and when Mrs. Muenich used to come to Steyr to visit her husband, she always was Kremers guest. Their friendship lasted even after Kremers emigrated to United States, and long after Dr. Muenich became a successful doctor in Steyr. Him and his family used to visit with Kremers many times in New York.

A doctor refugee from Yougoslavia later was added to the medical staff in camp. He was an older man, kind of old-fashioned, and tried his best. For a while he was Hania's doctor during her pregnancy.

Doctor Muenich was also involved with our family's health problems. In a matter of facts he helped Frieda, and who knows maybe even saved her life, after she was fooling with a hanging piece of skin hanging from her toe. The trouble started when her toe got infected. Frieda was dangerously ill, with very high temperature and clearly visible red line climbing higher and higher on her leg, making its way to the heart. Seeing Frieda for the first time Dr. Muenich got scared and alarmed. He started a penicilin treatment, and when improvement became evident, he called in late at night a specialist from Steyr hospital, who that particular evening attended some important reception, but came to see Frieda on doctor Muenich's urging. You can believe me. There was a sight to remember. I think at the time our family was the last one living in this dark broken down half barrack striped of wood by vandals. Frieda in bed still with some fever, the elegant doctor from Steyr, Dr. Muenich and the rest of us waiting in anticipation for the doctor's verdict in a dim light of a 40 watts light bulb.

Finally the specialist told us that Frieda was better, and that Dr. Muenich was doing an excellent job. I guess seeing our suroundings he recommended for Frieda to stay for few days in hospital. Thanks to Dr. Muenich's diligence, Frieda recovered. I hope she remembers him for taking care of her day and night.

Dr. Muenich didn't take money for his work. Instead he asked if our relatives in United States would send some food parcels to his family in West Germany. Grandma's Frances cousins in New York have responded generously.

The last so-called doctor in Steyr was Shlomo Kremer who by profesion was a dental technician, who in his office fitted people with bridges and plates.

Chapter 114

Return To Zion!

Year 1947 was coming rapidly to an end. In Palestine Jews kept fighting to bring about a creation of a Jewish National Homeland, when at last on November 29, 1947 United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two independent states. One for Palestinians and one for Jews.

The vote by the United Nations Genetal Assembly was a sweet victory for Jews. Finally the U.N. decision promised the beginnings of a viable state, which would be a refuge for the survivors of Hitler's death camps.

To the Arabs however the decision was an outrage. A dismemberment of a region claimed as their own, was an insult to be avenged in blood. Arab mobs attacked and murdered Jews all over. Arab bomb squads detonated explosives in marketplaces and guerrillas besieged Jewish settlements and cut communication lines. By December 1947 Palestine was in state of virtual civil war, and slowly evacuating British forces declined to intervene.

The Jewish order of the day was to hold on, to yield nothing. Armed mostly with rifles, settlement after settlement held of intensive Arab attacks. In the six months between passing passage of the partition resolution and the declaration of statehood not a foot of Jewish held territory was lost, for the Jews had two keys to victory, the Arabs lacked: Unity and organization.

Against the backdrop of of Arab disunity the Jews of Palestine were soon able to take the offensive. In the spring of 1948 th Haganah sized control of all major cities within the U.N. proposed Jewish state. These included the crucial port of Haifa, the all Arab city of Jaffa, Safad near Syrian border, and the new city of Jerusalem. As the Jews advanced from one city to the next, hundreds of thousands Arab residents fled. Distrustful of Jewish Agency assurances that their lives and property will be safe, believing instead they would return to their homes in the wake of victorious Arab armies. The Arabs of Palestine soon began packing their belongings, and by boat, bus, cart and car streamed across the borders into the safety of neighbouring states. There most of them were forced into refugee camps.

On the late afternoon of May 14, 1948 the 650,000 Jews of Palestine gathered around radios and waited. Then precisely at 4pm through cracle of static came the familiar voice of their longtime leader David Ben-Gurion. His voice filled with emotion, the old warrior-pioneer began to read... "By virtue of the national and historic right of the Jewish people and the resolution of the United Nations: (We) hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine-to be called Israel".

Shortly before David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence, another ceremony took place in the port city of Haifa. Sir Alan Cunningham the last British High Commissioner for Palestine, took the salute from the contingent of his troops. With this simple ceremony 31 years of British ruke in the Holy Land ended.

The Arab plan of operation was simplicity itself. From the south a strong Egyptian army would sweep up the Negev, taking Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. From the east Transjordan's Arab Legion about 10,000 men trained and staffed by British officers would cross the Jordan River and quickly occupy central Palestine and the Old City of Jerusalem. From the north the elements of the Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqui armies would smash through Galilee, sweep into Haifa and Tel-Aviv. They thought in a week perhaps two at most the Jewish state would be extinguished, its citiziens the victims of what one Arab leader predicted would be a "Mongol massacre".

Arab armies never broke the spirit of Jews. Egyptian army was destroyed in Negev on the outskirts of a small Jewish settlement called Nirim. Only the Arab Transjordan Legion thrust quickly toward Jerusalem laying siege to the New City. With Arab shells pouring into the city it appeared certain that Israeli held Jerusalem would yield either to Arab Legion or to starvation. But working under constant bombardment the Israeli work crews bilt a road into the city. The 24 hour siege was broken and Jerusalem was saved. On morning June 11, 1948 the first Israeli conwoy rumbled down the new road into Jerusalem.

The clamor of battle for the Holy Land suddenly ceased and Arabs agreed to a month long truce.

When fighting resumed on July 8, 1948 Arabs found themselves confronted with vastly improved foe, and in ten days the Israeli armed forces cleared Galilee of the Syrian-Lebanese-Iraqui Forces. In the south Egyptian forces were cleared from Negev, leaving Israel with secured southern flank.

By the first anniversary of Israel's independence it was clear that a new power had arisen in the Middle East. Israel had not only survived but had extended its territory by about a third. Yet survival cost the nation dearly. Some 6000 Israelis had been killed, almost 1 percent of the population. Arab deaths were even greater. The defeat was made more bitter for the Arabs by their feeling that they had been treated unfairly. During the next quarter of the century Israel fought three major wars and the 1982 Lebanon invasion to ward off Arabs threats to its existence. Yet despite the cost and suffering Zionism in 1948 had against overwhelming odds, realized a dream of centuries. The wandering Jew of history had secured a home in the land of his ancestors.

With Israel's independence new guidelines had been established for legal immigration of Jews to the Holy Land, bypassing the camps on Cyprus and restriction imposed by the British, and traps set by them in open seas nearby Palestine's coast.

At the same time an enormous preasure was put on young people, boys and girls alike In Jewish D.P. camps all over Europe to join the Israeli army. Specialy selected people from political parties, even thou some of them didn't intend at all to emigrate to Israel kept harrasing men and women with all kinds of threats, and loss of jobs if they wouldn't join. All of us Frieda, Hania, Ela, Norbert and I went through such a harassment by Mr. Fertig and his cohorts. He refused to give-up on me, and made me go through a medical examination to prove that I was not fit to serve because of my blind right eye. And even after I presented him with such a document, he wouldn't give-up by trying to take my job away.

This was a histeria time created by politicians, who wanted to sent people to Israel by intimidation. It took a while for them to realize that people who survived the holocaust won't be intimidated anymore, even by their own.

Chapter 115

International Refugee Organization!

Shortly before establishment of Israel the United Nations created IRO (International Refugee Organization) It took a while but after a certain period of time, sergeant Hodges and his soldiers left the camp and a British colonel John Wattleworth took over as civilian administrator.

Wattleworth was a stuffy British traditionalist, with many years of service in India and other former British colonies. He tried to rule with an iron hand but the Jewish committee was always able to push through projects by him, he would never aprove if he knew more about them.

The Austrian camp secretary Hinterreitner kept his job, and the Austrian Jew who previously un-seated the former Austrian Nazi retained his post as the camp engineer.

Colonel Wattleworth hired a private secretary for himself. She was "Fraulein" Victora, who besides her duties in the office, performed very well as an easy bite for many young men in camp.

The colonel used to live in a hotel in town. While living there he fell in love with the owner, whose husband was listed as missing in action after serving in German army during the war. This woman refused for many months to marry Wattleworth, but finally gave in after reciving official notice from Austrian government that her husband was declared "dead".

Since IRO took over distribution and other services didn't change. The difference was that most deliveries came from Austrian who were re-inbursed by IRO. Even thou IRO was an international organization most of the money used to come from United States. Our salaries ceased coming in scripts from AJDC. Instead we all went to town and registered with a branch of Austrian government, who from then on paid our monthly wages, and making all of us eligible for paid vacation, un-employment insurance and free medical care. My salary was 350 Austrian schillings per month. I don't re-call at this time if Hania, Frieda and Ela, recived salaries from Austrians for their sweaters or if they continued to recived Joint's scripts.

During a joyous ceremony in camp honoring Israeli independence, colonel Wattleworth found himself in a peculiar situation. He was sitting at the head table with all those Jewish dignitaries, even thou he as his British government were against Israel and didn't recognized the Jewish State as yet. Still he stood up and said few kind words congratulating the Jewish people because of this very important achievement.

After Americans left camp, IRO reorganized the camp security. They fired few patrolmans under the pleasure from some Zionists, who made good on their promise to take revenge on young people who refused to go to fight in Israel. I survived the massacre, only because I was married and we were expecting a child.

The rest of us went to a police training camp in Ebelsberg, Located on outskirts of Linz. Ebelsberg was a tremendous complex of 4 story buildings which served as S.S. headquarters during Hitler era. After the war United States Armed Forces were stationed there. When soldiers left, authorities closed two D.P. camps in Linz. People from Bindermichel and Wegscheid were relocated to the comfortable rooms of Ebelsberg.

I spent one week in Ebelsberg learning Military Police tactics under the command of an American Military Police capitain. We learned instructions about, how to protect the camp from outside or in case of fire, some discipline which was very hard in those days to enforce on Jews, self defence (some kind of wrestling) and how to write reports. We all recived British army uniforms dyed from field green to navy, caps, shoes and police sticks as well. Our quarters and food were execelent, and by the end of the week all tests concluded we recived our diplomas.

Besides Jews there were other nationalities at this police school in Ebelsberg. There were Poles, Ukrainians and Yougoslavians. So it didn't come to us, as a surprise when a woman resident of Ebelsberg recognized an Ukrainian attending the police school as murderer from her old hometown who killed her family during the German occupation. This woman was wild, crying and yelling with a trembling voice, making an effort to murder this guy with her own hands.

Ofcourse the Ebelsberg security had a small riot on their hands, especially when some men joined in with this yelling woman trying to help her to strangle the Ukrainian. Finally the order was restored when Military Police arrived in camp and wrestled the man away from the Jews. They arrested the Ukrainian. I guess he was tried and convicted, but I am not sure how long he spent in prison.

After IRO took over the necessary operations to run the camp, American Joint Distribution Committee scaled down its operation. Their PX and scripts were used to help people who needed more then the majority.

IRO opened its own PX which supplied the camp population with all kinds of household goods and other merchandise without charge. Mr. Gertner was the head of this new store, and colonel Wattleworth, practically shoved on him his new wife to help him out. Since that day all kind of rumors and intrigues hit the camp. Little by little we started to realize that colonel's Austrian wife was a primary source in medling into other peoples affairs.

Once she even involved our family and the Rosenbach family who before the war used to live nearby Jaslo. In Steyr we became good friends and their daughter Regina was Ela's best friend. Their very good looking son was colonel's personal driver. I really don't remember the reason which strained our relations with Rosenbachs, but the hell broke out when Wattleworth's wife suggested to Gertner that Frieda was the source of his problems with his Russian wife Anya. So Gertner who used to be a very good friend of grandpa Abraham got mad at us as well.

Rosenbachs and their children emigrated to United States. Regina married a wealthy sweaters manufacturer. They have two children. The good relation between Ela and Regina survived until now. Maybe they don't see each other but they talk a lot on the phone. Regina travels extensivly all over the world.

Rosenbachs son Arek could have any girl in Steyr but he wasn't interested. I think he is living with someone in New York. Mr. Rosenbach passed away few years ago. Mrs. Rosenbach is in her early nineties.

Gertner emigrated to United States also. His daughter never liked his Russian wife. After a stormy marriage they divorced in Los Angeles.

Two men came into fame and wealth in Steyr 231 as co-menagers of the food warehouse. They were Mr. Furman and Mr. Fingerhut. They both emigrated to United States. Victor Polaniecki was the one who took over after they left. After Victor left, former Frieda's friend Beckermann got the job. But then there wasn't to much to distribute. The glamour of getting rich was gone. The camp was on the verge of ~~closing~~. BEING CLOSED.

Those were the breakthrogh years. The most important years since we arrived in Austria. Those were the years when the legal immigration to Israel was in full swing. There were no more crossing the enourmous mountains on the Austro-Italian border in sub zero temperatures, and hoping not to be caught by border guards. Little by little some other countries had begun to open their doors to admit the refugees, except the United States. Only few chosen ones left, being looked upon with envy by the ones left behind.

As quickly as the new Israelites left the camps, they had been replaced by other Jews arriving in masses from Rumania and Hungary. It took maybe only half a year, when another type of a wandering Jew came into existance. Those were so-called immigrants in reverse. People disssatisfied with living conditions in the new Israel, who choose to come back to D.P. camps and try their luck elsewhere in the world.

On a more tragic note adding anger and commotion to camp inhabitants, one nice sunny afternoon a small bomb exploded in the back of the camp injuring a small boy playing there with other children. The injury was minor, even not requiring hospitalization, but a group of hotheads to turn this un-fortunate incident into a visious attack on Jews. Police picked up the pieces of the bomb and after analized them issued a report that there was no foul play involved. The small bomb was there since the war, when our camp used to be a military fort. Probably it would never be discovered if the little boy wouldn't step on it.

Future citiziens of Israel tried their best to prepare themselves for their new lives in the Holy Land. An aura of anticipation developed, and fear as well, because war still was going on in former Palestine. But overall peoples attitude was good despite of knowledge of many hardships ahead.

Buying rush of all kinds of goods made many Austrian merchants and companies very happy. Regular folks started with pots and pans, clothing, bedding, mostly feather filled comforters and other houshold goods. Small repairmen bought tools and equipment for their future business or repair shpos in Israel.

But with the biggies was a different story. They kept buying not only just bicycles or motorcycles. They had shipped to Istael trucks, getting ready for business in trucking industry. Others bought bakery eqipment, and those who planed to live in the country purchased machinery for raising chickens, or diary equipment for producing milk and diary products.

Ofcourse not everybody was able to buy all those things, so they searched for other means of making some extra money, extortion included. One of our policemen wanted us to give him our entire monthly collection from businessmen threatning with informing on us, but finally settled for a small sum we collected for him among ourselves.

Only small percentage of refugees re-settled in European countries. Jews and none Jews as well traveled to England (mostly Poles), France, Belgium and to Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Denmark. Many ill Jewish people have found temporary heaven in Sweden just to recuparate couple of years after the war, and then emigrated to countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in South America, or Canada and some went as far as South Africa, Australia and New Zeeland. The rest of us was waiting for our turn to settle in United Sates.

Hearing stories about not so good situation in Israel from people who returned to D.P. camps, made many prospective emigrants to Israel change their minds and try to get their relatives in United States to bring them over, Many of them already shipped their new business equipment to Israel, and tried very hard to get it back, but instead each one of them recived a polite letter personally signed by David Ben Gurion telling them that the State Of Israel was in much bigger need of their equipment then its owners, and therefore was confiscating all of it. A storm of protests erupted, which accomplished nothing, but big loss of thousands of dollars for the original owners.

While all this was going on Hania and I traveled to Salzburg to say good-by to my uncle Salo and aunt Dina who few days later left for Israel. For Hania this was first trip to Salzburg. My cousins the Goldsteins already re-united with their children in Israel. For uncle Salo his lifetime dream to live in a free democratic Jewish state finally came through.

Aunt and uncle told us that they are leaving a trunk full of all kinds of things for us with the Tepper family. Speaking of Teppers, Leniowers friends way back from Fergana, their daughter Sala and husband Zylek left Salzburg for Israel as well. This was the last time I saw uncle Salo and aunt Dina. They enjoyed their lives in the Holy Land for few more years, until they passed away. First uncle Salo and then aunt Dina.

Some weeks later I traveled to Salzburg with Mr. Neuman and Victor Polaniecki. Both of then took driving lessons, and this trip was their final, before getting their certificates. My trunk, which my uncle left for me with the Tepper family, somehow disappeared, without Teppers knowing about how it happened. On the way back we made a stop in the famous D.P. camp Parsch on Austrian-German border (the center of black market), where Mr. Neuman bought American cigarettes for farther re-sale. For me it was first time at this black market headquarters. Later on the highway we got stopped at a checkpoint by Austrian Highway Patrol. We all became frightened because of those cigarettes in the trunk, but the driving school sign on the car and explanation of the instructor of the purpose of our trip satisfied the patrolman. He was convinsed that the three of us were student-drivers. I would be a disaster if he would decide to search the vehicle.

This was my last trip to Salzburg, until two years later, when we spent some time there before leaving for United States.

Rather tragic news awaited us in Steyr when Hania and I returned home after seeing uncle Salo and aunt Dina. A letter from uncle Ludwik informed us about the death of my, Blessed Memory Father, your grandfather Jacob after a prolonged illness. The news we had expected for many months finally arrived. You already know the details, so I will not repeat them again.

In meantime black market flourished in Steyr and other camps. It was obvious that the big men of the business decided to stay in Austria as long as possible and continue with their activities in order to increase their profits and the overall wealth.

The small fries of the black market, distributed their wares among the Austrian people on their motorcycles. Most of them used to be well known to Austrian police, and American military authorities. A small outfit of M.Ps. came once to camp to arrest one of them. At the same time as they were entering his room, he was able to escape through the back window. Luckily his room was on the first floor. It was a cold winter day and the man ran dressed only in his pajamas and barefoot. Later his wife took his clothing to his hiding place, and he was forced to skip Steyr and live for a while in a different camp. He was not a decent person, and a womanizer. No decent woman in camp would associate with him. At the end he was the lucky one, who have found a wife who was a very nice person from Hungary. Nobody in camp would believe that she agreed to marry this guy. Her influence on him was tremendous. There wasn't such thing he wouldn't do for her. It was a miracle. After few month of this marriage Ackerman was a different man.

Another man like Ackerman was Pelz from Polish Silesia with a wife and small child. He made plenty of money on black market but spent most of it on foolish things. His wife wasn't to smart, so she always believed his silly stories.

He always pointed out to other people that he was a "Man from Bendzin" (town in Silesia), like his bragging would have somekind of meaning. Not at all. On the eve of his leaving for Israel, he had the nerve to go among the people, asking to make a collection for him, because as he put it, after all this years of dealing on the black market he was broke.

An odd couple who used to live in our barrack were Meilech and Moyshele. Meilech was the older one. A man who lost his wife and children during the war. I think he survived in Soviet Union, because his wife sent him east on the wrong assumption that Germans would hurt men only.

Moyshele was a young man. Not very toll, but with a nice and pleasant face,, and ofcourse single, whose family as many others perished in holocaust. His relatives in United States promised to bring him over.

Meilech and Moyshele even thou they shared a room haven't been best of friends but they tolerated each other. If they had any respect for each other I don't know, because nobody in camp didn't respected Meilech anyway. Ofcourse the man was loaded with money and a member of the "whosalers" (businessmen).

Moyshele on the other hand was onfof those men who used to make their money on the streets around the camp, selling to passing by Austrians American cigaretts, Hershey bars, coffee, noodles and nylons. Like the others he never failed to ask his customers if by any chance they wouldn't have jewlery or gold for sale. You could say he made a better living, then the average person in those days.

I guess Meilech and Moyshele would keep tolerating each other if not for the young Austrian young woman they hired as their maid. But there was one thing wrong. This maid was not only very good looking, but from a decent middle class Austrian family, who after the war came on bad times.

Another problem developed when both of them Meilech and Moyshele have fell in love with her. A rather nasty situation developed, when this young woman rejected Meilech and told him that she was in love with Moyshele. Ofcourse Meilech moved out and shortly after left for Israel.

I don't remember this girl's name. But Rabbi Frenkel converted her to Judaism. Her and Moyshele got married. He wrote a letter to his relatives in United States and they accepted her as his wife. Eventually they left for New York. They still looked to me as being very much in love, when I saw them in front of the "HIAS" building in New York in 1951.

When IRO administration took over, and followed with reduction of personel in my department (security), only two people minded the gate at night and checking at certain intervals the rest of the camp. I was still doing my secretarial work, but was obliged to duty at the gate. An incident took place once during such a night, when I and my partner were sitting in the guardhouse. I learned then how insensitive people could be in regard to other people, to reach their objective no matter who else might get hurt.

This particular night at 4pm, three butchers who used to live in camp walked in sit down on a bench, and got involved in a small talk with me and my partner. We thought that they were waiting for the early bus going to Linz, which always was making its regular stop just around the corner from the camp.

An hour later an Austrian showed up by the window. As soon as they spotted him those butchers jumped to their feet left the guardhouse in a hurry. My partner and I suspected that the three men probably had some dealings with the Austrian, and soon fergot all about it.

The real shocker came later in the day, when I was resting at home after my night duty, and was called to report immediatly to the camp administrator. Not the Jewish administrator, but to the one and only colonel Wattleworth. I was told that a man walking down the street in the morning saw another man, taking a cow to the camp through a side street. Because there was illegal in those days to sell cattle without government permission, any such transaction at night as the man saw it was a crime punished by prison. The man reported to the police what he saw. Plainclothes men came to camp to take me and the chief Janek Kleinmann to police headquarters. In those days I spoke German fairly well, but during questionong my tongue got all tangled up, because I was scared to death, and my interrogator thought that it was because of my not knowing how to speak German. Anyway I stuck to a story that I didn't see nothing, except people going to catch an early bus to Linz. I mentioned names, but not names of those butchers. In one sentence I saved their necks.

But did those butchers appreciate it? Not at all. When I went to police headquarters Hania felt numbness all over her body and spent all those hours in bed not able to move. The butchers ofcourse mad a good profit, but never even suggested or offer us a couple of pounds of that meat for protecting them from the police.

Kleinmann left camp to join his future wife in Vienna, shortly after this incident. Joseph Fiebert got his old job back. As I said before some people were forced out from the department, others left for Israel with their families. Those who left got replaced with others. One of the newcomers was Melich Oderberg. This man was a "Haham"; in other words smart alec. He was smart in Judaic studies. It was interesting to watch him sometimes solving problems among people the old country way, using comments from the Torah.

Oderberg was there with his wife who survived the holocaust. Himself he survived in Soviet Union. They had two sons, one of them born in camp. Half of the camp attended the boy's "brith". He always insisted that the "brith" was followed by a large reception. I was there as well, and saw many people but not food.

Few Years ago I saw Oderberg here in Kansas City attending a wedding in K.I. Synagogue. We had very nice get together at Mr.& Mrs. Federman home, Oderberg's friends. Oderberg and his family are living in Denver. One thing I am certain, that his present wife wasn't the same woman I knew in camp. Later somebody told me that the first Mrs. Oderberg passed away many years ago.

Another important man, not only in camp but about Steyr as well was Moyshe-Itzek. He was there with his wife of many years and a small girl. He was a man whose heart was full of hate toward Germans and Austrians, and strong desire for revenge. You see, Moyshe-Itzek and his wife lost their children in holocaust. You could see him all over town in Gasthouses, taverns, restaurants, ballgames, just looking for trouble, just to start a browl so he would punch out few Austrians, Poles or Ukrainians. On many ocassions he was successful. After encounters like these, Austrian police used to come to camp with warnings, that trouble in town might develop. But those warning never materialized. Our camp was never attacked, and Moyshe-Itzek was never arrested. I guess even Austrian police was afraid of him.

On any given weekday many inhabitants of our camp traveled to Linz by bus, ran by Austrian railroads. Some people used to go on business (not legal ofcourse) so traveling on an Austrian national bus was rather uncomfortable for them, because they always carried something what wasn't "kosher". Other people used to go to HIAS or AJDC seaking from them all kinds of help and advise concerning their lives and emigration to other countries then Israel. Many people sought medical help at the D.P. Hospital in Linz, and other went there to visit their friends and relatives.

Looking for easy money a smart man Bergazin came up with an idea to satisfy camp population, but mostly the businessmen. He rented in Steyr an elegant private bus. For a certain fee, which was higher then on the Austrian bus people from camp could travel on this bus every day, Saturdays excluded directly from our camp to camp Ebelsberg in Linz and all those other places they needed to visit. From then the businessmen could carry their contraband without worries. Ofcourse there always was a possibility that this bus could be stoped by Austrian Highway patrol. There was a set fee, which Bergazin paid each day to this private bus company.

As long as everybody in the family was healthy our lives were quite decent, a long way from the misery of Siberia and Uzbekistan, but still was lacking the tranquiity of a regular life at home, with a steady job and all the good things which come with it.

Finally we had our nice rooms in the new barrack. In a matter of facts Hania decorated our room so beautiful, that inspectors from IRO Headquarters were so impressed, and sent reporters and photografers to interview us and make pictures. Who knows, maybe in some city in United States in a newspaper there was a picture and article about our room in camp Steyr 231.

Parcels from grandma Frances' relatives in New York and San Francisco kept coming, but not as often as in the beginning. This was also a time when"CARE" organization in United States came into existance and many of their packeges started to arrive in camps. Twice we recived packages from this organization. At first we didn't know who sent them to us, but a letter which came later from my father's cousin on his mother's side from Toronto, explained that this man was the sender. In my replay I thank him for his generosity, and even asked him if there was a possibility for him to bring us over to Canada. We never heard from him again. We had never found out who sent the other package.

In camp we continued our friendships with many people. Some of them slowly but sure kept leaving Austria. It was to bad that decent people were in minority in those days. Horrors of holocaust changed lots of men and women, who in many cases needed therapy in order to bring their lives to normal.

Mr. Kalish the former friend of my father from Zbaraz, actually was the only person who could link me with my family's past. Because of this friendship he asked me to be his witness, when he married his wife in court. They had been married previously by a Rabbi.

Political kidnapings, so common in those days finally came to Steyr. We thought that such things would take places only in large cities. It was a shock when couple young men (not Jews) from Eastern Europe were taken off the street, pushed into a slowly moving car and then driven away. We used to know them, sometimes they visited with people in our camp, but since the kidnaping, we never saw them again.

In early 1949 uncle Ludwik, aunt Rose and their adopted son Heniek left Cracow for Israel. After the creation of the State of Israel it was legal for Polish Jews to leave Poland and settle in Israel. Those Jews were the ones who saved themselves from the living conditions of the D.P. camps. I still don't know who was better off. Ofcourse people with desire to go some day to United States, accomplished their goal later via Israel.

Before uncle Ludwik left Cracow he together with aunt Mala made sure and errected a monument on father's grave, with an inscription honoring the memory of my "Blessed Memory" mother. Above my father's grave there is a monument honoring the memory of aunt Mala's husband Gabriel and her children Saul and Zosia, and other members of the Bauer family (aunt Mala's maiden name was Bauer) who either perished in holocaust or died in Soviet Union. She paid for her part of the monument, and Hania and I paid for my father's monument. We handed our money (in dollars) to Mrs. Rosenbach in Steyr, and her brother in Cracow paid out to uncle Ludwik.

After the Kahane family and Balins left Cracow, a long era of all of us living in Cracow finally ended, except of aunt Mala. She was a native Cracovian, and so was her sister, then still living in Cracow. Even thou Mala and her new husband Ferdinand Korngold settled in Belgium, she used to be an often visitor in Cracow, until her death many years later. Although she passed away in Antwerpen, Korngold, who also was a native Cracovian eventually moved her body to Cracow.

It seemed in those days that everybody from all over the world was heading for Israel. United States and Soviet Union didn't waste any time, by giving their recognition to the new born state. It took longer for Great Britain to do the same. If they would have their way, there wouldn't be a Jewish State at all. They would give everything aways to their old friends the Arabs.

My cousin Irma Schlafenberg and her husband Bruno, left Lourdes in France and via Vienna went to Israel. My other cousin Helen Stein and her husband Robert also left Yougoslavia and headed for Israel, to be re-united with her brother Alfred who had been there since escaping from Gestapo van in Vienna in 1938. Many years later while in Israel he had a change of heart and became a protestant, and settled in Bristol England. He is married now with four or five children, a profesor in one of the high class British colleges. Irma's brother Fritz Schwarz lives in Israel since long before world war two.

Fritz might as well be considered, as one of the pioneers who had worked a hard land to conquer to make it fertile. Last to leave before the war were my uncle Dr. Julius Nussbaum and his wife Regina from Vienna, 3 months before German invasion on Poland and the beginning of world war two.

On the Leniowers side their sister in law Regina Leniower and her children the Apterbachs and Janka and family left Belgium and settled in New York City. Grandma Frances' cousins Tadek Blut Juszczyk and Tadek Rotter left Poland for Israel quite few years later during the second wave of Jewish emigration in ~~1960s~~. 1957.

Those were the years of great population shifts. Remnants of Jews kept leaving Europe in masses and other nations kept running from communism. On the other hand Hitler's helpers, the hard core Nazis were looking for countries to hide under assumed names to avoid their pursuers and justice.

Back in Steyr after Kleinmann left many young men and not so young as well used to come around and wanted to go out with Frieda. Most persistant were Beckermann and Victor Polaniecki. Beckermann was desperate because he needed papers from someone, so he could emigrate to United States, and was willing to marry just for this reason. Polaniecki had his own papers from his relatives in New York and Kansas City. Besides he was hanging around because he happened to love Frieda without strings attached, long before he made his move to win her hand. Both Beckermann and Polaniecki shared a room with each other, but this didn't stop them from hating each other, which was really funny.

In those days the Jews from camp 231 had found for themselves another nice place where to relax on Saturdays afternoon. Across the street from camp on Franklin Delano Roosevelt Strasse, there was a block of apartment buildings, and beyond them a long line of wheat fields divided by narrow paths. Where the fields ended a small and rather pleasant forrest was standing. On sunny summer afternoons a hord of people from camp used to walk down those paths, to reach the forrest to stretch out there in the shadows of trees. In the beginning the owners of the forrest didn't interfere. But soon the whole thing got out of hands. Our Jews made themselves comfortable there, as if this beautiful forest was their own. They never cleaned up after their Shabat picnics, leaving their filt and garbage behind. For others the narrow paths leading to the forest wasn't enough to walk on. They needed more room, so they used to walk on wheat. Ofcourse the owners of the property wouldn't put up with this kind of behavior. Soon the "no trespassing signs" stoped forever the Saturday's fun. Our Jews were outraged as well, blaming those signs on anti-Semitism. They wouldn't admit, that they spoiled everything by their stupid behavior.

When Joseph Fiebert took over as security chief after Kleinmann left, the whole atmosphere and discipline changed to worse. Most of the patrolmen instead to patrol, kept watching the businessmen, to make sure that nothing slips by them, when new merchandise arrived in camp, so they could later collect their duties. As a chief Fiebert also arranged for another scam. Since Hungarian, Rumanian and Czech refugees started to arrive in Steyr, he assigned our security men to unload their suitcases off the trucks and store them in empty rooms nearby. The following day when those people came to pick-up their baggage to travel to their destinations, he collected from the surprised people a certain fee, according to how many suitcases each family owned.

Fiebert's good friend and drinking buddy, became his deputy and fire marshall. Luckily there weren't any fires in camp, except a small one in the kosher kitchen. Because Motel (Fiebert's friend) didn't know how to write and read, I was forced to take care on all his writing and reading duties. I used to make inventories of the fire equipment and made sure that all was clean in operating condition. Motel's extra activity, which he loved to do most, was when on orders from camp's draft board at night he used to deliver summons to young people to report for draft to Israeli army.

There was in camp another secret activity arranged by Jewish authorities to train young people how to attack and defend themselves in case of enemy's offensive.

Ofcourse by enemy attacks they ment Arabs attacks on Jewish settlements in Israel.

Jewish Agency had sent a young man and a young woman to a camp somewhere in West Germany to train them in all sorts of fights, hand to hand, a form of karati and other mambo-jumbo using sticks instead of weapons.

When they came back the man first focused on camp security people, and later on other organizations. Everything used to be run by a specially designed code, because whoever run the show didn't want even "Betar" to find out about it.

Our exercises took place in one of the many empty stables around the camp. We knocked each out for nothing. Other peoples refusal to participate put an early end to this charade. Once colonel Wattlewoth walked in on us, and was kind of surprised seeing us jumping up and down, but somebody explained to him, that all it was a police training to keep us in shape.

Leica Salomonovicz was the young woman who taught self-defense to young women in camp. But most of them weren't interested , so their program was doomed even before it started.

This Leica Salomonovicz was quite a girl. She wasn't beautiful but quite a girl in other ways. Her parents used to be very nice people. I knew her father, because he was a member of security also. Her brother was making pretty good living on the black market. She had many boyfriends, but on the return from her trip to Germany, she brought with her another boyfriend. A good looking man whom she later married. She cheated on him a lot, and continued in her ways even after they came to New York. Because of her behavior her husband tried to commit suicide twice. He lost his leg in one of his attempts. His life with her was one big hell. He died early because of his un-happy marriage.

Sometime in 1948 Frieda's former boyfriend Sigmund Gleicher, after serving out his term in Garsten prison was re-leased and went to Linz. Through a mutual friend, Frieda sent him his belongings. They never saw each other again. Eventually Gleicher married in Ebelsberg and went to Israel.

During the enormous shift from Siberia to Uzbekistan, and then to Poland and Austria we kept coming across people, whom we knew once before. Among others there was in Steyr the family who traveled with us from Aldan all the way to Uzbekistan. This was the man who tried in Tashkent to extort some money from uncle Ludwik, in order as he put it, to bribe some official to get us faster out from Tashkent.

The other family we came across was the Jakubovich family. Actually we new Mr. Jakubovich only from Siberia. He was there with his father and two brothers. Very religious man, who had plenty problems trying to adjust. He was very happy to see Leniowers again and insisted that he will never forget their help, when the going was rough for him.

In Steyr him and his wife already had couple of kids. She was a religious person also. Her brother used to work with me in security. There was a sister in the family as well, who was on a very fat side. Imagene the surprise of the entire camp population, when a good looking man from another camp came to Steyr to marry her.Another surprise came when when Miss Horn (her name) after only one day of marriage came back to her mother. Then again rumors exploded, about, what was wrong with this man. Ofcourse a quick divorce was arranged, but this man wouldn't give up. He kept coming back insisting that he loves the girl. Still Miss Horn wouldn't have him, even with all the money he was waving in front of her. It was defintly something wrong with him, and I guess some people knew, but nobody had had nerve enough to say it aloud, and the old Mrs. Horn kept chasing him away.

There were other people I knew in Cracow, who came through Steyr. One of them was a lady dentist who was married to a"MD" practicing in D.P. Hospital in Linz. And then only passing through came Mr. Reiner, an uncle to Joseph Reiner who went with me together to Sobieski gimnaziuum in Cracow. I saw him there after the war Mr. Reiner spent sometime with my father in hospital in Cracow.

Once when a small transport came to Steyr from Czechoslovakia, a young woman approached me on the street, and told me that we went to school together in Cracow. I didn't recognized her at all. Then she told me her name, and I remained myself who she was. When we were in school together she always was a small girl. Ofcourse years went by and she changed for better. We used to attend the Commercial Lyceum together, but not in the same room. Her name was "Yam" but I didn't remember her first name. Except one boy who was in the same room with me, others didn't pay to much attention to her. He was as small as her with blond hair, nice face and pleasant smile. Maybe because of their height they were drawn to each other. His name was Figatner, and his parents used to own a monument business for all the dearly departed.

Yam was the only survivor of her family. She grew-up alone to be a good looking young woman. She got married to a Jew from Prague. His name was Stanek. They had a little girl. In Steyr I helped her to find a nice room, and supplied her with plenty of coal, because it was a very cold winter. Her husband used to be a shirt manufacturer, and kept manufacturing shirts even in Steyr. He put in his room couple of sewing machines and hired couple of Austrian women to help him out. In meantime his wife became a good friend of ours and spent many evenings in our room. On another hand she liked a lot the company of Mr. Bronner, who was very influencial at the AJDC. As far as the Staneks were concerned, money was no problem for them. As long as they had them, they liked to throw them around without hesitation. On any given day they would travel to Linz to have a good time, or just eat a good kosher dinner in Ebelsberg.

Their hope was to emigrate to Canada. Because of their late arrival in Austria some problems existed. At the time of our departure, they were still waiting in Steyr.

Along with Staneks another young couple came on this transport from Czechoslovakia. After a while the wife started quite often visiting our guardhouse at the camp's gate. She was just sitting there listening to ours conversations or putting in her few cents from time to time. We never could find out why she was sitting there, and nobody bother to ask her. But few weeks later a story started to circulate around the camp, that she was afraid to stay with her husband, which ment simply, that she didn't love him. It came out later that she wouldn't sleep with him as well. The husband on another hand outraged used to come running into the guardhouse accusing some of the men of having an affair with his wife. The truth was that she found herself another "nut" from Czechoslovakia as well, who used to claim being some famous leader and a spy, surrounded by bodyguards. People in camp called him "fruitcake", and nobody believed his stories. Eventually this woman was able to divorce her husband and married the other "nut". The Staneks used to be their neighbours, just behind a very thin and full of holes wall. They described the woman as a "fruitcake" as well running naked all day long around her room.

In those days night transports from Hungary and Rumania, became a normal occurence, because there was much easier to cross the border between Soviet and American zone near Steyr. We registerd them, fed them, After a short rest most of them were on their way. Usually it took almost three days to handle a transport. As I wrote before Hungarians used to have good connection in high places, and most of the time they knew, their final destination even before leaving their homes in Hungary.

In order to travel in Austria these people needed Austrian passports for foreign citiziens in order to cross from one occupied zone to another. The most difficult task was to cross in or out to or from Soviet occupied zone. All of us had had those passports, it took time for new arrivals to get them. Thanks to Fiebert's good connection with Steyr's police department he was able to work out a plan, ofcourse to his advantage for a certain fee, and picture taken by a Fiebert selected photografer, for people who wanted to leave in a hurry. Armed with pictures and money Fiebert was paying off somebody at the passport office, and returned to camp within few hours with new AUSTRIAN DOCUMENTS.

When Fiebert was in hospital laid down with a broken leg, and another transport came to town, our official "smart alec" of the security department Mel Oderberg who wanted to impress some people with his influence, had tried Fiebert's scam. Needless to say the person in passport office at the police department who used to make favors for Fiebert, informed Oderberg, that he didn't have a slices idea what he was talking about. He also said that everybody must wait for his or her's turn.. When the official told Fiebert about Oderberg's atempt, he was furious and accused him of trying take over his operation.

Going out on town was a must on Saturdays and Sundays, even thou many young people used to go out every day. Jews visited only their favored places, where the propriators of restaurants and gasthouses used welcome the with open arms. Believe it or not there were places around Steyr which didn't like Jewish business, because a drunk tough Jew always ment trouble with regular Austrian customers. Austrian restaurants served delicious food, "Schweinenbraten" (pig roast) included and Jews loved it.

And then there were places taken over by Jews for most of the day and evening, where THEY used to play cards. A lady owner of one particular establishment, made a fortune from Jewish business, mostly from the loosers. It was the same place where finally after having relations with many Austrian women Fiebert had found another one more closer to his age, who lost her husband in the war. He moved out from camp and joined her in her apartment. She liked him a lot. Every day she used to bring him to work a hot well prepared lunch, which actually was a dinner by European standards. Eventually they got married. She even expected a baby, but lost it because she was to old to have babies. As far as I know, Fiebert never left Steyr. If he still is alive, he would be 88 years old.

After the establishment of the State of Israel we in the security department contributed generously to help organize and buy weapons for the new Israeli Army. In the most elegant establishment in Steyr called "Zum Goldenen Pflug" (The Golden Plow) we presented two balls, open not only to camp population, but to Austrians as well. We engaged for those two affairs a very popular band from Vienna. On both occasions the place was full.When I think back about those times I only hope that our money really went to help the young Jewish State, and that some greedy official didn't put his dirty hands on it, before the money reached Israel.

The above two years, especially 1949 used to be known as years of refugees in reverse. The only Polish Jews coming to camp in those days from Vienna with Hungarians and Rumanians were the ones who made it back already from Israel. Those were the ones who didn't like to live in Israel mostly because of the war and un-stable conditions. Again they settled in camps around Linz and Salzburg. Jewish organizations wouldn't take them anymore, but IRO didn't have no choice but to help them again. Most of them were men of split families, who left their wives and children in in Poland or Israel. We used to call them "outcasts" but in meantime they enjoyed good time, while waiting to be send to some faraway country like Australia or New Zeeland. Those were the ones who never stoped searching for an easy way of life. I wonder if they ever found it.

Besides the "outcasts" there were families in camp who for one reason or another had to or were forced to split. Families parted either to emigrate to different countries, others parted just to go back to Poland. One family for example, whose father used to supervise all deliveries from AJDC to Steyr 231, with a son who did very well on black market, lost their daughter after in 1946 she married a man whose family didn't like the life in camp and choose to return to Poland. In 1948 they returned to Steyr and the daughter was very happy to see her parents again. But in 1949 her parents recived the permission to immigrate to United Staes, so they left leaving their daughter behind in Steyr. When I saw them in New York in 1951, they were still waiting for their daughter and her husband to join them.

In 1948 preliminary medical examinations took place in all D.P. camps in Austria and West Germany. Counties who were willing to admit former citiziens from Eastern Europe, needed an evaluation of all the new applicants. Americans and representatives of other countries engaged for this task Austrian doctors, who acted on their behalf, and on certain occasions, doctors from D.P. camps.

When early results of those examinations had been revealed, they put many people in a state of shock. Diseases like high blood preasure, lung, heart, eyes and many others, practicaly made them un-eligible to emigrate to any country particulary to United States of America.

But most shocked were people diagnosed with veneral diseases. People with excelent social standings, elderly people married to each other for many years. Later some of them recived a reprieve, notices telling them that a mistake had been made. Others got cured, and their only remaining option to emigrate was Israel.

Now take for example the family Zuckerkorn. A man educated in Yiddish and Jewish history, with wife and two children. She was a very good looking lady, but ill with T.B. She contacted the illness during the war in Soviet Union. She didn't know nothing about her misfortune until doctors in camp discovered her condition. The AJDC took very good care on her. They kept her few years in a sanitarium in Italy, and thanks to their help Mrs. Zuckerkorn recovered and was able to join her family in Steyr and later emigrate to Israel.

Zuckerkorn was always wearing a ~~head~~ hat, because he was ashamed of his baldness. Once while visiting his wife in Italy, while eating dinner with his hat on, a man asked him why he was wearing a hat, to which Zuckerkorn replayed, that he was a religious man. Year or so later the same man saw Zuckerkorn at a leftist party meeting, of which they both were members without the hat on his bald head, and finally realized that Zuckerkorn wasn't religious at all.

In camp Zuckerkorn was a milk distributor to children and old foks. His job earned him a "nick-name" from the Shalom Aleyhem's book "Teyve da milkhdike", (Teyve the milkman), like Teyve from the play and movie of recent years "Fidler On The Roof"

Some people who grew up in those old-fashioned "shetles" in Eastern Poland remembered very well the old ways how they used to live. They reminisced about those who used to sit at the eastern wall in their synagogue, about the so-called "gevirim" (rich people), and the poor ones in the bottoms of "shtetl". Still they never fergot about the stupid man, the town's "bum". Each "shtetl" had at least one of those, sometimes a man and a woman, who in many occasions were much smarter then some of the town's "gevirim". Usually the "bum" was an educated person, who from to much learning got a little "fardreyt" (dizzy) from to much knowledge.

Needless to say there was one of those in Steyr 231. It was just one difference. It wasn't a "bum" but a "Bumette" an older woman, whom old and young used to chase around the camp with all kinds of ruthless remarks. Granted she wasn't an educated person. She was there with daughter and her husband, the Jews of Steyr nick-named her "Schwieger" (mother-in-law). Her son-in-law was a Polish Jew, a shoemaker who made a good living during the war in Soviet Union, where he met the "Schwieger" and her daughter, both of them poor Russian Jews. The daughter married the shoemaker, and her's and mother's life changed to better. They came to Poland with the shoemaker after the war and later with other Jews leaving Poland they came to Austria. The shoemaker continued to make money, but for some reasons started to abuse (mostly verbaly) his wife and the mother-in-law. "Schwieger" went on to take more abuse from many un-sensetive people in camp, but the daughter enjoyed her life in the west, got much better looking and finally left her husband, and married another man after a divorce. ~~Somehow~~ She menaged to sent her mother ahead to New York, where some organization took her in. Somehow when "Schwieger" saw me in HIAS in New York, she remembered me from Steyr, and gave me a bad eye, even thou I never spoke to her in my life.

Like in a shtetl of many years ago you could find in camp a small group of backward people, completely illiterate, unable to read and write. Even thou being a minority, they represented in camp a "vocal majority". We heard them all over the place, their big and un-trained mouth' working overtime. Whatever was going wrong they always directed their disapproval at the 'Inteligentia". As they used to say "Panochki i Paniusie" (Ladies and Gentlemen). The war taught them how to live better. They learned fast how to make money on the black market, and not knowing how to read or write didn't prevent them from knowing how to count their money.

Some of their men were successful in marrying much more inteligent women, even from much better families. A man working as patrolman in security fell in love with a young Rumanian innocent 18 years old girl who came to camp with her parents. He was my age, People in camp used to call him "Babnik"(womanizer). He quit all his girlfriends and convinced this girl's parents that he will be the best husband possible to her. As far as I know the man changed completely. He married the girl, settled down. Later they had a baby-girl, and emigrated to Israel.

As in the old shtetl there was in camp a ritual bathhouse (mikvah). A family man was in charge. He was doing his job, but still some women had accused him of being a "Peeping Tom". Ofcourse he denied the allegations, but didn't have an excuse about the two small holes in a wooden partition. True! he was a happily married man, and father of a beautiful daughter Mary. Lots of young men wanted to marry her, but she was to choosy.

Another similarity to a shtetl represented shoemakers and tailors. Good shoemakers and tailors were hard to come by. As in shtetl there used to be few good ones. Those tailors and shoemakers who used to get the work from most of the population Jewish and Christian as well. The rest of them were poor, hardly able to prepare a decent Shabat, staying hungry most of the week or being supported by local charities.

There wasn't different in D.P. camps. The good "Balmeluhim"(profesionals) as they used to call them in Yiddish kept their shops going in their rooms. Some of them by paying off a committee member got an extra room just to keep the shop away from the family quarters. Ofcourse there were no hungry people in camps like in those old shtetls. AJDC mede sure of it.

The less fortunate shoemakers and tailors had joined the cooperative created by AJDC and worked for the organization, sewing and making stuff for PXs, later to be sold to workers for their scripts.

I once went to a tailor in a AJDC shop to alter my winter coat, and then again to make for me a pair of white shorts for summer. This man screwd up my coat and shorts, such a way, that another tailor was needed to un-srew the mess.

So when finally I was able to effort my first new suit after the war (not counting the one I got from AJDC) I went to a tailor with his own shop. Still it was already 1948, and most of the good tailors left the camp. We paid for this suit 500 Austrian shillings, and it took quite a while of fixing and altering before this tailor came up with the final product satisfatory to us.

A tragic day came upon the Amsterdam family and us as well when on November 3, 1948 Norbert's father Mr. Alois (Eliezer) Amsterdam passed away. His death was a terrible shock to all of us, and left an un-forgetable mark on his wife Mrs. Esther Amsterdam, but even more on his son Norbert. It was also a time when your grandpa Abraham suffered from then un-known to us illness, spending most of the time between hospitals and his bed at home.

Mr. Alois Amsterdam was a good and friendly man, loved by his family and respected by his friends and camp population. He was confident and was looking forward to the day when he and his family would go to United States and reunite with his sister Mrs. Esther Wiesenfeld, after many years of separation.

Few weeks before his death doctor told Mr. Amsterdam about his very high blood preasure. We all hoped that he will come out of it soon. As far as I can remember he suffered from a stroke, one day before his death. Norbert took him immediatly to hospital, but it was already to late.

Mr. Amsterdam's body was brought back to camp. Our family's good friend MR. WRUBEL Mr. took care on the ritual aspects and funeral arangements as well. Alois Amsterdam was burried at the small Steyr Jewish cementary, next to the mass grave of former Jewish inmates of a nearby concentration camp, murdered there by the Nazis. Some of the residents of Steyr remembered their last march to the camp falling on the streets of Steyr from malnutrition and exhaustion. Most of the camp population attended the funeral. It seemed that only grandpa Abraham and Mr. Berrish Kremer didn't attend. Your grandfather was in bed ill. As far as Mr. Kremer was concerned, he would go, but his sons wouldn't let him.

I remember very well Norbert being surrounded by his friends, AND obviously suffering, and it took all our strengh to keep him from throwing himself on his father's still un-burried body.

After all the mourning passed, Norbert changed to a different person. It took him a long time to be himself again. After the funeral he didn't shave for a whole month. After one year he kept going to synagogue every day. The death of his father made a better Jew of him, and very religious as well. Esther Amsterdam missed her husband a lot, and as far as I know she still miss him, because she always talk about him. And Mr. Amsterdam for being a very good husband and father deserves their love. "Blessed Be His Memory"

Winter months of 1948 and 1949 were very cold, which resulted in an acute shortage of coal and burning wood. Mr. Greenbaum who was the supply man, already left the camp to settle in Israel. His succesor wasn't energetic enough to control the bad situation. Those were very tough times. Many people were forced to buy their coal and wood in town. Burning wood was as expensive as coal and needed to be cut as well. Our wood cutter was a former German soldier, who spent much of his war years in Soviet prisoners of war camp in Siberia. While he was cutting the wood with his electric machine we used to exchange stories about living conditions in Soviet labor camps.

Our family was short of coal many times, but I took some chances, while being at night on duty at the guardhouse I helped myself to the coal from security's supply, so we could keep warm at home at least during the night. I was lucky, that nobody saw me carrying those heavy bags.

After trying for over a year to date other girls Victor Polaniecki appeared in our room, this time around for good. It was obvious that he wasn't going to leave again. The only matter remained to be solved, was for Frieda to make a decision and tell Victor "yes" or "no"

Still another hitch developed when Frieda recived a message from another suitor. A letter came from her's former co-worker at the Polish delegation in Uzbekistan. A surprsing invitation from Shmil-Zalmen Goldberg for Frieda to come and meet him in Passau and ancient city on the Danubia River in Bavaria to discuss a possibility of marriage.

As far as I was concerned I never liked Goldberg, and a thought of having him for a brother in Law made me kind of nauseous. But it wasn't for me to give advise in this matter, and on other hand nobody would listen to me anyway.

After few family meetings and long deliberations, Frieda agreed to go and see Goldberg, and I was selected to travel with her. We hired a taxi, for this beautiful ride of maybe 200 miles. From Linz we traveled through a georgeous countryside all the way along the Danubia River to a small border town of Schörding, another one of those 700 years old places. As far as we could see were standing old very well preserved buildings even on the German side, where in the middle of the city of Passau was proudly standing an ancient cathedral.

The border between Austria and Germany was practicaly open. All Frieda was required to do, was to leave her Austrian passport with the guard on the crossing bridge and walk with a lady guide to Passau where in a border restaurant Goldberg was waiting for her.

Mr. Brandstetter (the taxi driver) and I went SIGHTSEEING in meantime and then stoped in a quiet cafe for rest and coffee.

Late in the afternoon the driver and I went back to the border and asked the lady guide to tell Frieda that there was already time to go home. Half an hour later we were on our way back. I don't know what the conversation was about between Frieda and Goldberg. Personally I was satisfied and very much so that Goldberg's wish to marry Frieda didn't come through. First of all it would be below dignity for all the family, and secondly I suspected then that Frieda's mind was already made up to marry Victor anyway.

As I saw it then Victor had cared not only about Frieda, but the rest of the family. He was always around and ready to help. Those were very trying times for all of us, mostly because of grandpa's condition getting worse.

During summer of 1948 Victor replaced former menagers of the food warehouse who left for United States. There was a quiet summer for all of us. We curtailed our social life to minimum. Only Frieda and Victor traveled a little.

On January 4, 1949 Frieda married Victor. Victor's affidavits from his relatives in Kansas City needed to be amended, to add his wife's name and short life story. The fact that Frieda had her own papers didn't change a thing. Frieda would be the first from the family to go to America. The rest of us because of grandpa's illness, didn't know how soon we will be able to leave.

In the fall of 1949 Victor's and Frieda's visas finally came through. They left Steyr early in November. Before their departure they visited grandpa Abraham in hospital, who with tears in his eyes gave them his blessings. This was the last time Frieda saw her father. While waiting in Salzburg for travel orders to Bremenhaven, she came back to Steyr to visit with us for couple of days. Their voyage to America was a stormy one, because of very bad weather over the Atlantic Ocean. Their first stop was in New York harbour, where they were able to exchange few words with our relatives, before the ship continued south to New Orleans. They disembarked there and went by train to Kansas City. They took their sweet time before notifying us about their arrival. In a matter of facts we sent a wire to Pollmans in Kansas City with prepaid reply, which at last informed us about Frieda and Victor being already there.

One day before Frieda's and Victor's departure we gave them a small reception with only few closest friends attending. After they left. it got a little lonsome around the house, but all this changed after our dear Kubus came to our lives.

When our parents (your grandparents and great grandparents) left their respective hometowns to begin maybe "the" most important journey of their lives, they didn't expected that in some cases this was the beginning of their end. Only your grandma Rose, my mother left us earlier still in Uzbekistan, which was late in 1945, near the end of the war, and still full of hope of returning home with all of us. In those days not really realizing the full extend of Hitler's horrors we kept calling Poland and Cracow our home. As a result of very poor living and illnesses closely related to this kind of living grandpa Jacob first and grandpa Abraham left us still young men with many years left, if they would live in normal conditions.

On this fateful September day, 1939, Abraham Leniower and his family on a horse drawn wagen decided to go east to escape the murderous Nazi armies, just to fall into hands of another evil, maybe not so murderous as far as our people were concerned, but evil in many other ways, toward his own people. Grandpa Abraham tried and succeded to keep his family fairly well and together during the first year of the exile, while only few hundred miles to the west the first signs of killings and Nazi opression just begun.

Grandpa Abraham was 50 years old in those days in fairly good health, and nothing was hard for him to assure the well being and safety of his family.

In 1940 and 1942 grandpa Abraham survived the harsh and hard deportation living and working in temperatures, way below zero in the wilderness of Siberia trying to help not only his own family, but feeding many young people, who never had enough money to last them from one payday to another. Some of them would pay him back, but no matter how much they tried, after paying for room, winter clothing, and the forced trip to Siberia, and war bonds never re-paid by the Soviet government, there wasn't to much left to re-pay grandpa Abraham.

So your grandfather, besides small malnutrition left Siberia still healthy, with a little book with all those names who never were able to pay their debt.

And then came June of 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded Soviet Union. Like thousands of others Abraham Leniower took his family and went south, to the bright sun and warmth of Uzbekistan. Later looking back at those days, he probably realized, that this was one of the bigest mistakes of his life. Fast moving German army kept taking large chunks of Soviet territory including the fertile Ukraine, with her tremendous wheat crops. A wave of refuges from Western Soviet Union, and thousands of our people coming from Siberia, met in Southern Soviet republics creating overpopulation and shortages of food above any expectations,

The ones who remained behind in Siberia were the winners. When Leniowers and their friends settled in Fergana, they thought, that the place they found, would be theirs until the end of war. Needless to say, because of dirty manipulations of Uzbek authorities after few weeks in Fergana they were forced to settle on a collective farm 30 miles away from Fergana, which kept struggling all the time for the duration of the war, leaving workers without pay.

Years 1942 and 1943 were the worst. Hunger was ravaging the countryside, leaving thousands of people death on the streets.

There was a sorry picture to see not only grandpa Abraham but all of us to pour more hot water into ours meager anyway soups. Faces mostly od older folks got swollen and their ~~faces~~ legs as well, because of malnutrition and low resistance. Grandpa Abraham was sick then, but he fought back. Later when Leniowers moved to Fergana again, and improved their living conditions, grandpa's health also improved.

Things changed after we left Soviet Union. I noticed on the way to Poland, that grandpa Abraham didin't feel as good as he should. Grandma Frances kept remaining him all the time to take care on himself. She even was upset when she saw him drink a small shot of vodka, which he liked to drink once in a while. A habit many oldtimers followed since who knows when, on an assumption, that was good for their health.

In Szczecin grandpa got ill with dysentery. It was very difficult to find a good doctor in a strange city, but was even more difficult to get one to come home. Finally girls found one by the way of the Jewish Committee who used to run a small clinic for Jeiwsh population of Szczecin. This doctor told grandpa to stay in bed and take some medication. Eventually he recovered.

I am convinced that grandpa's heatlh problems started long before coming to Steyr, as problems of my father which started a long time before his coming to Poland.

In Steyr all ~~began~~ BEGAN with pains in grandpa's back. Doctors put him in the small hospital in Reithoffer. They released him after few days, but when those pains returned they shipped him off by ambulance to Displaced Persons Hospital, then located in Gmunden, a picturesque town in the mountains on the banks of a trmendous lake. When he returned to Steyr in early 1947 it seemed that he recovered completely. He went to work buying and selling stuff, and played poker for pleasure with his friends. But anytime when he carried merchandise on his right arm, pain kept returning.

The pain persisted even after we moved to Steyr 231, but we thought, that the arm was strained from the preasure of the garments he used to carry.

Overall 1947 was the last year, when grandpa Abraham was, let me say half way OK. Him and grandma Frances still presided over our wedding, making the best possible arangements. Real problems surfaced after our move from Reithoffer to Steyr 231, close to the end of 1947.

Early in 1948 grandpa went again to Displaced Persons hospital, which then was already located in Linz after a move from Gmunden, to serve better hospitalized people, as most of the camps were located in this area.

D.P. Hospital in Linz was a very good and modern facility, staffed with good doctors, from all over Eastern Europe, who choose to live in the West.

The trip to hospital in 1948 was grandpa's first to Linz, where he spent many months with some interruptions until his death in January 1951. His phisisian during all these years was doctor Holosh, a caring and capable person from Budapest (Hungary), and with ~~with~~ him was a wonderful nurse, whose name and nationality I no longer remember. She was with grandpa Abraham to the last second of his life, she closed his eyes and according to an old Jewish ritual, which people still practiced in those days put his body on a stretcher on the floor.

1948 and 1949 used to be very trying and rather sad for our family. For almost three years our lives were like revolving doors, watching our fathers getting worse all the time, without hope for improvement. My mind was constantly with my father in hospital in Cracow, and the illness of grandpa Abraham as I saw it showed the same symptoms. Maybe in different places of their bodies, but symptoms were the ones of a deadly diseace.

Our financial resources, even with help from grandma's relatives in New York kept disapearing as fast as we could put our hands on them. Money we were able to save from our earnings, and later change to dollars, went to specialists, who either didn't know what was going on, or just wouldn't tell us. Most of the time our meals consisted of soup, potatos, and an European version of salad called "Miseria" (misery) made from European lettuce, cucumbers, in water with lemon juice and sugar.

Many times when I was visiting with grandpa in hospital, after his pain was getting un-bearable, he called on his faithful nurse. "Ich brauche eine Spritze. Bitte geben Sie mir die Spritze" (I need my shot. Give me my morphine. Please!)

But the real hero was your grandma Frances, who practically devoted herself, to take care on her husband. During his stay in hospital, she traveled to Linz, almost every day to be with him. The long period in her life when grandpa's condition kept detriorating, she took up the residence in hospital. The administration gave her a room near-by. For many weeks she even didn't come home at all, just once in a while for a short visit.

Doctor Holosh tried everything available to help grandpa. Our cousins from New York had sent best medicines possible, but none seemed to work for Abraham Leniower.

Finally running out of resources Dr. Holosh sent grandpa to an orthopedic hospital in Linz, owned and operated by an order of Holy Sisters, with specialists best in the area. But all they could do was to put grandpa in a cast, and told him to sleep in it. After few weeks there grandpa took his cast and went back home to Steyr, and then to D.P. Hospital in Linz again.

Besides grandma Frances being with grandpa all the time, we visited him as much as possible. Anytime we were in Linz, on any kind of Business we went to see him. We used to bring him good food from home, which really wasn't necessary, because hospital had plenty of good food, and Hungarian Jews made sure that all Jewish patients be fed with real kosher food.

Earlier when grandpa despite his pain was able to walk, he spent some time courtesy of AJDC in Bad-Schalerbach, about half hour train raid from Linz, another one of those many Austrian resorts on lakes, surrounded with high mountains, famous because of water who supposed to heal bone and back problems similar to grandpa's/

This was the week before Passover of 1949. Hania and I left Steyr early in the morning to collect from AJDC Passover food for grandpa Abraham. Afterwards she went back to Steyr, and I took a streetcar to the railroad station in order to catch a train to Bad-Schalerbach to deliver this food to grandpa.

Bad-Schalerbach was a small and quiet community. After leaving the train and trying to find grandpa's hotel I walked through an empty town. There was not a soul in sight. I guess it was a "siesta" hour. People were either resting or taking baths or therapies.

I found grandpa Abraham in his room. We spent couple of hours together. He told me about his therapist, and what he was doing for him. Later we went to this garden where people used to drink the miracle water. There he introduced me to some of his new friends. I left him in good spirits. I think he remained there for another couple of weeks. Still the Bad-Schalerbach treatment didn't help him at all.

The last effort to help grandpa came later in the Fall, when Dr. Holosh decided to send him to Bad-Ischl, another famous Austrian resort in the mountains, and home of the known all over the world Austrian composer of operetas Franz Lehar. When we were there with grandpa he was still alive.

The chief surgeon in hospital in Bad Ischl was Dr. Krueger, who during Nazi era performed experiments on concentration camps inmates. He was forbiden by Austrian authorities to pracice medicine, except in this hospital in Bad-Ischl.

As I understand it took an effort by some important people to convince this doctor just to examine grandpa. After grandma Frances checked him in, Jewish authorities from Linz and some rich Hungarian (Jewish) family who used to live in Bad-Ischl made a contact with this doctor, paid him off, and then he agreed to perform an exploatory surgery.

Needless to say all those efforts didn't produce any new results. The tumor in grandpa's back was un-operable.

Couple days before the operation Frieda, Ela, I and Mr. Neumann grandpa's friend hired a taxi and went to Bad-Ischl in order to cheer him up and be with grandpa during his surgery. He was very happy to see us, when we gathered around his bed, but he was tence and his face was showing how scared he was. The surgery went smooth, and we saw him later in his recovery room. Grandma Frances was with him. Recovery room in this hospital was a single, bright room with flowers all around it. After surgery grandpa needed blood transfusion. We gave samples of our blood, but none was comparable with his type. We even placed long distance calls to Steyr asking for donors, but nobody responded, except Victor Polaniecki, who showed up in Bad ischl later in the evening ready to give blood, but, then doctors already had Grandpa's type from hospital's blood bank. Taxi driver and Victor spent the night in Bad Ischl. Next morning Frieda joined him and they went back to Steyr.

Following day I went home as well. Ela decided to keep grandma company in Bad Ischl. When I left grandpa had a slight fever. At home Hania was very happy to see me. I explained to her the situation on hand, trying not to upset her because of her condition (pregnant), my story for her was on a little brighter side.

There was nothing else the doctor in Bad Ischl could do for grandpa. Grandma and him went back by ambulance to D.P. Hospital in Linz, and Ela came to Steyr. After the operation grandpa felt pretty good. Cuts on his back healed nicely, and he started to walk with the help of a cane. In his mind he was sure that his recovery was just around the corner. Ofcourse we knew different. This was already autumn of 1949, and his real suffering was just beginning. He never left this hospital again. He never knew how very ill he was. Until the last days of his life he was hoping to go some day to America with all of us. All these months he kept taking an active part in our family's life and wanted to know everything about what was going on around us and the world.

Grandpa left hospital once on emigration business in January 1949. Hoping that he will be able to go to United States sometime in the future, doctor Holosh gave him permission to leave hospital. Few months later United Staes Congress approved first part of the law allowing Displaced Persons from camps in Europe to immigrate to America. That was why I was meeting grandpa Abraham at the AJDC building in Linz to sign some papers. After all the formalities were taken care off, he returned to hospital. Even thou he was ill then, nobody taking and looking at him, couldn't realize the extend of his illness.

Grandpa, since his youth was a heavy cigaretts smoker, and smoking helped him a lot during his illness. At certain point doctor Holosh hoping, that his condition would improve, took cigaretts away from him. Later when situation worsened, he allowed him to smoke again.

Abraham Leniower was a man with strong heart and mind. He fought for his survival, and was able to prolong his life considerably. Many inconsiderate men, who spent time in hospital with him, leaving and returning, always when coming back wondered aloud in disbelief that grandpa was still alive. Their expression was common "Oh! You are still here?",meaning, "We thought you was dead long time ago". Grandpa Abraham surprised them all, and some of them even passed away long before him.

All our parents came from a strong stock. They all worked hard to accomplish something for themselves and for us their children. They all survived, with many difficulties first world war. The period between the two wars wasn't as easy, as we as children used to think. The crash of 1929 and the world depression made them poor as well as people in United States. But the Hitler era and world war two were different. Those who didn't perish had to work very hard to survive, much above their strengh to beat the monsters of west and east. Some of them left us early, still during the war. On others effects of their hard work took toll later in years to come.

One of the most famous writers in Polish literature was Henrik Sienkiewicz. Most of his writings came out in late 1800s and early 1900s. All his books had been based on real events in Polish history, and brought him fame and hero's image all over the country.

There was this book Sienkiewicz wrote about ups and downs of a one noble Polish family, about their existance during the years when Poland was partitioned among the big powers of that era, and their lives in independent Poland. The tittle of this book was "Rodzina Polanieckich" (Family Polaniecki). Obviously a family with a name Polaniecki had their roots in small town or village not far away from Cracow, and the name of the village was and still is "Polaniec". This book also was a must in studies of Polish literature, and I remember reading it during one year in gimnazium.

I am not quite sure if there was such noble family in Poland. Mavbe Polaniecki is a fictitious name. What I am trying to do is to establish how Frieda's husband Victor came by the name Polaniecki. I don't suggest that Victor was a member of this family. He couldn't have. They were Polish and Catholics, and Victor was Jewish, but still a large part of book concerns itself with a marriage of one of the young Polaniecki men to a Jewish woman who converted to Catholicizm and later had a child. The fact remains that in 18th and 17th centuries many Jews in Poland who used to work for nobility as their financial advisers, as gratitude for their loyalty had been awarded with the noble family's names. So it's highly possible that Victor's ancestors inherited their name from such a noble family.

I don't have to much information about the Polaniecki family. Victor was always busy, and never had enough time to tell me somethings about his family. I was after him until the last few weeks before his death, but anytime I brought up the subject he wasn't ready to talk about it.

Here is the information I was able to gather from our short and haotic conversations.

It seems according to Victor that either Polanieckis or grandpa Chaim Polaniecki used to live in Ropczyce, the same shtetl, and hometown of Leniowers. Victor's grandfather married Gela Berkowitz. Their son Moyshe Itzhok born in ~~1881~~ 1885 married Malka Golda Yust born in ~~1892~~ 1892. They had two children: Victor born ~~1917~~ June 29 1917 and daughter Toba born in 1923. Their father Moyshe Itzhok passed away still a young 35 years old man in 1927. Victor's mother later re-married to one Moyshe Wolf, Victor was educated in Heder and public schools and practically ran their family ~~ga~~ grain business since we was 15 years old. His sister Toba was a student in Jaslo gimnazium.

All other children of Chaim and Gela Polaniecki came to Kansas City in early 1920s. They were Sam Polaniecki (Pollman) who married Sara Mallin. He made a fortune here in Kansas City in his egg business. They had a daughter Frances. Bessie Polaniecki (Pollman) married Harry Mallin, brother to Sara wife of Sam Pollman. They had daughter Helen and son Irving. Elizabeth Polaniecki (Pollman) married Albert Friedman. They had two sons Harold and Jack. The last was Milton Polaniecki (Pollman) who came to Kansas City via Canada. Later he married Sara Kushner. They didn't have children at all. As of now all those Polaniecki sisters and brothers are not alive.

Sam's daughter Frances married Morris Berger who came to this country in 1940. He lost his first wife in New York while she was giving birth to their son Arthur. Frances raised Arthur as her own child, maybe even better. Berger became a successful businessman manufacturing furniture, and in real estate. Arthur married Margie, a gentile girl who converted to Judaism. They have two children Aron and Leslie. Arthur is very successful in pharmaceutical business, and has doctor's degree in pharmacy.

Bessie's daughter Helen lives in Denver married to a wealthy businessman as well. Her name now is Pomeranz. She and her husband have a married daughter. Bessie's son Irving is married to Evelin. They have three children: Charlie Brent who is a doctor of dentistry, married with two or three children. Esther Claire is married to Henry Lega, son of refugees from Poland. They have three sons: Adam, David and Paul. Charlie Brent and Esther Claire live in Saint Louis as their parents as well. ~~X~~ Sharon Gail is married with couple of children and lives in Rochester, New York. Irving Mallin is a retired postal worker.

Harold the older son of Elizabeth is a lawyer married with two children. The younger son lives someplace, maybe here in Kansas City. He is poor and not well, but his brother refuses to help him. A very sad situation.

Grandparents of Victor on his mother's side were Leizer and Toba ~~XXX~~ Yust born Shapiro. Grandpa Leizer used to serve in the old Austro-Hungarian army, and had told Victor many stories about those days. During his young days Victor was very much under the influence of his grandfather who taught him a lot, mostly ofcourse about "Talmud" and religion. Victor was born in Binarowa ~~xxx~~ a village near Gorlitz. The Yust family used to own a farm there and a house. Members of the family lived in the vicinity as well in Biecz, Zhmigrod and Krosno before moving to Jaslo.

~~MXX~~ Victor's uncle Milton Yust came to this country in early 20s. He used to deliver milk, and then was an owner of a grocery store in New York. He married Dora, a sabra born someplace what is now Syrian territory, who came to this country from then Paletine. Dora passed away few months ago. Milton and Dora had a son Burton, who is a principal in New York's school system. He is married to Grace and they have a son. Milton's and Dora's second child was a daughter who with her husband and sons live in Pennsylvania and are teaching at the university.

Beyrish the oldest of Yust children came to ~~XXXXXX~~ America first. He died from a bite od an insect. His family in Poland even recived insurance money after his death~~x~~.

Haskiel ~~x~~ is the youngest Yust who came to New York after world war two, after surviving with his wife Gladys in Soviet Union. They had a daughter Telma who married to Philip Mendelkehr. They have a son Larry. Thelma is a teacher and her husband CPA. Gladys passed away few month ago.

As years went by Victor's uncle Milton and his family left New York and took residence in Catskil Mountains. In a small town Liberty, where the Grossinger Hotel and Resort every year for many many years housed and entertained thousands of New Yorkers, uncle Milton Yust was an owner and operator of a much smaller hotel, until he sold it not so many years back. Him and his wife moved to a beautiful home in nearby Monticello, where they lived until Mrs. Yust's death. Then uncle Milton moved back to New York to be nearby his son Burton.

Our girls still remember Moyshe Wolf, Victor's stepfather, when he used to come to Brzyscie to buy grain.

In September 1939 Victor's mother insited that he leaves Jasło before Germans took the town, but he returned home few days later, when it became obvious, that for time being there was no safe place to go. He stayed in hiding, until news reached Jasło, that the Red Army invaded Poland from the east, as a part of a secret agreement between Germany and Soviet Union. And again on his mother's urging he left home with some friends to go east. When the group arrived at the new Soviet-German border on the River San, after crossing they were detained by Soviet border guards. After some questioning they released Victor. He stood there for a while in front of the guardhouse waiting for his friends. But a guard came to him and told him to go, with a short advise. "Never wait in front of NKVD building after they released you". What he ment, was that it would be for them very easy to arrest him again, and forever. As Far as his friends were concerned the guard told him, that they might never let them go. In Soviet Union nobody knew what will happen in next few minutes.

So Victor went to Lvov, and then with other refugees from Poland went to work In Soviet Ukraine. Promises by authorities of better living made him to choose this new path. Ofcourse the living wasn't as good as promised, so many of those refugees returned to the former Polish Ukraine (Western Ukraine), to be later deported as all of us to Siberia. Victor didn't return. He hold few jobs in different cities, before finding an employment as a traveling representative of a photo company. Records and pictures at the company were in such a mess, that on some occasions Victor was forced to deliver substitute ready pictures taken of a different person. Like at one time he delivered a picture to a man wearing a hat, EVEN though the man took his picture without a hat. Victor explained to him, that they added a hat to make him look better. Ofcourse the man didn't recognize himself, but accepted the picture anyway.

From Ukraine Victor went to the Republic of Georgia (Gruzya) birthplace of Stalin. By accident he found himself in a forbiden city for foreigners. He was once stoped and arrested, but later after some explanation released with a warning. He was sent later to Ural Mountains where he used work in Coalmines.

In the Urals after the German attack on Soviet Union he was drafted into the Red Army and was asigned to an anti-tank batalion. He used to carry on his shoulder an anti-Tank weapon, for which he was responsible with his life. His worst experiences from that period of times were when Red Army was chasing retreating Germans, when His batalion needed to cross many rivers, submerged in water up to their necks, carrying their weapons in stretched up arms high above their shoulders. Victor's another bad expirience was when somebody stole his weapon while he was asleep. He was lucky that the army didn't send him to prison or even executed. He recived a strong worded lecture from his commandant, a story what happen to people who loose Soviet property. He was reprimended as well. After the end of the war he came to Poland. He reunited with his uncle Haskiel and his wife. He used to lve with them for a while. After they split, the uncle went to Germany and Victor to Austria. Victor's mother, sister and stepfather perished in the notorious death concentration camp in Bełzec.

Before marriage to Frieda Victor shared his quarters with the Gotlieb family which hoped that some day he will marry their daughter. He dated other girls during those years, but his mind was always with Frieda.

Chapter 116 (cont)

Year 1948-1949!

When Frieda and Victor left on November 17, 1949, she was already pregnant with her first child. After leaving Salzburg for Bremenhaven, according to regulations they spent there a certain period of time before boarding a military transport ship, which took them to America via the port of New Orleans, and then by train to Kansas City. While In Bremenhaven Frieda tried to call her former uncle Josef Eisen who was staying then in one of those D.P. camps in West Germany. Needless to say it was Saturday, so uncle Eisen being a very religious Jew, didn't accept the call. Ofcourse Frieda was mad at him, but she should had known in the first place not to call him on Saturday.

The Pollman family formely Polaniecki, who were responsible for bringing Victor and Frieda to America, put them up with Milton and Sara Pollman. Milton was Sam Pollman's brother who was the main sponsor. Milton also used to work for Sam in his successful egg business. His job was to examine each of those eggs how they look inside, before they turned them into somekind of molasses, and canned them for sale.

Sara Pollman tried her best to help them in the beginning. Later when a room became available in the apartment next door on 40th and Virginia, Frieda and Victor moved in to share the apartment with one MRs. Vigder, Sara's friend, whose daughter moved out after being married.

Victor's first job was with Berger-Kantor Mattress Company. Berger was Sam Pollman's son in law. As I understand Victor used to have plenty agravetions with his cousin, and on one occassion even told him in Yiddish to stop sucking his (Victor's) blood. Berger and his partner even gave Victor a 1 (One) dollar Hanuhah bonus. He left them finally for another job with Englender Mattress Co in North Kansas City. Victor's and Frieda's first son came to this world on June 5, 1950. They named him Martin Irving, after Victor's father Moyshe Itzhok.

Another important event in our family life also came in 1949. First Hania got pregnant, which a surprise for everybody in camp and to ourselves as well.

Because of some irregularties Hania was carrying two months, not knowing about, it. Finally nausea gave us a hint, and ofcourse our doctor confirmed that she was pregnant. Hania was pretty sick for a while, but with time everything got normal, and with much anticipation we started to count months and later days until the blessed moment arrived. We figured that the pregnancy started late in February or early March. For most of the time there weren't any major problems with Hania's health. Because of the illness of her father, she tried very hard not to get excited, even thou we had plenty worries in those days. A problem developed when about two months before the delivery a doctor discovered sugar in the urine. It was dangerous in those days to have sugar problems during the pregnancy as well as it is today, but with proper care, diet and rest your future garndma came out of this no so pleasant predicament.

A highlight of social life in Steyr was the wedding of ~~Isak~~ Shlomo Kremer to his beloved Clara. Lots of people were invited. Everybody expected a dinner, but really nothing happened. The young maidens, who expected to be married some day, were sitting around the table expecting "Da goldene yuch" (Golden chicken soup), which by old Jewish tradition after eating this soup, which the bride ate before would bring them luck in finding a young man for themselves. As I noticed, there wasn't even enough soup for each maiden.

Following another tradition the old Mr. Kremer, the father of the groom wanted very much to dance with his new daughter in law, but after few steps asthma attack interrupted his happy moment.

But what got me most was when some guy started to make advances to Hania, ignoring my presence. I guess he didn't know that we were husband and wife. Mostly he was interested in her ring. He wanted to know if it was a real diamond.

The emigration to Israel was going on with full speed. Many people kept leaving the camp and with them many committee members. Those needed to be replaced with new members, so an opportunity presented itself for other people who wanted so much to sit on the chair and preside over the masses for their own gains.

To tell the truth there was not to much left to preside over. But The new candidates didin't mind, hoping that some bones still be leftover to lick.

There was this man who all these years tried to convince and prove to the people that he was the right man to be a leader. Nobody took him seriously in Reithoffer and later at Steyr 231 as well. His name was Rybak. He was a member of Mizrahi (religious party). He and his wife didn't have any children and some day planed to go to America with the help of Mr. Rybak's brother in New York. This brother was in the right place, working for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, so he knew the right people and to whom to talk on behalf of his brother. Needless to say the immigration people didn't like something in the Rybak family application. All I know that the Rybaks was still in camps when we left, and their brother when I met him at the HIAS offices in New York told me that he was doing his best.

Anyway back in Steyr in 1949 Rybak finally achieved his dream. He was appointed a committeeman from Mizrahi, but in a wrong time. If If he knew in advance how much his leadership wouldn't be appreciated, he would never run for this office. When orders came to close Steyr 231, most people blamed him for the closing, even thou he didn't have nothing to do with the decision. He was just following IRO's orders.

Also in 1949 a major political crisis developed when Austrian communists tried to overthrow the rightfully elected Austrian government headed by Chancellor Figl. It was a scary night all over Austria, when Figl and his ministers refused to leave the government seat in Vienna. Strikes broke out in major cities including a large steel complex in Linz. The situation affected us as well because of our status as refugees from Eastern Europe. Thanks to Figl's stand and refusing to bulge, while remaining in the building a major crisis which could spread to other countries in Western Europe was averted.

For many years Austrian demanded withdrawal of all foreign troops from their territory, hoping to gain their independence. Western powers would oblige them anytime, but not the Soviet Union who kept insisting that during the war Austrians were Hitler's allies, and as such deserved to be punished as Germany.

At last after many years of negotiations, few years after we left Austria, Soviet Union finally agreed to so-called "Staatsvertrag"(Austrian State Treaty) giving them independence in exchange for neutrality.

On November 29, 1949 near midnight grandma Frances woke me up, with a message, that there was time for Hania to go to hospital. It was exactly the time when I was born twenty eight years before.

The last few weeks before the blessed moment arrived, when I was working the nightshift Regina Rosenbach used to spend nights with Hania. When this was impossible Hania slept in her mother's room.

I didn't work on November 29 at night, but because time of birth was getting closer, just in case Hania was staying with grandma and Ela. There were many versions of events which occured that particular night, but I am quite sure, that my version is the right one. Everybody in the family had a different story to tell.

Each night a driver was on duty at the motor pool just in case of emergencies. The night of November 29 the youngest M Chulew was on duty. He was the ambulance driver as well. Mr. Chulew the driver's father woke his son up and urged him to hurry. He was not only concerned because of the impotance of the sistuation, but as a friend of our family. The young Chulew and I went to the garage to get the ambulance. I also called in the doctor on duty at the camp, who came and confirmed that there was time for Hania to go to hospital. So far so good I said to myself, but as soon as we discovered that the ambulance would start, it wasn't so good anymore. I thought; "Here we go again" because as many times before on imporatnt occasions my luck didn't cooperate with me. Chulew didn't have no choice but to take one of those large military trucks made by General Motors. In those days we used to call them "Jameses" a nickneme given to them by Soviet authorities in times of the great relief effort from U.S.A to Soviet Union during the war.

All three of us comfortable in the cabin, went on the short raid to hospital, when suddenly the truck's headlights refused to function. There was a dark night an no moon in sight. There was no more turning back. We continued in a slow pace and finally without anymore incidents we arrived at hospital on the Siernigerstrasse on the outskirts of Steyr. Pre-birth pains kept coming and going.. We didn't encouter any delays at the admission window. I showed to the person in charge my working papers, which proved that my salary came from Austrian government, which entitled us for free medical care.

We went-up xx few flights of steps. I didn't see an elevator nearby. I even don't know if they had one. A maternity nurse took Hania inside. Later she came out and told me, that there was no reason for me to wait, because it will be long time before the baby will arrive. xxxxx Somebody told me later that the nurse thought that Chulew the driver was Hania's husband. I don't know how this was possible, because I didn't see him around when we first came to the maternity department. Hania and I kissed and then we parted.

As it turned out, there was rather long night. I went back to camp with Chulew. Because of some bizarre events during next twelve hours, broken telephone lines, and interruptions xx of service we haven't been able to find out, what was going on in hospital. At last in the afternoon the hospital informed the camp office that Hania gave birth to a five pound healthy baby-boy. It was a joyous news for me and the whole family. My first thought was, how sad it was that both of my parents couldn't see their grandson.

So it was November 30, 1949 when our son was born, about twelve hours later xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx after I was born. Grandma Frances on this day didn't go to Linz to be with grandpa Abraham, Ela went instead. Grandma and Norbert's mother were the first to see our baby. Hania's first words when she saw her mother were: "Mother I have a redhead boy". I guess she still didn't know, that many members on my mother's side of the family were redheads.

I really don't know why I didn't go with grandma to hospital this first day to see Hania and baby. There were few rough days for her after the delivery because of xxxxxxx stitches and she could hardly sit up. Still little by little she kept recovering. I was overjoyed to see her first time after all this was over. xxxxxxxxxxx All I remember being overewhelmed with happiness. I knew then that a new chapter of our lives have just began. I didn't know at that time how I was going to handle all this, because of my rather frivolous nature. I realized that having a new born baby brings lots of new responsibilities. Hania and I loved our son. She from the moment when she heard his first cry, and I from the xxxxxxx moment seeing his red head. Grandma Frances and Ela loved him as well. Our only regret was that all this joy came along during grandpa Abraham's illness, and that he wasn't able fully participate in our celebration.

After the birth Hania spent 10 days in hospital. We visited her every day, and feeding her with home cooked good meals. During those visits we enjoyed very much to look at our son through the nursery's window, trying to figure out, whom he resembled most.

Next day after our son was born, grandma xxxx Frances went xxxx again to Linz to be with her husband, and told him the good news. He was very happy as well, becoming a grandfather for the first time. Needless to say he didn't have to many opportunities to see his grandson.

As a breast feeding mother Hania recived her ration of milk. She always was and still is a very caring mother. It was Sunday morning when I brought her home in a Taxi. Everything possible was ready for the baby. A baby boggy which was his bed for the first six months of his life. We recived many baby things from AJDC and grandma's cousins in New York. Having a boy we needed blue clothing and bedding for him, but the ones left in stock were all dirty and torn, so we settled for pink, which were brand new.

Because of doctor's advise we waited longer then eight days with the ceremony of circumcision (brith), because our baby was yellow. xxxxxxx Afterwords there was "Brith and x reception in our room presided over by Rabbi Goldstein.

Close to the end of 1949 many people left to all parts of the world, and the camp population was getting smaller with each passing day. So it didn't come to us as a surprise at all when orders came from IRO to close parts of Steyr 231. Ofcourse barracks went first and with them our beautiful room in the new barrack. There was nothing we could do about it. Hania was very un-happy and cried all day long during our moving day. It was sad to leave with our little baby to a three story dark brick building and settle in an un-friendly large room on second floor, which workers later divided into two rooms,one for us and one for grandma Frances and Ela.

So "Brith" took place in the new surroundings. In those days the former Rabbi Frenkiel was already in New York, and Rabbi Goldstein finally got his wish to be camp Rabbi. Mohel Fischer from Budapest performed the circumcisiom. We named our son Jacob David, after my not so long ago departed father and grandma Frances' father who passed away when she was a young girl. As I see it now our choice for Godparents wasn't exactly a wise one. Friends of ours and Amsterdams Mr.&Mrs. Schüssel got the honor. We had should known then that our ways would part soon enough, and we won't see them again for the rest of our lives. The right choice would be someone younger and closer to our family.

A nice reception followed the ceremony. We celebrated another reception and ceremony of "Pidyon HaBen"(Redemption of the first born). Again there were quite few guests on hand. Our good time got interrupted when some happy fool, mixed beer with Mr. Rosenbachs drink. He got very ill after drinking this mixture. His family was forced to take him to hospital, because of a fear for his life.

Parenthood! What a wonderful word and feeling, but something brand new for Hania and me. Slowly we learned the ropes and meaning od having a newborn child. We menaged ofcourse, but Hania was the one to menage the most. We also had lots of help from many people. Grandma Frances tried her best between her visits with grandpa in hospital. And there was Ela ofcourse, but to a point. Even before the happy moment arrived she told us to forget about ours previous ways of life, and not to count on her for baby sitting. Another helper was Mrs. Amsterdam and Regina Rosenbach. They all loved our "Kubus (Jack's nickname in those days) very much, and soon he became a darling of the camp. His first language was Yiddish, because we didn't see a point to speak to him in Polish.

Kubus besides few early baby sicknesses was a healthy baby. He didn't give us many problems except crying at night first few weeks of his life. He recived all the necessary shots, he had a good appetite and pooped a lot. Sometimes we worried, why his pooping was soft or hard.

Our large room in the brick building was cold, and required lots of coal during the cold winter. We needed two iron stoves to keep it warm. To get coal was my job, and I was able to get it most of the time. My clumsiness was in evidence, when I once droped a large pot of hot water for Kubus" bath burning severly my upper front legs, but my heavy winter clothing prevented some serious complications. Our son's first bath was another memorable experience, when he stiffened in his baby tub. A lady who helped Hania pulled him out rightaway. After this incident, bathing was no problem anymore. Kubus loved it very much.

An extra help to our finances came when according to Austrian law, Hania as a beast feeding mother recived a small pension from the government. She was required to report twice a month to a government doctor to verify her status.

At last 1949 came to an end, and when population in camp had shrank some more, in early winter 1950 another order from IRO had decried closing Steyr 231 forever. The remainder of the population was to be moved to camp Ebelsberg on outskirts of Linz. Ofcourse to move to Ebelsberg was a move for better. Nice buildings, four story tall, nice modern rooms and better surroundings as well. We couldn't expect better accomodations from former quarters of SS during Hitler era, U.S. Armed Forces after Germany's defeat. Jews from Linz area used to live there since 1948. When we arrived we took rooms available after people who already left Ebelsberg.

Chapter 117

Ebelsberg!

Moving to Ebelsberg was a perfect arrangement for grandma Frances. With a direct streetcar line to D.P. Hospital just around the corner, it was much easier on her, then riding buses from Steyr.

So within few weeks in early spring Steyr 231 became a past. Some late arrivals from Czechoslovakia and Hungary were allowed to stay there with Volksdeutschen from Eastern Europe. People like former chief Fiebert and few others with business conections in Steyr rented apartments in town. Ofcourse Fiebert moved in for good with his Austrian wife. As I wrote earlier Mr. Rybak closed the camp, probably regreting for the rest of his life, the desire to participate in camp's leadership.

The last month of my employment with camp security I was forced to share my salary with Mel Oderberg, because there was not enough money to keep the full staff. In other words one of us would be dismissed. Anyway after all was over I recived two months extra pay, and then unemployment compensation for one year.

With closing of Steyr Norbert lost his job as well. He moved his small clothing business to Ebelsberg. Still already settled in Ebelsberg we used bring back to Steyr suitcases loaded with used clothing hoping to sell some there. But in those days after the move the magic of Steyr ceased to exist. There were no more takers for old merchandise.

Ebelsberg was a small suburb, directly on the highway going east to Vienna. It was the same highway, where we used to commute between Steyr and Linz. It was where the Linzer streetcar made it's lost stop, and from where people could ride a small electric train, which used to stop in front of the camp, and then went farther to a beautiful village in the mountains few miles away where the famous composer Johan Sebastian Bach sought peace and quiet while composing.

Ebelsberg was different, then all other camps. There were there not just tall nice buildings, but streets were paved, and neet concrete sidewalks with curbs as well. The nice lawns in the middle of the camp were all messed up, since Americans used to park there their transport vehicles.

All good rooms after Jews took over the camp after American left were taken over by rich people who knew whom to pay off. When we came there in 1950, it wasn't easy to get a nice and comfortable room, but thanks to grandma Frances, and documents describing in detail grandpa Abraham's illness, the committee assigned to us one of those nice rooms on fourth floor. It was a little inconvinient, because anytime we wanted to take our Kubus for fresh air, it was a hassle to take him down with his boggy. It was a large room as in Steyr, so the administration bilt for us a dividing wall.

Grandma even mentioned to the administrator, that her son in law was in a need of a job, to which he replied that he would do the best to help us out. Needless to say later it was Norbert Amsterdam, who then even wasn't married to Ela yet. How? We don't know. I was left hanging as many times before.

We took from Steyr our so-called furniture, and loaded the rest of our junk on a truck. Hania and Kubus came later in a cab.

When we arrived we found out that the menager of this building was the former son in law of the old Rabbi who married Hania and me. The same guy who constantly fought with his wife about the custody of their son. All this ofcourse after Rabbi's death. Anyway like all those crooked menagers, he expected a pay off from us, for the key to the room, even thou he knew that the room was ours. So he gave us the key to one room and left pretending that he didn't know anything about the other room. As soon as he left we opened the other door without the key, which was easy with a long nail. We taught him a lesson, not to play smart with us. He was speechless when he came back after an hour. We simply explained to him that the key from one room fitted the other door as well.

Norbert and his mother came to Ebelsberg, and moved in not to far away from our room on the same floor. The administration converted a part of a large bathroom into a room for them. They even covered the tiles with regular wooden floor,and walls as well, with a long closet along one wall to hang Norbert's merchandise for sale.

Ebelsberg!

Norbert's job in Ebelsberg was a building menager. Ebelsberg's administration was the same as in other camps. IRO through their representative was assiated by employes designated by Austrian government, and there it was the Jewish committee who always have had the last word, mostly in money matters, an old-fashioned bunch of crooks just thinking about themselves.

One four story building in Ebelsberg was designated for sick people who were able to help themselves, with as many comforts as possible, nice rooms and their own kitchen.

The main gate of the camp faced the highway, but pedestrians used to use the back entrance to avoid walking on the highway. At the gate there was security's guardhaouse, with a very efficient security department. They kept a good watch all over the camp, with special attention to the movements of the businessmen and their trucks arrival schedule. On another hand, businessmen kept a close watch on police to avoid mostly without success paying to them the enormous pay-offs.

In the back of the camp there was this large plaza, where on Sundays the small businessmen and other regular people tried to sell all kinds of merchandise to customers from the entire Linz area.

Facing the highway the camp young people enjoyed sports and other activities on a spacious soccer field, and abandoned by Americans baseball diamond. Besides the above in a barrack there was a cinema, in the basements there were many restaurants and camp's food warehouse, with a very shrood Hungarian menager.

In a small barrack just across from the guardhouse a man used to live with his Austrian young wife. The story about him circulating in camp was as follows: Shortly after the liberation 1945 this man was walking rather subdued on one of the sidestreets of Linz in the Soviet occupation zone, when he came across a Red Army soldier with a heavy loaded bag on his back. The soldier stoped the man asking for vodka, promising in exchange as he said the bag with many pictures inside. When the man finally saw the inside of the bag he got astounded and speechless. Without saying one word, he took the Soviet soldier to a place and bought him a lot of vodka. The big bag was loaded full, with American dollars.

All of us who lost our jobs when Steyr 231 was closed, kept making trips back to Steyr twice a week to report, and once a month to collect our unemployment compensations, and so did Hania to report that she still was the breast feeding mother, until somebody told us, that it was allright to transfer our papers to Linz. Which we finally did.

June 25-28 1950, when North Korean forces invaded South Korea Soviet sympathizers in camps were overjoyed, they blamed everything on the South and complained constantly, that Americans standing in the way of a nation, who wants to be re-united.

A panic broke out in Austrian cities. Austrian men thought that Americans would draft them and will ship them out to Korea to fight. While standing in line in Linz to collect my unemployment compansation I overheard them bitterly complaining, and saying that they would refuse to fight against the Soviets. Nurses in D.P. Hospital passed rumors around, that there was a shortage of nurses in Korea, and that somebody important said, that they would be shipped out there very soon to help.

Since 1948 when Soviet Union initiated the blokade of Berlin, and even before, under Stalins directions they kept medling with other nations business all over the world. The famous "Nyet" of Gromiko and other Soviet officials became a symbol of Soviet aspirations to rule the world. Americans responded with a tremendous airlift to keep Berliners supplied with goods and keep the communications lines to the city open as well.

Besides going to hospital we spent most our days in camp. Our going out to movies and theaters stoped right there. My only entertainment left in those days was my continued interest in soccer, and Hania never was against my going to major league soccer games even if on some occasions I traveled with other people out of town.

A favored pastime was the National Austrian Soccer Lotery, called there "Fussball Toto". I used to play every Sunday, hoping for a large win, but only couple of small prizes, once 8 schillings and the second time 10 schillings were my only reward.

On nice and warm spring and summer days, while Hania was doing chores around the room I used to take our Kubus out to a small green area on the edge of the camp overlooking the highway. Few trees gave us plenty of shade to relax and watch the traffic going by. Kubus played or slept, until I started to feel his poop, a signal that there was time to go home.

On Saturdays as in the old shtetl everybody got all dressed-up, end went down to walk and gossip around the camp. From time to time a traveling cinema came to Ebelsberg. A good picture always drew large crowds.

Businessmen in Ebelsberg were the most powerfull around the camp and elsewere. All day long walking or sitting down they discussed their moves, finances and how to outsmart the camp polive, Austrian police or the highjackers. Yes there used to be highjackers in those days as well. A high amount of tension was always notable among the businessmen, when a transport of merchandise was due in camp. Except few people nobody ever knew when and where this stuff would be un-loaded.

Still being powerfull created enemies. Those were the people who made their business to find out well in advance when goods would arrive in camp and what was the content of the trucks. Most of the time a shipment consisted of American coffee, American cigaretts, chocolate and nylons.

The enemies of the businessmen were the Boggs brothers, who wanted badly to join the partnership, but didn't have enough money to contribute. To force the businessmen to take them in they came up with an idea of highjacking. Yes! On few occasions, during dark nights, with some outside help they highjacked the loads, disposed of the merchandise, and practically pushed themselves into the partnership.

Those businessmen used to live in camps like in a paradise. Some of them survived the holocaust, and some returned after the war from Soviet Union. They never had so good before. They enjoyed their riches every minute of days and nights. Most of them came from Jewish slums, and many of them even didn't know how to sign their own names. Their wives and children used to be best dressed people in camp. They owned cars and apartments in Linz, and kept mistresses on the side. Some of their wives were aware of the situation but decided to ignore it in fear of loosing the good life.

One of the most popular man among the businessmen was a young man, whose real name I no longer remember. He used to be like a landmark of Ebelsberg. Very good looking, very well dressed all the time. He was married to a beautiful Austrian woman, and his looks were like those of Chester Morris in the days when he played "Boston Blackie" (a detective in the early days of television). Everybody knew for "Oh-La-La" a batttlecry of the fans of Linzer Hakoah, when they used to play in Upper-Austrian soccer league. So "Oh-La-La" was his nichname as well. He never walked alone. Always with an entourage of tough men. Obviously his body guards.

On one occasion when Austrian police showed-up at the Ebelsberg gate to arrest somebody, his Austrian wife appeared in front, with an emotional speech, urging them to leave, and forget Jews, after all this they had done to them during the war, meaning holocaust. Ofcourse the police didn't listen to her, and didn't leave until they found what they came for.

Very popular in Ebelsberg were taxi cabs, even thou Jewish drivers charged double more then cabs in Linz. Other business' flourushed as well. There were tobacco shops, news stands with papers, magazines and comic books from all over the world. Comic books exchanges in many languages made a tremendous business, not talking about restaurants, and soda pop stands manufactured by Hungarian Jews. Still prices were much higher, mostly double then in Linz.

Ebelsberg!

There was a tranquil life for most Ebelsberg's population. Close to a larger Metropolitan area people had had many opportunities to enjoy themselves. The wealthy ones ofcourse didn't spare a moment to make up for the lost times during the war. The middle class and even poor people tried hard to make the best of their lives with the help of AJDC. There wasn't impossible for the wealthy to travel for rest to many of Austrian resorts, which some poor people could enjoy as well with the help of American charitable organizations. Without hesitation one could say that all people in Ebelsberg were well fed, dressed and used to live in better conditions then in any other camp.

Many maybe because of their ability, and others because of the right connections enjoyed their lucrative jobs with the AJDC. An elegant luxury bus used to take them each morning to work in Linz and brought them back home in the evening, with free meal available during lunchhour, and many other advantages not available to others.

So as you can see we left our tranquility well behind us. Grandpa Abraham was atill ill, and there was no improvement in sight. Despite the convinience of a direct streetcar line, grandma Frances used to spent weeks with grandpa in hospital without coming home.

Most of the time we were busy taking care of our Kubus. On days when I didn't sit with him in the grass area, I and other fathers used get together, pushing our kids boggies and discussing politics, sports and other events. All of us former Steyr residents, who weren't lucky enough to land a job in Ebelsberg.

Some as Norbert not only had a job, but tried and succeded in business. Him and his partner Podolski employed tailors who made all those suits, which used to hand in Norbert's room, while middlemen walking on streets nearby stoped passerby's especially on Sundays with offers of good buys. When they menaged to sell a suit or two or more, they collected commissions from Norbert or Podolski at the end of the day. When Norbert offered us partnership in this business, we didn't have no choice but to decline, because we didn't have enough cash to invest. Probably four or five hundres Schillings would do.

For middlemen and other blackmarketiers the best day was Sunday. Prospective buyers swarmed all over the camp looking for bargains. Not only suits were in demand. All kinds of other merchandise old and new. But the biggest rip-off was the wrist-watch market. An un-known source used to supply these people with very cheap watches, who later were sold to Austrians as an expensive items from Switzerland with a tremendous profit.

After loosing my job because Steyr got closed forever, I never hold another job for the rest of the time spent in camps. I was a bitter man. I knew that I was capable to hold any administrative job. I spoke rather good German, writing as reading as well. I knew bookkeeping, and typing. Still wherever we came it was always to late. The good jobs all of them were taken by previous arrivals, which didn't mean that someone with good connections with a political party couldn't get a good job. In Reithoffer I didn't have no choice but to be satisfied with hauling trash, load and un-load coal, and ofcourse some "nothing" supervisor of sanitation had a nerve to propose to me to clean restrooms, which I categoricaly refused.. Other "nothings" like this supervisor hold good jobs without any knowledge and experience.

And again not having another choice in Steyr 231 I took the job in security, about which I wasn't elated anyway. After world war two there was no honor to work for security.

Grandma's Frances pitch for a job for me ended in fiasco. Still I had three job offering, but none of them materialized. First they called me to try out for a typist job in administration. The Austrian administator gave me a tryout, and later while the camp committee chaairman was watching he told me that I mispelled the word "Bethlehem" (German spelling of this word was more complicated). Even thou the man from the committee who probably didn't know how to write and read German complimented me, the Austrian turned me down, and gave the job to some woman.

Another opportunity presented itself when our good friend Mr. Bronner who hold an important position with AJDC recomended me for a job there. That time around a lady from London in charge of hiring turned me down, because of my limited knowledge of English. Miss Risker (her name) told me that writing and reading wasn't enough.

The third time I was called in for an interview with the head bookkeeper of O.R.T. (Organization Rehabilitation Training). When I arrived a large man, one of those Russian Jews who with his family was able to leave Soviet Union with Polish citiziens was sitting behind an oversized oriental desk in an oversized chair. Looking at him I was under impression that I saw a dictator of some of those oriental countries. Needless to say all we had was just a pleasant converdation. I told him about my qualifications, and he didn't say either "yes" or "no". Leaving the room I noticed nearby at a much smaller desk was sitting his assistant, so I thought to myself; Why does this guy wants me if he has an assistant? At the end I wasn't wrong. Before leaving Austria the bookkeeper turned over the job to his former assistant.

There was quite an excitement in Ebelsberg when people from abroad came to visit with their relatives. First was a group who traveled in their 1950 Chrysler automobile. Half of Ebelsberg population was outdoor to admire the car. Besides everybody wanted to know, about living in United States and how soon we would be permited to emigrate to America.

Another couple with two children came from Paris, France in a fancy red sport car. Suprisingly they spoke perfect Yiddish. A man who used to work in administration, who originally was from Tarnow was their close relative.

The third and last relative who came to Ebelsberg was just a plain working man, who traveled around Europe by train. He was a Union member, and tried to explain to the crowd around him, that not everybody was rich in America. You would/he/ listen to those people around him, whose reasoning was that as long he could effort to travel to Europe and see his relatives, he was a rich man for sure. In reality, probably some of those men who kept heckling this man, owned more money then him.

An important part of Ebelsberg's population were the ultra-Orthodox Hungarian Rabbis. These people kept their distance from the rest of camp, even isolated themselves from their religious countrymen. Each one of them had a large group of followers, who followed him wherever he went. A Rabbi like that (They used to call him Rebe) even didn't go to a restroom alone, and covered his eyes while passing women on the street. Their wives never appeared in public alone as well, always suroounded by women of her court.

I paid close attention to one of those Rabbis. He was skinny like a thin stick, always with his head down, and bundled-up, like he would be cold all the time. I noticed his face once. His expresion was very sad. To me he looked like Jesus Christ before crucification.. Their kids never played with other kids, and always studied in their Yeshivot.

Becuse I was un-employed I was required to report twice a week to manual work around the camp. And there again, the man in charge was our good friend from Steyr Mr. Winnitzer who used to spent long evenings in our room. It wouldn't mean nothing to him to re-lease me from this work, because I was doing nothing supousedly helping a man to build a fence, and waisting my time. Still Winnitzer kept quiet looking away from me when I was reporting in the morning.

We met some new people in Ebelsberg, as before many of them just kept hanging around. A nice lady gave us a baby bed for our Kubus when her daughter outgrew it. It was nice of her, and Kubus finally was able to leave his buggy.

I also recognized in Ebelsberg a mother with two daughters from Tarnobrzeg. While as a teenager spending my vacations there I used to see her there bringing her daughters to a camp for poor children organized and supported with other ladies by my aunt Janette. Later while visiting grandpa Abraham in hospital I found out that the older girl was ill with T.B. While there she met an ill young man, a Christian, and married him.

Another young woman in Ebelsberg remained me very much of somebody I knew in Cracow, when I was 14 or 15 years old. This was in years when all young people in Cracow used to meet on Deptak and the nearby Jordan Park, in summertime only. Our family used to live in this area separated from Deptak with so-called "Błonie"a large meadow on outskirts of Cracow. I could have sworn that this woman was Luda Josefsberg. I knew her at the time, when for the first time in my life I started to go out with girls. In Ebelsberg her and her husband and their little girl occupied a room just across the hall from ours. Still in Ebelsberg I never tried to start a conversation with her, but anytime while passing by each other she always smiled at me. As I see it now, I am quite sure, that the woman was Luda Josefsberg.

It was in Ebelsberg as well, where we met the Rotman family. Mr.& Mrs. Rotman were a pre-war couple from the city of Łodż. Her name was Rose and his Rubin. Their little girl Ala was born to them after the war. I don't know how, but somehow we got friendly with each other. I am quite sure that they spent their war years in Soviet Union, even thou they never mentioned the fact. Mrs. Rotman came from a well to do orthodox family, "Cohanim" on both sides, which Mrs. Rotman never failed to mention.. Mr. Rotman had a "hunch-back". She never got permission from her parents to marry him, so they eloped. People in Ebelsberg used to wonder, how a good looking woman like her even would consider to marry him. But as she said, she saw her husband as a good looking and rather lively man.

Since his early youth Mr. Rotman learned how to be a good tailor. He repeated to us his lifetime story many times with an emphasis how perfect he was in his profesion. He put aside tailoring in Ebelsberg and made his living on black market, and because of it he was few times in trouble with authorities, which explained their rather late arrival in United States. Rose Rotman took a very good care on their little Ala. She kept an watchfull eye on her, even not allowing her to play with other children, saying to people that nobody was good enough for their daughter. "Sie spielt mit Ihrer Puppe" (She plays with her doll), was Rotman's excuse.

Rotmans used to keep to themselves. He was one of the first men in Ebelsberg who bought himself a motorcycle, although I never saw him riding one. Their idea of having fun together was going to Linz and among other things was a visit to a bathhouse, according to an old Austrian tradition when whole families used to go to bathhouse together and bath together.

Two Rubin Rotman's nephews on his mother's side Arek and Bob Mandelbaum survived the holocaust, and came to United Staes shortly after the war, and settled in Kansas City. When we told them that our Frieda was living in Kansas city as well, they wanted her to find out about their nephews, because of lack of mail from them. Frieda's reply was that both of them were drafted and taken to Korea.

At last Arek Mandelbaum and then his brother Bob returned safely to Kansas City. Rotmans came to Kansas City much later, I think in 1952. Rose and Rubin both worked in garment industry. They had later a baby boy, Aron who was to little to remember his father who passed away shortly after his birth. Another tragedy stroke when not so many years ago Ala passed away as well. Mrs. Rotman died few years ago from a heart attak. Aron now is in his twenties, studying to be a doctor. He married after his mother's death. Arek Mandelbaum is married and a furniture manufacturer. His brother is dead, He left a wife and children. Arek's children attending universities.

Emigration from Austria being in full swing, prompted another rumor to develop that the camp in Ebelsberg was next in line to be closed, soon. Still this rumor didn't stop Hungarian religious Jews to purchase wheat crops from a nearby farmer to be used for "Shmura Matzos"for coming following year's Passover. They worked the field and with their own hands removed the crops.

It seemed that our family wasn't punished enough by the miseries of war, deaths and illnesses of ourdears, another sad episod came upon us in June or early July 1950.

To spare her mother for a certain period of time Hania used to visit her father in hospital every afternoon. At the same time Mrs. Podolski the wife of Norbert's partner was recovering in hospital after a miscarrage. Mrs. Podolski, then was up in her age and it was everybodys guess, that because of her age she lost her baby. Anyway while visiting her father Hania stoped in Mrs. Podolski's room as well. It was already late in the afternoon when she was in a big hurry to get home and feed our Kubus. When Hania left Mrs. Podolski's room, while going down the stairs, she sliped and then fell breaking her right ankle in three places. The fall and break was so un-fortunate that the front of your grandma Anna's foot with all herb toes found itself in the back. And whom did we blamed for this misfortune? Mrs. Podolski's bad eyes ofcourse. Luckily that this accident took place in Hospital. Some members of a high level American commission have had witnessed the whole thing, and thanks to their efforts Hania was taken immediatly to the operating room where they put the leg together. Becuse of internal bleeding doctors delayed to put the leg in cast. So in one word, there we had another mess on our hands, and Hania was forced to stay in hospital for almost two weeks.

It was getting late, and at home we started to worry. We expected Hania at a certain hour, and when she didin't show-up I walked to the streetcar stop, to wait for her there.. Few cars arrived in a row, but Hania wasn't on them. I began to worry even more, when a man who just got off the streetcar coming back home after visiting his sick wife in hospital, approched and told me the whole story what happened to your grandma Anna, adding that she was in bed in hospital next to his wife's.

What a shock it was for me, Ela and grandma Frances. We felt like somebody hit us with a heavy object over our heads. Hundreds times I asked myself one question; "Why?" Why us? There were no easy answers. I guess such was "God's" will, and we didn't have another choice but to accept it, stay calm and pray for Hania's quick and complete recovery.

In the evening we hired a cab and took Kubus to hospital to be fed. There Hania told us the details of the accident. While being with Mrs. Podolski she mentioned, that there was time for her to go and feed the baby. So the story old as centuries applied to this case. I guess Mrs. Podolski felt very bad loosing her baby, and she didn't mean to hurt your grandma, but, who knows, maybe one small thought enter her mind; "Why couldn't I have a healthy baby like hers?" Old Jews used to call it "A Nehora". This was the only explanation. After all people slip and fall of the stairs but don't break their legs with so many complications.

After two weeks bleeding finally stoped. Two weeks in bed, two weeks of taking our baby back and forth to hospital for breast feeding. Toward the end we decided that once a day would be enough. We didn't want to worry grandpa Abraham so we didn't tell him anything, until the last day, when he was able to see Hania from his bed outside at the courtyard on a nice summer day. During this period of time I took Kubus so he finally was able to play with his grandson. It was the first and last time as well. Kubus was looking at grandpa, and grandpa was looking at Kubus, holding his little hand in his hand, and wispering some words to him. The whole experience was very emotional to grandpa and me as well.

After doctors put cast on her leg, they released her from hospital. A vehicle from camp came to take her home. Hania needed croutches her first time out. To get into this vehicle a person needed to step on portable stairs. A fat lady released from hospital the same day claimed those stairs first, To my horror stairs sliped from under her. And there I was holding Kubus in on one arm and trying with my other to hold up the tremendous behind of this lady to stop her from draging Hania with her. I guess I was strong them, because I was able to push this woman back in to the truck.

If I am not mistaken grandma Frances was with us. Next I handed Kubus to her and then helped Hania to get settled inside. Back in Ebelsberg with the driver's help we formed a seat from our hands and took Hania up to our fourth floor room.

It was one of the happiest days of my life having her back home. As far as I was concerned the worst was over, but six long weeks of healing had just begun. As time went by, we visited the doctor in hospital few times for check-ups. Slowly Hania learned how to walk with her cast on, and on nice summer days we used to come down with Kubus and his buggy and spent couple of hours with some of our friends gathering around.

Those six weeks in cast seemed to drag forever. But when the day came, and the doctor removed the cast, X-rays showed that the ankle healed pretty well. With a sight of relief, we started to prepare for therapy, and then period of learning how to walk again. It took a while but slowly things came to normal. A heavy filling lifted from our hearts, and we were able to turn to other important issues which were just about to enter our lives.

First of those events was another move from one camp to another. Yes rumors again turned into reality. Once again we were forced to pack our meager possessions and move on.

The other event had to do with our emigration. The United States Congress had passed a new immigration bill allowing to enter the country, not only holocaust survivors, but refugees from Eastern Europe as well, which ment us.

Our egilibility for immigration to America became official. New documents, which we recived from our relatives in New York, mainly ment assurances , that we will not become a burden to the government of United States of America, and exactly specified the place of employment and lodging on our arrival in New York. I supposed to work at Janette Juniors Inc of New York, and Dr. and Mrs. Joe Rosenblum were obliged to let us stay for time being in their apartment.

Finally all the pieces started to come together, as far as the emigration was concerned. If everything would be well with our family, we wouldn't have problems at all, and we would be on our way. Needless to say a big "If" was in our way. The big "If" was grandpa Abraham's illness and we would never leave him and grandma Frances behind.

In meantime Norbert's and his mother's new papers arrived from their relatives in United States. It was nothing standing in their way to start emigration proceedings. It was obvious to all of us that Ela and Norbert would be married as soon as possible. Even before Norbert's new papers arrived, they both got married in a civil ceremony, with Norbert's mother and grandma Frances serving as witnesses. To make all documents valid I went to Steyr to see our former chief Fiebert, who for a fee went with Ela's passport (Austrian) to the police to change her name to "Amsterdam." So it was obvious then that Hania and I would stay with grandma and grandpa as long as nessecary. But not to loose our emigration privilages, we filled with American emigration authorities through Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) all applications needed for this purpose. I personaly filled all those questionaries, and all very long ones in triplicates for the entire family. I even surprised the lady in charge in HIAS, who knew that most of the people paid for this work. Those papers were our lives stories since the days when we were born. Few weeks later we appeared in front of a minor American official to swear that information in those papers was the truth and nothing but the truth.

In connection with this swearing ceremony some Jews in camp started a rumor, that Americans want Jews to keep their heads cover while being sworn.. Really it wasn't what Americans wanted, but what orthodox Jews wanted. I didn't wear my hat, and the American official could care less.

Next step were interviews by the CID (military version of CIA in those days). Each person who applied for American visa needed two witnesses. Good witnesses were very important to testify about the character of the future immigrants.. There weren't enough witnesses to go around. At the end many witnesses testified few times for different people. Actually we testified for easch other. All those CID people would say "Oh it's you again".

September 1950 was the last year we spent our High Holidays in camps. As always in years following the war and holocaust praying during Holidays, especially while reciting "Kadish" was extrimly emotional. I remember staying next to Norbert in one of those praying rooms, watching how deep he was involved in prayers. I admired him for this attitude, and how much his outlook for religion changed after his father's death. Watching this crowd praying in their old-fashioned ways, it even didn't enter my mind a thought, where we will be a year from then. Kansas City was a faraway place, in which I didn't expect to be, and even farther away was an idea that during High Holidays 1951 Hania and I would attend services with the B'nai Jehuda reform congregation, without head cover, and listening to a woman blowing the "Shofar" on a regular trumpet in the Music Hall of Municipal Auditorium.

Shortly after the Holidays sometimes in October we moved again. Hania and I went first to our new location to select two rooms for us and grandma and Ela. There was a big change to barracks from the comfortable living conditions in Ebelsberg, mostly rooms with broken windows, in whatever remained from a former German concentration camp, which after the war served as living quarters of none Jewish D.P.s

The camp was located on the same highway as Ebelsberg, about 3 miles away, on the way from Linz to Steyr. The name of the village was Asten-Hüttendorf, and the name of the camp was Asten. It had a large brick-concrete entrance, with a guardhouse ofcourse. Inside many barracks served as living quarters for inmates during Hitler era and later Displaced Persons. Asten as well was an assembly point for all emigrants leaving Austria. When we arrived there only few Poles, Rumanians and Yugoslavians were left behind. People not well enough to emigrate, and those who encountered other problems, mostly political preventing them from going to United States. Many Jews as well had been placed on a "hold" list with health problems and because of conections with black market.

Already being used to a nomandic way of life it didn't take us to long to settle in our rooms after we arrived in a truck again. As before Hania, even thou she still wasn't able to move around full speed, furnished our rooms as beautiful as only possible. I myself started to instal our new stove, but gave it up after some difficulties to push a chimney through the window, and then up to the edge of the roof. We needed other people to do it for us. With shorter days and cold nights a good stove was important, to keep our Kubus warm.

He was a good little boy, doing fine, always with a smile and good appetite. Until he was one year old he was getting his breast feeding, Sometimes when I was eating he was standing next to me and watching. I used to feed him pieces of my chopped steak and potatos. He was simply delighted with this stuff. The biggest joy came when he was 10 months old. I put him down on the floor, few feet away from me, and stretched my arms toward him, and there he moved his little feet and came to me, walking first time in his young life.

Only east side of the camp was taken over by Jews. Five or six barracks were enough to house them all, so it didn't take long to get acquainted with our new neighbours, among them former two most powerful committee members from Ebelsberg, one of them a former committee chairman. In Asten like others, they were obliged to wait for their turn to emigrate. The former chairman of the committee wanted to go to United States. His son who earlier went to Israel came back to camp and joined his parents in pursuit of an American visa. The committeeman and his wife, a couple who married many years before used to be rather peculiar, they stayed together but for most of their married life they never spoke to each other.

Then there was this large Jewish-Lithuanian family. As others in this barrack they made lots of money on black market. A family who used to live across the hall from us was good off as well. Their kids, a boy and a girl used to like very much to come to our room and spent time with us. Their mother was playing a role bragging all the time about her family. On Saturdays afternoon she always wore an expensive robe, and visited all her neighbours, like in an old shtetl before the war in eastern Europe.

Chapter 118

50th Anniversary
Friday September 1,1939!
Friday September 1,1989!

A soft mist lay across the waters of Danzig (Gdańsk) harbour, as down broke on Friday, September 1, 1939. The exact date specified by Hitler for "Operation White" (attack on Poland) in his first directive back on April 3, 1939. Through the haze, movements could be made out on the shadowy bulk of the battleship "Schleswig-Holstein" riding at anchor on her "courtesy visit" to the Free City. The massive guns swivelled smoothly around. They were levelled to fire at what, for them, was point-blank range. They were directed on the little Westerplatte peninsula across the Danzig harbour, which housed a Polish garrison of 88 men.

At 4.45am precisely, with an ear-shattering roar and the flash of cordite they opened fire.

The second world war had begun!

6000,000 Jews died, got murdered, or perished because one maniac wanted to rule the world without Jews. Over 50,000,000 of other nationalities didn't survive as well, killed on war fronts, fighting in underground armies or being murdered by the Gestapo and S.S.

As you alredy know there were hardly any survivors in our family. Leniowers, Salomons, Nussbaums and Mondscheins perished. All of them with the exception of few of us who menaged under a severe strain to save ourselves in Siberian taygas, and hunger of the very hot Uzbekistan.

What I am going to write now is only shortened survival ordeal of grandma France' cousin Tadek Blut who didn't want to give up and survived under very trying conditions. Ofcourse his family and their relatives the Rotters perished in the Bełżec extermination camp. (Story on page 100. Another Look at the Past. Bełżec 600,000).

As Tadek Blut (Juszczyk) tells us in his own words. His happy and good life came to an end in September 1939. As many others thanks to panic and other considerations, and with permission from his parents, because he was then already 15 years old he left Jasło hoping to return in few days, because everybody was confident about quick Polish victory.

As we know already the wheels of history turned into the opposite direction. Tadek went through a difficult period when German bombs tried to destroy the train he was riding, and it's pasengers as well.

With some luck Tadek's train arrived in Stryj, a town in southeastern Poland. Still heavy bombing, but Tadek came out un-touched, besides loosing his suitcase, so he felt much lighter with his last pocessions all gone. When the Red Army occupied Polands eastern territories Tadek joined a Soviet run Agricultural Technicum. Because he was a very good student he recived a scholarship, which helped him to survive. The German invasion of Soviet Union in 1941 interrupted hia studies. He needed one more years to graduate. Trying to return to Jasło, Tadek stoped first in a small city of Sambor. Thanks to a miracle and with God's help while being among the 100 Jews arrested by Germans on the streets of Sambor, in order to scare the population, not thinking to much Tadek walked into gate of a first building he saw, escaping death. Germans killed all the other 99 Jews.

The escape turned out to be a very important lesson in Tadek's life during the occupation. He taught himself not to be negative anymore, and try to save himself in any situation.

In Sambor he was hungry all the time, and the worst moment came over him when he stoped caring. Finally he trew away the yellow armband, which was a mark of his Jewishness, and boarded a train to Jasło. This was the first time when Tadek started to play a role as a Pole, which went rather well.

It was January 1942 and Tadek's family was still in Jasło. Many Jews came back from the east, and Germans marked all of them as communists, ready to finish off.

In January 10 1942 Gestapo called in 54 Jews, and Tadek among them. He didn't obey their order, and was the only one missing from the 54. Tadek went into hiding in family's mill in village of Zhołkov, while Germans killed all 53 Jews AT THE JASŁO CEMENTARY.

Chapter 118 (cont)

50th Anniversary
Friday September 1, 1939!
Friday September 1, !989!

At that particular time our family's Polish friend Mr. Truskolaski, approached my father with a proposal for me to leave home and change my indentity with help of so-called "Arian Papers", which Mr. Truskolaski was able to obtain for him.

And those were the circumstances under which Josef Juszczyk was born. Tadeusz Blut ceased to exist. Truskolaski accompanied Tadek to a village Święciany, where he used to work in forest as an assistant to a forest ranger.

The Last Passover Tadek had spent with his parents was in 1942. In Święciany he played a role of Josef Juszczyk without any difficulties, because of his Arian features. Tadek's parents and the entire Jewish population of Jasło perished in August 1942 in the crematoriums of Bełzec.

Hopes that he will be able to spent rest of the war in Święciany didn't materlialized, when Tadek ran there into his former school friend, who promised not to report him, but Mr. Truskolaski thought different and advised Tadek to leave Święciany immediatly.

Tadek went to an address given to him by Truskolaski in a small town of Dukla. There Tadek introduced himself as a young officer of the Polish underground Land Army, who menaged to escape from Germans. Polish patriots who took care on him, then transfered him to another small location Lesko Łukawica, where he worked as an helper to the large ranch supervisor. Everything would be fine if not that somebody there recognized him as a Jew, maybe because of the ways he was acting, or maybe because of his inteligence and knowledge.

There was just enough time for Tadek to escape and catch a train at the nearby railroad station and travel to Rudnik on the River San, where he got a job in the local lumber yard as exprt on wood.

In Rudnik Tadek joined a Polish partizan unit with a base in Biłgoray forests. While working in daytime, he took part in many raids on German army at night.

The Red Army liberated Tadek July 22, 1944 in Rudnik, who because knowing the disposition and feelings of the local Polish population toward Jews, still kept his indentity secret, until May 1945.

Tadek had had a close call, during a pogrom on Jews in Cracow, shortly after the end of war, when the Polish militia trying to control the crowd almost kill him. Thanks to Almighty the lucky star still shined over him.

While visiting Jasło, and the ruins of their family former home Tadek made a pledge to himself to leave Poland and travel to then Palestine. Needless to say, it wasn't easy in those days to reach the Holy Land. Instead he went to school and at last recived his diploma as engineer in "Wood Technology".

As you already know Tadek kept his Polish name Juszczyk after the end of the war, but he changed Josef to his original first name Tadeuez. In 1957 he left Poland with a legal emigration groups for Israel, where he took a job in his profesion with "Keren-Kayemet Le-Israel". He married Dorotha born Gołowieszko in Sarny Wołyn province in the pre-war Poland, which in now part of the Soviet White-Russian Republic, in Israel in 1961. They have a son Ilan who got his education in Israel and later served in Israeli Armed Forces. Presently he travels in the Far East.

During the six-day war Tadek fought on the Jordanian front, taking part in liberation of the Old Jerusalem. His lucky star still shined over him, when he faced death on few occasions. During the Yom-Kipur war he worked behind the front lines.

It is possible that many other interesting details of Tadek's life we will be able to obtain in some near future, when he will atempt to write his own life's story.

Chapter 119

Asten!

Even before coming to Asten we met in Ebelsberg a man with a 11 or 12 years old son, who was camp photografer. He seemed to be a nice man, but very un-happy person who loved his boy a lot. His wife, the boy's mother was in camp with them in 1946 or maybe even before, but she wasn't satisfied with living conditions in camps, so she left both husband and son and returned to Poland. Nobody heard from her for couple of years, when suddenly late in 1949, she started a tricks loaded campaign from Poland to get her son back. Ofcourse her former husband resited her with bunch of tricks on his own. And finally when time came to leave camps, this woman finally realized that she lost her son forever. I myself honestly hope that sometime in their lives they had found a solution to their problem, and were able to reunite.

When we moved to Asten, Norbert and his mother, remained for time being in Ebelsberg. For a short period of time they took over a room, a very nice room in the former administration quarters.

In meantime in Asten we started to prepare for Ela's and Norbrt's wedding. I dodn't remember the correct date, but I think it would be right for me to assume, that the wedding took place October 25 1950, and under the trying circumstances, it was a very nice wedding. I would like to call it beautiful with all my heart, but doing so I would exaggerate. Still it was more to it, then our wedding or Frieda's wedding.

First of all we ordered in Linz beautiful invitations, and paid a man who delivered them to our guests in Ebelsberg and Asten. To make the wording better I told the printers to use the word house instead of barrack. Also clothing of the young couple was much better then ours. Ela wore beautiful blue wedding gown with a veil and all kinds of trimings, and Norbert's suit was tailor-made. Guests included ours and Norberts friends, and members of the Austrian camp administration.

A problem developed with the selection of a Rabbi. Norbert wanted the old Rabbi Goldstein who he knew since Reithoffer, but the Rabbi from Ebelsberg insisted that this was his territory. At the end they reached a compromise, which probably cost Norbert some money, and Rabbi Goldstein performed the wedding ceremony. I was really surprised, after finding out that the Rabbi and his family still had been living in Steyr. I thought they were long gone to Israel or elsewhere.

On the morning of the wedding Norbrt and I went to Steyr in a cab, so Norbert could say prayers on his father's grave. A son-in-law of Rabbi Goldstein accompanied us to the cementary. It was a solemn and emotional trip for Norbert. In the afternoon both Ela and Norbert went to hospital to visit grandpa Abraham. Another emotional visit, that time more for Ela. He was very happy to see them, and bestowed fatherly blessing upon them. It was a terrible time seeing this man raveged by this illness, a man whom we knew as energetic and vibrant personality even during darkest days of our lives.

We knew this lady from Yugoslavia, who used to do some cleaning and washing for us, and helped out lots of times even in crisis. She was with us during the wedding as well, cleaning and watching Kubus. My job was to bring tables, chairs and benches from the synagogue, a real heavy stuff, and Hania set-up the tables with food and decorations. There was only sweet tables with drinks ofcourse.

The ceremony under a plain "Hupah" took place in the long hall of our barrack. Hania and I gave Ela away, and Mr.& Mrs. Sametmann were Norbert's "Unterfuehrers". Sametmann was a former poker buddy of grandpa Abraham, but he didn't know to much about Judaism. He took a healthy "sip"of wine before he passed the glass from the Rabbi to the young couple. So as you can see, there was some humor involved.

The reception was very nice, but there was no music, which was obvious, because of grandpa's illness.

As everything, also this happy occasion came to an end. A little ray of sunshine in a rather gloomy era. My first chore was to return chairs and tables to synagogue, so people could pray there next morning.

Later after the wedding I accompanied Ela and Norbert on their "overnight honeymoon" trip in a cab to Ebelsberg.

The same night our Yougoslavian woman cleaned our rooms again to a point that next morning nobody would tell, that this was a sight of a wedding just a night before.

Right away a day or two after the wedding both HIAS and AJDC started to preasure us about going to United States. Our case was clear of all obstacles and we could leave anytime. But because of our predicament at home we tried very hard to work out a postponment. Still the preasure didn't let down, and so we were forced at least to start on some not so important preliminaries.

To tell the truth we didn't like to move to Asten, and when the announcement came we seriously considered moving back to Steyr. There was a small group of us who was thinking about such move, so one afternoon we went to downtown Linz to see the former Austrian administrator in Steyr, who without questioning our motives, gave us special permissions to move back to Steyr.

As it turned out we never moved. After few days of thinking and a special trip to Steyr to find out about the living conditions, that an old Jewish proverb "Only a goat goes back", applied to us as well. First of all the new Austrian administrator who didn't know us at all assigned to us the worst rooms possible. Besides this set back, only few Jewish families, late arrivals still lived there. Others were the "Volksdeutschen" families of whom we didn't want no part. The camp made an impression of a "ghost town".

As far as our family was concerned we finally came to realize, that because of grandpa's illness, we didn't have another choice but to go to Asten. The place was the closest one to D.P.Hospital in Linz, with the best bus connections for grandma Frances to travel to be with grandpa in hospital.

As in the old days Fiebert and his group of card players and gamblers kept making rounds of the drinking establishments. Another fixture around Steyr was a man whom I remember as Lova. After all Jews moved out he rented a space in center of Steyr and equiped it with long racks, and opened there a large store with second hand clothing.

The rather extensive social life in all D.P. camps throughout all those years came to a complete standstill in Asten. Those who remained, while waiting for emigration didn't care anymore, only thinking how fast could they leave Austria, mostly those who encoutered problems. I personally continued to play Austrian Football Toto, without luck. From time to time I went to see a movie, when a traveling cinema used to arrive in Asten. To counter boredom we used to read a lot. Books and magazines available at the local camp stand. The place was owned by Hungarian religious Jews. While being kings in Ebelsberg, their lives in Asten changed drastically as well. They ceased to fill so sure of themselves finally realizing, that they must wait for their turn to emigrate.

Their stand was loaded with all kinds periodicals in many languages. Special romance editions, comic books, old and new we kept exchanging all the time. Next to their stand was the fat lady selling bananas. Her business got slow as well, because of shrinking population.

In meantime grandpa Abraham's health kept deteriorating. He was in constant pain, finding relief only with help of morphine shots. For long months he shared his room with a very ill man from Yugoslavia. His wife and grandma Frances became friends in need during their long ordeal. This lady used to live in Asten all these years with none-Jewish D.P.s.

After Norbert's and Ela's marriage it was obvious that they would leave soon to travel to United States. Everything depended on how soon Amsterdams new papers would arrive from America. Hania, I and Kubus would wait and see, what the future will bring.

Despite decline in camp's population big business continued. The Boggs brothers who with their highjacking operation forced themselves on the big partnership, before leaving Austria for Israel, bought a tremendous hauling trailer with a rigg and other accesories to teach people there the business of trucking.

Asten!

Norbert his mother and Ela moved into a very nice room in Asten in a barrack next to our's. He still kept his job in administration, but this time aroud it was an office job, dealing with distribution of food coupons. A controversy developed when IRO and Austrian administration decided to distribute money, so people would be able to buy their own groceries. There were many who liked the idea, but most of the population insisted on the food distribution. At the end the controversy was resolved satisfactory to both sides. Those who wanted money, recived money, the rest of us recived food as before.

We were really surprised when Rotmans moved in next door. We didn't know to much about them in Ebelsberg, but living so close to them in Asten gave us an opportunity to know them better. Mrs. Rotman didn't see nobody around except her daughter. Mr. Rotman was busy with his black market deals until he got caught. He was forced to stop, because a conviction would seriously hinder their chances to go to America. Mrs. Rotman and Ala used to visit us quite often. This girl loved our Kubus very much, and used to hug him so hard, that the little fellow when he saw her next coming through the door sought shelter at his mother's arms.

Rose Rotman always kept bragging about her family back in Lodz before the war. How she was a "Cohen's" daughter a very religious and important man in the community. Then she continued about her love affair with Rubin Rotman, and how her parents were against their marrage, so they didn't have any other choice, but to elope. They had led a strange life in their room in Asten. They slept long in the morning, and their real everyday life didn't begin until late in the evening. When everybody else in camp was asleep Rose Rotman was cooking their meals, and Rubin Rotman kept turning their radio full blast while he was singing and step dancing to the tunes, not that he had any talent, his voice was terrible, just enough to aggravate all the neighbours.

Radios in camps were a very popular items. Not just those plain small radios. Those who were able to effort them had bought the big "Minervas". Some "shnorers" just for the sake of showing off bought them as well. Other folks like us used to buy smaller models, used ofcourse like Philips or Telefunken. Our Telefunken, German made was a bargain I once bought from an Austrian who happened to stop with it in the guardhouse when I was on duty. When I brought it home, and turned it on, first thing was that I sought out the radio station in Sofia, Bulgaria to find out if they still were playing the music we used to dance to before the war in Cracow. Imagene my surprise. This station still played those beautiful tunes after all these years. It was the same after fall of Poland, when I got misty, already under Soviet occupation when accidentaly I turned on the radio in my uncle's home in Zbaraz and caught the beautiful music from Sofia.

Hania's and my occupation in those days was to resist Jewish and American authorities, while they kept preasuring us into emigration, with threats, that we might loose our eligibility to immigrate to United States. The threat was serious enough, but still we were determent not to give in.

To give grandma rest from the misery of hospital Hania and I took over visits to grandpa Abraham. I can't help to remember one particular November Saturday late afternoon. A major snowstorm developed over Linz. After we left hospital, we tried very hard to reach the nearest bus stop, walking in a deep wet snow up to our ankles. Also with us, was walking the wife of grandpa's very ill neighbour in the hospital room. The lady used to live in Asten as well in the none-Jewish section. It took us quite a while to get to the stop. when we finally boarded our streetcar, after a short ride, electricity went off throughout the entire city of Linz. When after a half hour waiting nothing developed we left the streetcar and decided to walk. It would be a long walk if the lights wouldn't come on again. We carried few packages and watched closely the old lady who tagged along. We stoped at the next stop, and finally our streetcar arrived. The bus from Ebelsberg to Asten was loaded with people over capacity. Our room in the barrack in Asten, when we finally arrived felt like a paradise.

Mrs. Amsterdam shared their room with Norbert and Ela. On Fridays nights only because of "religious considerations" slept in grandma's Frances room. Now I leave it to you to figure out what "religious considerations" ment to Mrs. Amsterdam.

Finally we arrived at the point, that we didn't have other choices available, but to cooperate with authorities, at least in some cases to keep our eligibility alive as far as immigrattion to United States was concerned. All three of us; Hania, I and Kubus went through a complete medical examination. This examination was conducted by doctors selected by American authorities from a large pool of refugee doctors. We passed with flying colors. Americans hold back many applications, not only because of health reasons, but economic and political as well. Black market activities kept many people from emigration. Among Jews an important setback was their affiliation with leftist Zionist organizations. For many in the early days of D.P. camps such a move was just a formality in an effort to re-settle our people in Palestine. Nobody suspected then that this would be a drawback in the future, and ruin some peoples plans to immigrate to United States. After a while all those cases had been resolved for most of the applicants They arrived in United States a little later, but not before traveling back and forth to Salzburg, just to be told "come back later". Some of them went even as far as Bremenhaven to be sent back to Salzburg, or some times even to Asten.

Our clear case followed with a speedy invitation from American doctor. Actually he was an Austrian, appointed by Americans specificaly to interview all applicants about their health. Hania and I only answered couple of his questions, so the next step for us was to appear before American concul and representative of Justice Department in Salzburg.

And there we put another stop on our progress. Few times we were able to delay our travel to Salzburg, because of grandpa's illness. We knew we wouldn't be able to do this very long, but at least we gave ourselves some leeway before the final move. It was the beginning of a nerve breaking period for us. To wait and think what tommorow will bring. A thought even crossed our minds, that, who knows, maybe we will be forced at least for time being settle in Austria.

Events which developed during the month of December 1950 changed entirly our assumption about directions and ways we were just about to take.

With a complete turn around, our thoughts went back again to all those tragedies which came upon our families, as a result of war and aftermath. Our share was as significant as anybody else's. It is true. Times heal wounds, and people do their best to forget and go on with their lives. Yet! Personally until this day I thing about my Bl.M. mother, how she passed on in vain, my heart griefs. I can't get rid of a thought, that maybe I had'nt done enough for her. The second thought which hangs over me all the time is, that I wasn't with my Bl.M. father when he passed away.

And now again with regret and pain in my heart I write about a man by whose life I was touched deeply during 10 years of my life.

In those last days of 1950 grandpa Abraham's life was coming rapidly to an end. Even thou he was always in pain, he was still curious and interested about everything around him. There were no more encouraging knews from hospital.

New Year's eve 1951 went rather quiet in Asten, not only for us but for most camp inhabitants as well. There was nothing to celebrate anymore. I guess long years in D.P. camps, left their marks on the people who still were there, especialy on our family with all those problems during our stay in Steyr, Ebelsberg and Asten. The oldtimers would rather leave as soon as possible, and those all kinds of delays kept them on edge all the time.

Another groups of tough gays came from Poland and other countries, and those returning from Israel were more then ready to take over the black market business.

On a happier note we celebrated on November 30 1950 first birthday of our dear Kubus, with a cake and presents we bought for him. One day of sunshine in a life filled with clouds.

Chapter 120

Grandpa Abraham's Funeral!

There was already evening January 7 1951. It was getting late and grandma Frances still wasn't back from hospital. Because of constant worries, what would happen next, I decided to take a walk and wait for grandma at camp's main gate. When the last bus from Ebelsberg finally arrived it was already past 10pm, and grandma was on it. I was very happy to see her, but the news she told me on the way to the barrack weren't good at all. It seemed before she left hospital that grandpa was getting worse, but still was able to recognize people around him, and urged grandma to go home and have some well deserved rest. She listen to him but something was telling her that it wasn't right for her to leave.

It was a sleepless night for all of us. early in the morning on January 8 I went again to the camp's gate and recived permission from the guard on duty to call D.P. Hospital. The nurse on duty at the internal medicine department was the same nurse who had done so many favors for grandma and grandpa during his long stay in hospital. I stood at the guardhouse like a piece of concrete with the phone to my ear, when this nurse told that she was very sorry to inform me that Mr. Abraham Leniower passed away at 11.23pm January 7 maybe 2 hours after grandma Frances left him. She told me as well that according to Jewish tradition she placed grandpa's body on the floor. I gues she knew better then I because she saw many Jews die there. I started to walk slowly, back to the barrack. I didn't know what to do. Walk even slower or run. I wished that the road would stretch out so I wouldn't have to tell the bad news to grandma, Hania and Ela. In time I passed Norbert's and Ela's room I must had run pretty fast, because Ella told me later that she knew that it was me running home with bad news. It was very hard for me to tell grandma and Hania that all was over. I was mumbling, but they knew anyway what I was talking about. They kept crying, and grandma was really upset for leaving grandpa alone the night before. But such was God's will and nobody could have change it.

After the initial shock grief and cries subsided, and time came to think about grandpa's funeral. Soon it became obvious to me that I will be the one, who will take care of all the necessary arrangements. It was still early in the morning, and all I knew about Jewish funerals that according to law the burrial must take place the same day.

My first step was to go to synagogue to ask people praying there for advise. Norbert was there as well. They all Norbert included were sympatetic. Each of them full of sugestions, but nobody offered to help me. I realized then that I was on my own. Me a person who in those days knew so little about Jewish religious customs. Quickly I started to move on, because days were short then in Upper Austria and the only Hevra Kadisha was located about 70 miles away in Wells the only other D.P. camp active besides Asten. I hired a taxi, and upon arrival in Wells the driver and I were directed to the synagogue where we found the head of the Hevra Kadisha. He was a young Hungarian man, and it didn't take him to long to get his group together. Among them was the son in law of the old Rabbi who married Hania and me way back in April 1947. The son in law was the same man who wanted a pay-off before letting us into our rooms in Ebelsberg.

My driver was an older Jewish man who was very good and helpfull to me. We took the Hevra Kadisha to D.P. Hospital in Linz, and then we went to The "Israelitishe Kultusgemeinde" to get the key to the Jewish cementary. The Rabbi of Linz was a Hungarian Jew Herskovitz who with his wife and children lived in a small room near the Gemeide's office. After a talk with him and Gemeinde's president we set up the funeral for 4pm. Before we left Linz for Asten I hired a chauffeur driven hearse to be at an appointed hour in front of the hospital.

In meantime in Asten Norbert put together a large group of our friends to go to the funeral in a luxury bus hired by our family.

I was trying to compliment myself for job well done in a field which i was totaly ignorant, and I must say I handled it pretty well. At least I was telling myself that somehow I was able to windicate myself in my own eyes by doing for grandpa Abraham, what I wasn't able to do for my father.

Chapter 120 (cont)

Grandpa Abraham's Funeral!

At the D.P.Hospital we picked up grandpa's body and placed it in the hearse. Our Kubus was left at home in care of Mrs. Amsterdam.

Linzer Jewish cementary was on the outskirts of the city. It survived untouched the Nazi era. Many old monuments from many years back stood there all in good shape. All preparations for grandpa's burrial had been done in a small building bilt just for this purpose. After the Hevra Kadisha completed their rituals, grandpa Abraham Leniower, son of Josef Leniower and Haya Gitl Blasbald Leniower had been put to eternal rest in a grave next to the old Rabbi who performed Hania's and mine wedding ceremony. According to an old Jewish tradition He was placed in a plain wooden casket. Rabbi Hershkovitz presided over the funeral, and after "Kadish" had been said, all was over.

Abraham Leniower Blessed Memory was another victim of the Hitler era. A man with integrity, beloved father and husband, respected by many. He is missed dearly by all of us.

Started with the evening right after the funeral, prayers had bees said entire week twice daily in our room, and conducted by Norbert's friend, former Rabbi Potrzebowski.

During our final days in Asten I ordered a monument to be made and later placed on grandpa's grave. Few weeks after the funeral we had a ceremony of unveiling.

Hania was most shocked with her father's death, more the all of us. I guess deep inside she believed more in his recovery, then her mother and sisters. She cried a lot.

After ordering the stone, I asked my good friend Mr. Gewirtz to make for us a printout of the Hebrew words necessary to be carved out on the monument. Mr. Gewirtz was a young man my age. He was a very religious, orthodox person, even dressed most of the time in orthodox clothing. But besides tremendous knowledge of Talmud he was educated in secular subjects as well. He never tried to push his orthodoxy on his not so religious friends. Many times we used to walk together around the camp discussing all kind of matters; politics, literature, sports and many other topics. Mr. Gewirtz was on the top of all of them. It was a pleasure to be his friend. For some reason Gewirtz and his wife were kept much longer in camps then most of us. They were a childless couple, and as much as they desired a baby, even much more they wanted to leave Austria.

Chapter 121

Leaving Austria!

After the funeral it was obvious that Hania, I and Kubuś will be the first ones to go to United Sates, because of some minor problems with Amsterdams papers. As far as grandma's Frances case was concerned, she needed to start the processing all over again, because of neglecting it so long because of grandpa's illness. The authorities understood her predicament, and promised to rush through her papers as soon as possible, so she could travel with Amsterdams.

HIAS and Joint knew right away about grandpa's death, and before we could catch our breats, they were real hard on our backs urging us to leave fast. They gave us few days only to prepare after the week long mourning period and get ready for the trip to Salzburg.

Those were exciting days for all of us. For grandma Frances those were the days of some relaxation, after years of stress, worries while spending most of her time in hospital at grandpa's side. At last she was able to enjoy few days with her beloved Kubuś.

Before leaving, once again we recived from Joint a bunch of "shmates" which including with our own junk we needed to sell somehow. For the money earned from this sale Hania and I went to Linz to buy for ourselves and Kubuś new shoes, clothing, a new candelabra and silverware. We sold our Telefunken radio, and Victor's officer boots, breeches and jacket as well. Those were things he left behind before leaving for America.

Most of our stuff we packed in a large wooden box we had it made couple of years before just for this purpose, and decided to take with us Kubuś' boggie, which we later abandoned in Salzburg.

All what was left to do was to print our address in New York on the box. But when asked the man who was doing this for most of the emigrants, his wife for some reason steped in and declared that her husband is working to hard and she wouldn't let him to do the job. I didn't understand why she was making all the fuss. After all she was cheating on him all over the place. Anyway I saved myself some money. I had done the job. It wasn't a work of art, but good enough to get the trunk to New York and later to Kansas City.

A group of strong men came to our room in Asten early in the morning January 13, 1951. Those 5 or 6 men for certain fee used to pick up the baggage of all Jewish emigrants going to America, and then placed them on trucks to transport them to Linzer railroad station.

Day earlier we said our goodbys to all our friends. On the morning of our departure, grandma went with us to the assembly barrack. Kubuś was still sleepy, and kept saying all the time how much he was missing his "lulu". After a painfull goodby with grandma Frances, a covered truck took us and other emigrants to the Linzer station. It was a cold day and light snow was falling. By the time we reached the station it was daylight already. Our heavy baggage had been taken care of by special people and we didn't have to worry about it until before leaving Salzburg for Bremenhaven.

There was no pleasure and no comfort as well, riding the train from Linz to Salzburg, our first step on the long journey to United States. We traveled in a third class car on hard benches and without heat. We didn't expect luxuries, just a little decency, which we didn't get. It wasn't possible to sit down and relax a bit. We just kept walking around the car to keep warm. Our biggest concern was about Kubuś. We didn't want him to catch cold, so we kept him all bundled up. I amm convinced that his future health problems in Salzburg, came as a result of this train ride. Usually it takes only couple of hours to travel from Linz to Salzburg, but to us it seemed like an eternity. When finally we arrived in Salzburg, trucks were waiting for us at the station to take us to Helbruner camp, the assembly camp from where all D.P.s used to leave to many countries all over the world.

Helbruner camp was located in nice residential part of Salzburg. It was NOT different from the camps we saw before, with buildings, barracks, offices, kitchens and supply sheds. Former Nazi authorities left many of them all over Europe, as tools of their plans to enslave the mankind, especially Jews ofcourse.

Chapter 121 (cont)

Leaving Austria!

What an irony it was. In a kitchen where only few years before Nazis cooked potato peels soup for their Jewish prisoners, in 1951 there was a Jewish kosher kitchen, and who knows maybe some former prisoners of this camp who ate there potato peels, before enjoyed a good kosher meal.

We moved into a stacco building, without separate doors to each room. A large Lithuanian family took over the second room, which ment that in order to leave they always would go through our room with doors to the outside. Because of Kubus we would had prefered the second room, because staying in the first room ment open doors almost constantly. In order to protect Kubus from the cold coming in from the outside we decided to hang blankets around our corner. Our neighbour in this room was a former strong man employed by "Oh-La-La" in Ebelsberg. The man, his wife and a small boy wanted to go to America, but while we were processed rather fast, their application was temporary denied and these people like many others traveled many times between Salzburg and Asten until American authorities finally approved them. Considering this strong man and his family I doubt if they ever went to United States.

As we suspected the cold train ride and the cold room in Helbrun made our Kubus sick. Most of the time in Salzburg he had slight temperature. Doctors called a flulike cold, but his problems persisted until at last we boarded the ship for our voyage to New York.

As in other camps we followed the same long established routine which begun with registration. But this routine was more important then the others. Everything we had done there was bringing us closer to our goal of leaving Europe. We filled out lots of forms, and recived many new documents. And again following advise of certain people, who maintained that Americans like religious people we choose the kosher kitchen. What can I say. It was another mistake on our part. Those Jews have promised us a delicious kosher meal every day. Until today I am asking myself the same question. What happened to those meals? where were they when we needed them? The truth is that during our stay in Helbrun only once or twice we ate a kosher soup. We fed ourselves with our own money. Ofcourse children kitchen was OK. Luckily it wasn't kosher, because we would be forced to buy food for Kubus as well. There was this lady, a widow with a young son, who for few days only shared a room with us. She was Jewish converted to Christianity. A very nice person. She was the one who used to tell us about the good meals in the regular kitchen.

On second day after our arrival we were told to go to American Headquarters in Salzburg to see the consul. All three of us got dressed up in our best. I wore my new grey sport tweed suit, which a tailor in Asten made for me in a record time. Two days.

And what a terrible January morning it was. There was a large snowstorm passing through Salzburg. Army trucks which ususally took people to see the consul couldn't move, so all of us were forced to take a troley-bus, which was loaded with people going to work. We were very lucky just to get on the bus. We had hardly entered the headquarters when we heard our names to enter the consular office. We had found ourselves in a large room full of many typists. They assigned Hania and me to two different people. I got one who was from Warsaw and spoke perfect Polish.

All questions answered in Salzburg were the same we already answered on our initial applications for permission to immigrate to United States. The difference was we wrote it in German, but the typist in Salzburg Translated our answers to English.

Before being called in to see the consul, a clark took our fingerprints included Kubus! At last we were allowed to enter consul's office. It was a pleasant room but without special or elagant furniture. Just couple of desks, few chairs and many file cabinets. All consul's questions were in English, which were translated to us by a young lady in German, and our answers translated to the consul in English. And so it went, back and forth.

We confirmed to the consul our answers on the application, and told our lives story, but mostly what occured during the war. His main concern was if we ever were communists or members of the party. After swearing that whatever we said was the truth and nothing but the thruth, we got the permission from the consul to enter the United States of America. We passed this test with flying colors. We finally achieved, what we were dreaming about since the end of war. We only regreted that some of our most loved ones weren't able to share our happiness. But it was exactly as someone said many years ago; "You need to build on ashes before achieving little success".

Seeing the consul and reciving his blessings wasn't everything. There was another hurdle to cross, which was an interview with a representative of the United States Justice Department. It was in his office where those un-lucky ones were detained or even sent back to their former D.P. camps, so their applications could be revued by Justice Department's investigators. Still we were confident that nothing like this will happen to us.

People who went through this interview before us, told us that this representative was a tough and mean man, and that his Ukrainian secretary was even worse then him. Anyway as it turned out he and his secretary weren't mean to us at all. On our part we didn't have nothing to hide, so we weren't afraid at all. We answered some tough questions about the political situation, and primary how we felt about giving away to Stalin by the Western Allies the eastern part of Poland in exchange for parts of eastern Germany. It was to our advantage, that in those day we weren't aware of the give away. The other tough question was to explain how we felt about communism at large. Then we were sworn in again, pledging to obey the constitution and laws of the United States of America and serve the country in the event of war. And again it came to me that wearing or not wearing a hat during the swearing ceremony didn't bother nobody. The consul and the representative could care less. As far as I was concerned, I was so excited about the whole thing, that wearing a hat was the fartherst from my mind.

We returned to Helbrun very happy. First of all we were happy because of the visa to America, and secondly we were gratefull for not having to return, because most of the time the sessions with consul and the representative sometimes lasted two or three days. We knew that there was 2 weeks waiting period for families with small children, but as it turned out we waited much longer, because our Kubus didn't feel good at all.

Still the waiting period wasn't boring at all, but it wasn't pleasant either. A message came from grandma Frances, that grandpa's monument was ready for unveiling. It was already one month after grandpa Abraham died. I went back to Asten leaving Hania and Kubus in Helbrun, because of bad weather and because Kubus wasn't well enough. I was rather sad after I walked in to our room and seeing Kubus' bed empty and not seeing Hania walking around the room. But after regaining my composure, I noticed grandma Frances preparing a good breakfest for me. You see I arrived in Asten late at night and slept in Amsterdams room.

As the day went on we made all the arrangements necessary for the un-veiling. Our friends went with us to the cementary first on the bus to Ebelsberg and then on streetcar to cememntary. Ofcourse we paid the bus and streetcar fares for all the people attending. It was a nice ceremony, and as I wrote before, grandpa Abraham was buried in a prominent place next to the Rabbi who married Hania and me.

It was night already when we arrived at the Linzer railroad station. There we parted company. Ela, Norbert and grandma Frances went on the bus to Asten, and I took a late train back to Salzburg.

Back in Helbrun I have found Hania and Kubus OK. At least for time being. But we were told to move next day to the barracks on the other end of the camp. The administration decided to paint our rooms.

The move to the barrack turned out beneficial for us. We shared our room with the large Lithuanian family, and the door was opening into a long warm hall, so we weren't exposed to cold. At the same time grandma Frances came to Salzburg to be with us. We enjoyed to have her around, and she was happy to be with Kubus.

During the waiting period in Helbrun we attended lectures and movies about the American way of life. It was very nice to see on screen how our future life would develop. It wasn't just propaganda. It was the real thing, as we would find out few short months later.

Because the service in kosher kitchen was almost none existant, we used to buy food from a nearby grocery store. Once I went to a nice delicatesen store and bought there half a pound of hungarian salami. I woke up next morning all covered with rush. The camp doctor told me to stay away from spicy foods.

After few days with us grandma Frances went back to Asten to follow up on her emigration case. She was realy surprised to discover, that she must reduce her high blood preasure before American would proceed her application.

As Amsterdams case was progressing satisfactory we were hopeful that grandma will travel with them.

There was moving time again to the fresh painted rooms. But we regreted leaving the good quarters in the barrack. At least we had been lucky that time around and secured a room in the back without doors leading to the street.

We shared this room with this Jewish-Christian lady and her son, and with "Oh-La_-La's" strong man. The lady left after few days, but we left behind the strong man and his family.

I wanted to speed-up the cleaning process and took upon myself to wash the paint covered windows. Not knowing how to do the job, I pressed to hard on the glass and while doing this I broke it, and cut my thumb severly. With all our problems Kubus included I became a steady customer in the dispencery. The doctor and nurses started to greet me with an "Oh! It's you again". Anyway the nurse took care on my thumb, which took quite few days before it healed.

The elder of the block was an Ukrainian, with his right palm wide open for bribes. The main reason for us getting a better room.

Still better room didn't help us at all. Kubus got sick again. Frankly we didn't know how to handle this predicament. All those old symptons re-apeared again. Slight temperature and sadness, and no apetite. It was like that for three days. It seemed each evening that he was getting better. He ate a little and played some. He slept good, but next morning the whole thing begun all over again.

Then Ela came to visit with us, but left promptly, because she couldn't stand to see Kubus in such condition. Couple of days after Ela left, grandma Frances came to see us again. Maybe it was her influence on our baby, and I am convinced that Kubus recovered quickly after seeing his grandma.

Time of our departure was coming closer and closer, and grandma decided to stay with us until our last day in Salzburg.

As other emigrants we recived clothing from some relief organization, which wasn't good enough for us to wear. We decided to sell this stuff so we called on a Rumanian Jew who used to live in Steyr. He took all this clothing with him and promised to bring money soon. But he never did. Later grandma Frances, came across him in Asten. She made him really sweat for a while, so he didn't have no choice but to give her our money. At that time we were already on our way to United States.

When the announsment came about traveling to Bremenhaven, we were prepared. We changed our leftover Austrian Schillings to German Marks. The last hurdle to overcome was the Austrian custom inspection. People used to tell horror stories about this inspection. We didn't worry, because we didn't have nothing to declare and nothing to hide. Austrian customs didn't look for people like us. They wanted people like our Lithuanian friends who were very rich, with plenty of goosepimps. One of them even asked me if I wouldn't mind to take over couple of his cases. But at the end when we all gathered in front of the custom shack, we found out that it wasn't bad at all. Custom officials just picked up few families at random, even bypassing our Lithuanian friends.

Those Lithuanians were overjoyed. Who knows, what had they carried in their bags and cases. Before all this happened I refused to take over some of their bags.

Few days before leaving for Bremenhaven, on a very nice January afternoon, Hania and I left Kubus with grandma Frances and went downtown to do some last minute shopping. After visiting some shops we stoped on a busy street, and while giving Hania some Austrian Shillings a plaincloth policeman approached us, and after indentifying himself with a badge, he accused us of soliciting. First we didn't understand what this policeman was talking about. At last we realized that he was concerned about the money I was giving to Hania. A short conversation followed and we explained to him that we were man and wife who in few days would leave Austria to emigrate to United States. Obviously he was disapointed because he was sure that he got an arrest. He was very much impertinent. He left us standing there, even without one word of apology. Wasn't this an exciting story? Something not likely to tell ones grandchildren.

Our last few days in Austria went by like in a dream. On the last Sunday before leaving I went to see my last Austrian movie. A typical comedy with Austrian flare, which I liked so much since my youth in Cracow.

I don't remember the exact date when we left Salzburg. Maybe last of January or early February. As always American trucks took us to the railroad station. A special train was waiting for us. Before leaving Helbrun we had an emotional good-by session with grandma Frances. It was particulary hard on her to part with her beloved Kubus.

At least our train from Salzburg to Bremenhaven was much better and more convinient from those other box car trains we got accustom to in our previous travels when we used to be forced guests of the Soviet government.

We shared our compartment with the lady pharmacist and her mother, about whom I wrote before, and who were making this trip second time around. The young woman had had a very intimate parting with her new boyfriend whom she met couple of weeks before, and intended to marry him in New York. A rather sudden decision of a woman who throughout the years in Steyr had many boyfriends much better looking and better educated more suitable for her. Needless to say the wedding never took place because as it turned out the man was a jerk. Grandma Frances who was with him on the same ship told us that he war trying to sell old dry dried out lemons to people who suffered with sea sickness.

Another person in our compartment was a young man, who was looking forward to join his fiance, who was waiting for him someplace in Connecticut. Our next door neighbours were the Lithuanians, who gave me one of their gold watches to wear just in case of an inspection. Instead they took my plain watch. They wanted to be on the safe side when Austrian border guards would enter the train. When the border inspection finally came, all they were interested in American dollars and cigaretts. There was permited to have 15 dollars per person and two packeges of American cigarettes. So after clearing this last obstacle Lithuanians took their watch back.

All this behind we finally crossed into German territory, going north on our way to Bremenhaven.

We recived some food in Salzburg before boarding the train, and then there was this one car attached to the train for mothers and small childrens with beds to sleep and food for children. At night I took Hania and Kubus to this car. It was warm there, but to get there, was another story. While crossing from one platform to another and there were many platforms to cross with hard blowing cold wind. I am quite sure that because of those crossings Kubus got himself another cold.

Chapter 122

Bremenhaven!

After traveling all night long we arrived in Bremenhaven the following afternoon. Trucks took us from the train to a large camp on outskirts of Bremen. The port city of Bremenhaven is located on the River Elba few miles away from Bremen. River Elba at that point is so tremendously large, and opposite shores are completely out of side. Only ocean going ships, vessels and liners are ankered at those shores.

Our last camp before sailing to the United States was the largest we ever had seen. Last in line of many camps, which had begun eleven years before in Tinda in faraway Siberian wilderness. The camp in Bremen was so much different from all those other camps. First of all it was a giant in comparison with all the others. To me it wasn't a camp. It was not an old shtetl from Eastern Europe. Rather it was like a city, with brick three story buildings, with administration, social halls, movie theaters, symphony orchestra and efficient armed police department staffed with former soldiers of armies of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and others who fought on the side of Western Powers, but choose not to return to their countries after the Soviet takeover. This camp was a mixture of many nations. The rules and regulations applied to all of them, and were strict enforced. No more camp committies. The camp had been ran by Americans and International Refugee Organization. Everything there was just. All the same for all nations, except for religious Jews who ran their own affairs.

As on previous occasions all began with registration. Again we recived all kinds of papers and documents and lodging assignments. Hania and Kubus moved into very nice room with the lady pharmacist and her mother. According to regulations men used to live in separate quarters. And this regulation remained in force during the ocean voyage as well. In Bremen we decided to stay away from kosher kitchen. We learned our lesson in Salzburg. We ate three times a day in a large mess hall, and the food was very good. Kitchen for children was even better.

Well! First few hours everything was fine as far as we were concerned. Our good feeling disapeared next morning during another medical examination. Our nightmares came back. Hania's and my check-ups went well, but Kubus had fever again and the doctor there suspected measels, so he decided to put our little Boy in hospital. Even thou we both felt terrible about this doctor's decision, there was nothing we could do. To late we realized, that we made a terrible mistake. We rushed to fast for our phisical examination. If we only would had wait one more day, nothing of that would happen. The good doctor kept Kubus three days in hospital. We listened outside standing in front of his window, and heard him cry constantly. His crying was breaking our hearts. On second day the doctor gave us permission to see our son. He was sitting on his bed crying quietly, his nose running without stoping. When he saw us, he almost jumped out of his bed. Kubus was very happy then and so were we. But not for long. When we left his misery started all over again. Couple of days later Hania and I were the two most happy people in the world when Doctor released Kubus from hospital. He didn't have measels at all. Probably the same cold, which followed him since the first day in Salzburg.

At last we started to relax a little. It was cold in Bremen in those days, and a strong wind was blowing from the sea. Anytime we went out, mostly to eat we bundled our Kubus in all kinds of blankets, because of fear that that he would catch another cold.

Bremen was our home for most of February. When we finally settled I wrote a letter to Frieda telling her and Victor, that we were on the way to America. I also told them in this letter that grandpa Abraham passed away.

In another letter I notified our relatives in New York about our arrival, asking them to come and pick us up at the pier.

The old rule , which required for some un-employed D.P.s to work couple of days a week without pay, applied in Bremen as well. I worked twice unloading coal from rail box cars into trucks. My old profesion still didn't leave me.

Bremenhaven!

I slept on an upper bed in men's dormitory. I prefered the up-stairs, because I was afraid that person sleeping on the top might somehow land on me during an un-expected fall. Another reason was that fumes from above would spoil my fresh air. Otherwise the dormitory was clean, pleasant with plenty of light.

One evening I listened to a concert performed by Hungarian musicians. Their Hungarian compatriots in the audience have cried with all their hearts listening to their national melodies, which made them aware of a possibility of not seeing their land Hungary no more in their lives.

The time was getting closer and closer for us to leave Europe. We felt no remorse, except maybe for our relatives who perished. We thought that this was the right thing to do, and that there was nothing left for us there.

The last chore before leaving Bremen was to check in our baggage. There were no more custom inspections. The only idea was to make sure that nothing was missing. Still to assure smooth and efficient transfer from the storage to the ship all emigrants used to bribe the German crew with 20 German Marks.

I assume that it was last of February or first of March when trucks again took us to another yet railroad station. Before leaving each of us recived rye-bread salami sandwiches. We ate on the train during the short trip to Bremenhaven. We all assebled later in a large hangar. Some people there, among them our Kubus got the last on the spot medical examination. A nurse stuck a thermometer into his little behind. His temperature was normal at that time, so the nurse said that he was ready to board the ship. There were many officials from IRO, AJDC and HIAS on hand. Each one of them checked off our names from their respectable lists. After this last ritual we took our places in a long line, waiting to get on the ship.

In front of us as far as we could see there was water and more water. And mind you, those weren't waters of the North Sea, those were still waters of the Elba River, deep enough to accomodate trans-Atlantic ships. Two Unites States Navy transport ships were anchored at the shore at this particular place. This indicated to us that two transports would leave Bremenhaven simutaneously. One ship was SS Gen. Stewart. The same ship which brought Frieda and Victor to America. The other was SS Gen. Muir (our ship). Those ships used to bring American troops to Europe, and on their return voyage delivered to New York or New Orleans the new immigrants from Europe. Waiting to embark we carried with us couple of pieces of luggage. Kubus felt comfortable in Hania's arms and I carried an extra knapsack on my back.

Who was Gen. Muir and why they named a ship after him I still don't know. The fact remains that as soon after we boarded the ship Hania and Kubus went to left and I to right, because of this stupid rule to keep men away from women. Hania and Kubus shared a very nice room with comfortable beds with another lady with a small boy, who as later turned out was related to Rotters and Bluts in Jaslo, which made her a far away removed cousin of Hania. This nice room was in the section for ship officers.

In meantime I was sent down almost to the bottom of the ship to a large dorm to share the bunks with other ninety nine men. Again for reasons I already told you I had found myself an upper bunk.

After I settled there was time already to go to eat supper. It was a cafeteria style mess hall and the food was delicious. I ate plenty, but this was my last solid meal for the duration of the voyage. My next meal was on our arrival in New York harbor, when I ate breakfest before leaving the ship for good.

The other important rule of the voyage was that every able man and woman were obliged to perform a servive without pay. During a mass meeting after the supper ship officers assigned to us all those voluntary duties. So people who knew even little of English became translators, and others took jobs closest to their profesions. I didn't feel how to work at all, so having some expirience in camp security I joined the ship security. They gave me an armband with M.P. on it, and told me to guard places I would be assigned to.

Chapter 123

Crossing the Atlantic!

My first watch was on ship's d upper deck, on a rather cold night. I was just standing there half hiden behind an open door to avoid the cold wind, when suddenly my stomach started to turn inside me. I knew right away that I was sea-sick. Ten days of one of the greatest miseries had begun. During that period of time I didn't eat nothing except some apples from the mess hall, and carried with me constantly a can of orange juice, which I purchased at the ship's PX. Those sips from the can made me feel a little better at least for few minutes, until the next wave of sea-water bounced of the ship again.

Always I tried to be close to throw-up containers, just in case of a throw-up attack. There was no help from nobody. A Belgian woman who was ship's administrator from IRO, kept saying: Go to work. You are not sick. And the doctor after giving me few useless pills, sent me to work as well, after telling me, that I was not sick either. Still I was sick, and it was even hard on me to perform my watch dutes especially at night.. Therefore I decided to help myself.

Second day on the ship I was told to move to dormitory for the security personal. Again I took an upper bunk, and soon discovered that the best medicine for sea-sickness was to lay down and take a nap.

It took me more then 24 hours to find Hania and Kubuś. Really it wasn't me who found them. Hania asked the steward of her section to page me, and this was how we finally got re-united. I was sick like a dog as soon as the ship left the waters of Elba River and entered the North Sea.

Hania's cabin was very comfortable. As soon as Hania and the other lady in the cabin discovered that they were somehow related, they became friendly.

Kubuś was doing very well during the entire voyage. His appetite was very good, and he would eat a lot more, but Hania was ~~was~~ sea-sick as well, still not as bad as I was. Many times she gave away her food for Kubuś.

The steward in Hania's section was a black men who was very helpful to mothers with small children. He kept re-calling an incident which took place on a ship carrying D.P.s to Australia. And to get to Australia took much longer then the voyage to America. Young mothers on this ship suffered a lot because of sea-sickness, and many of them weren't able to care about their small children. To the horror of all the passengers couple of children on the ship died.

The Atlantic Ocean is seldom quiet during month of March. And so was the case while we were crossing the sea. There were only two or three calm days, with bright sun shining. Most of the passengers either strolled on the lower deck, others with small children all bundled up were sitting in chairs or benches enjoying the fresh sea air.

On dyas when sea got real rough and the ship kept bouncing all over people were quite scared. In my dormitory man started a panic when he took coke spilling from an overturned bottle for sea water entering the cabin. He convinced himself that pretty soon the ship will go under.

One night when I was on duty in a hall in the lower part of the ship, water entered ~~the~~ through an open passage rushing with an enormous speed down those stairs directly at me. I was able quickly to move to a safe place. It took four men working few hours to clean-up the mess.

I liked very much to stay with Hania and Kubuś in their cabin. I enjoyed to play with my son, and take a nap on their soft bed. Nights were the only time when I was feeling quite decent while laying flat on my bunk and sleeping.

The chief of security on shipboard was former capitain of Polish army who fought on the side of Western Allies. A good man. But his Yugoslavian deputy was another story. There was no communication between him and other people, because the only language he understood was Croatian. Few times at night I pretended being hard asleep, when he was trying to wake me up to go on my watch. But I was determent not to go to work, so after shaking and pulling he finally was giving-up on me, leaving with a full mouth of Croatian curses.

Many people on shipboard for one reason or another were spared from the miseries of sea-sickness. They kept strolling all the time up and down the decks, talking, laughing and having good time.

Chapter 123 (cont)

Crossing the Atlantic!

And ofcourse there was an entertainment on the ship as well. Movies and concerts kept peoples minds off the sea-sickness. An average person if he or she wanted could buy at PX many things with scripts IRO gave us when we boarded the ship in Bremenhaven. Still orange juice was most popular. One of the bigest attraction were the vending machines, especially the coke machine. Most of the new immigrants didn't see a vending machine in their lifetime before this crossing. They used to exchange their one dollar biils for coins from the shipmen in order to see the wonder of liquid coke pouring into a paper cup.

My greatest pleasure during the voyage was taking a shower. I would stay there a long time, savoring the salted water spilling all over me. Good thing about salted water shower was, that there was no need for towels to get dry. A good shower made me feel much better because my nausea subsided as well.

Besides Jews many other nationalities journeyed on our ship. Everybody was getting along fine, except a bunch of Ukrainians, who couldn't hide their disapointment that Jews were going to United States with them. There were some incidents including shoving and anti-Semitic remarks. Jews reported this Ukrainian group to the ship capitain. If he wanted to take somekind of action, it was in his power to jail them, but evidently the whole affair ended with a reprimand. So even on the way to a golden and free land Jewish enemies wouldn't stop their hunt.

Hania and I were 29 years old during our voyage to America. You might say one third of our lives over. Six of those years spent in most deplorable conditions and other five in search of a better future. So for time being we were rather happy leaving the darkness and storms all behind us.

The endless waiting for something good to come along, seemed like a lifetime. We were spared the horrors of Nazism by hands of a person who didn't have our welfare in his mind at all. What he wanted to do just to exploit us. He succeded because he was a savage person himself. But at least him and his helpers, choose to abstain from the ultimate method of dealing with their slaves. Yes! for six long years we were those slaves.

Late afternoon March 12, 1951 our ship stoped at the edge of the New York City Harbor. The Statue of Liberty was standing in front of us. Our capitain had anchored his ship because entering harbor was forbiden after certain evening hour. The disembarking process had begun early next morning March 13, 1951.

Chapter 124

New York!

Most of the passengers remained standing and walking on ship's upper deck, admiring the twinkling lights of New York City. Hania and Kubus finally got tired and went down to their cabin and to bed.

As for so many immigrants before us the bright beam of the torch in the arm of Statue of Liberty was the first sign welcoming us to the great United States of America.

On the morning of March 13,1951 we put our best clothing on bought especially for this important occasion. I remember taking our old traveling clothing and throwing them all into the depth of the harbors waters. By todays standarts I commited a crime of poluting the enviroment.

As far as Hania and I were concerned we felt very special and privileged. After all, ever since 1886, when the great torch of Statue of Liberty was lifted into place 305 feet Bedloe's (now Liberty) Island in New York harbor, the colosal statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World" has symbolized America for millions of eager newcomers. Many wept as they neared the American shore, recalling all they had left behind and apprehensive about what they might find in the new land. But with their first glimpse of the statue as one of the immigrants recalled, they were "steadied... by the concreteness of the symbol of American freedom, and they dried their tears!

On a tablet within the statue are inscribed the last five lines of a sonet, "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus, herself an immigrant:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

When our turn came to leave the ship, a man from Immigration Department, handed us a temporary I.D. card, one for the entire family, and then we carefully watching our steps walked down the narrow gang plank, to soon find ourselves inside the pier.

Our arrival was no sensation anymore, because hundreds of other ships with emigrants from Europe, most of them victims of Hitler's era kept arriving in New York harbor since 1945-1946.

In a large hall American Red Cross volunteers were busy distributing coffee and doughnuts to the newcomers. Thesse people experienced greeters, also got a chance to learn the habits of many newcomers. In earlier days a newcomer had collected coffee and doughnuts for his large family even thou he was a single. He tried to collect as much as possible, remembering days of his internement in concentration camps. At last Red Cross people got wise to them, and at the time of our arrival, only one cup of coffee and one doughnut had been issued per person standing in line.

After collecting all pieces of our baggage, a custum clearence was next. Even thou we personally didn't have nothing to declare we were instructed to open our trunk and bags. Custom officials tried hard to be polite. They even learned few German words to make it easier on us and for themselves. But the Longshoremen at the pier were another story. That was the first hostility I encountered in America. I tried very hard to convince by showing him a key a longshoreman not to break the lock to our trunk with a crowbar, who proced to ignore my pleas and broke the lock anyway. Our trunk and couple of other items were transfered to a storage company on West 36 street. They gave us a recipt, Later when we needed some items from our trunk I visited the storage to get them out, and our trunk was still open then. Finally the storage company put a steel band around it. There was nothing missing when the stuff arrived in Kansas City six weeks later.

The large pier became a busy place, and lots of activity was going on, when relatives started tearfully embrace each other.

New York!

After being cleared by the customs, we finally met our new cousins; Pauline Pearlman and Sid Rosenblum, wife of Milton Rosenblum and Pauline's brother, who came to claim us from the harbor. We greeted and introduced each other and at last we got the first chance to thank them for all their efforts on our behalf.

All this seemed like a long dream, unbelievable but true. Yes! We had arrived in the land of our dreams. United States of America. We crossed our last line to freedom, after passing through an exit to the city. The doors of the harbor have closed behind us. A significant moment. Behind those doors we left our past, looking ahead for a brighter future.

All preliminaries behind, and jitters of meetings first Americans melted like a piece of ice in hot weather, when we settled in a cab. We realized then, that Pauline and Sid were nice and friendly people, and we felt deep down, that we made a good impression on them. In other words they liked us.

The first glimps of New York made a tremendous impression on Hania and myself. We saw many films and pictures of this great city, but seeing it in flesh was something else. Never before in our lives we saw such tall buildings, heavy traffic, neon lights and so many people everywhere.

We spoke in Yiddish to each other, and I guess we were lucky that Pauline and Sid spoke perfect Yiddish as well, maybe even better then us. After a rather long ride we arrived at the HIAS building on LaFayette street, first to register and get our hotel assignment.

During this first cab ride in New York on Pauline's suggestion I ceased to be Cesiek, Hania became Anna and our Kubus Jackie.

Still accompanied by Pauline Peralman and Sid Rosenblum another cab took us from HIAS to West 32nd street to our hotel, which in reality was one of those apartment hotels with bathrooms and restrooms in the halls to use by the tenants collectively. Pauline informed us that doors to a restroom should be kept open while not in use, so people would know that it wasn't occupied. Someting new for us greenhorns.

Actually Hotel Stratford was located in a high class area, almost on the corner of Fifth Avenue and West 32nd street, which wasn't bad at all considering the conviniences of transportation, stores and walking distance to HIAS building.

Our room was on 5th floor. Jackie right away took the likening to the elevator operator who became his friend for the duration. Shortly after moving in we met another member of the family, Pauline's daughter Mariam, a very nice young woman, who soon went down to the store and bought some food for us.

All the excitement of meeting the relatives and settling down, we finally were left alone in our room to take much deserved rest. Before leaving Pauline gave us some more advise and told us to be ready in the evening when her brother Dr. Joe Rosenblum and his wife Eve would pick us up, and take us for dinner in Milton Rosenblum's house.

Joe and Eve Rosenblum as it turned out were very nice people, like our kind of folks. After we met them later this evening and for the next month they spent lots of time with us. They used to invite us to their home on 28 East 10th street quite often for dinners and otherwise. We met there their son Robert, daughter Judy and their cook and maid Margaret who spoke German with us. Rosenblums gave us many tours of New York including a tour of the famous Waldorf Astoria hotel on our first night in New York. On another night we met one Mrs. Schreier who later became Judy's mother in law.

While having dinner at Milton's house we made a call to Kansas City to tell Frieda and Victor that we finally arrived. Ofcourse they insisted for us to come to Kansas City and settle there. Ofcourse everything depended of finding a job and how the Jewish Refugee Organization in New York would react to such a proposal.

All tired from our first day's activities in America we finally went to bed to rest and prepare for next day interviews with people in HIAS.

Chapter 124 (cont)

New York!

Probably it would take a small book to describe our 4 weeks in New York City. We left our hotel at 9.30am to be in time for our appointments in HIAS. Anybody who had business in the HIAS building, was served a good breakfest, lunch or supper. Downstairs in front of the hotel we hailed a cab, because it was easier then looking for a bus stop first time alone on streets of New York.

At HIAS we saw and talked to many different officials, who at the end of ~~the~~ our second day in New York gave us more appointments with other officials in a different part of town No. 15 Row street. Just to be on a safe side we went through an abbreviated medical examination.

On the third day in the offices at 15 Row we talked with people who informed us about the job situation in New York. From then on, which ever official we came in touch kept telling us the same story, that jobs in New York City were rather scarce. At the end of all those meetings the man in charge told us to go and get our social security cards and before we will come back to see him again to answer lots of questions on a long form.

In meantime for the next four weeks we kept busy sightseeing around New York. Every Sunday morning we used to go to the HIAS building where thousands of newcomers met. I personally came across many people whom I knew before the war in Cracow. Then there were those whom we knew in Siberia and few from Steyr.

Besides visits with our American relatives, who took a very good care on us, we visited many other friends and other relatives. Esther Apterbach and her mother aunt Regina Leniower came to see us at the harbor, but wasn't able to find us. Finally after few hours trying they got in touch with HIAS who gave them the name of our hotel. Since then we used to spent entire Saturdays in their home

Once on a nice April Sunday Pauline's daughter Mariam and her husband Ray Groce took us by car to their parents farm in Cranbury New Jersey, near Trenton. We had there a very good time, and we met there Pauline's husband Sol Perlman and their son Louis. To get to New Jersey we traveled through Pulaski Sky Bridge and through a tunnel under Hudson River. On the way back we made another crossing on a ferry. It was for us quite a side to see all those cars parked on this large "boat"while people were standing at the barriers or sitting and admiring the lights of New York and the Statue of Liberty.

Among all these new faces Jackie had quite a time. With some minor exceptions he loved all this attention he was getting, and to tell the truth everybody loved him. When Regina Rosenbach came to see us at the hotel, she couldn't take her hands off him. Later we also visited with her parents and brother in their Brooklyn apartment. In Bronx we visited with gandma's Frances cousins the Metzgers, our friends from Siberia the Julies and ofcourse Shmil Zalmen Goldberg.

An elegant lady came to Dr. Rosenblum's home while we were there and told Hania that she was her cousin, but without to much explanation. She brought some clothing with her, including a persian three quarter fur still in a very good condition. Later Eve (Joe's wife) told us that this lady was one of Salomoms from Tuchow.

As before during our travels Jackie got sick again, and with temperature elevated Dr. Rosenblum thought that he came down with measels, which again as in Bremenhaven it was just a cold. One night in hotel he wouldn't sleep anyplace else but on my chest.

On another occasion Hania got lost on the way back from HIAS to hotel, but some friendly New Yorkers on the bus helped her to come home safely. Then when I was waiting for my bus an oldtimer Jewish policeman wanted to know if I was from Stanislaw a town in Eastern Poland, which now is a part of Soviet Union. The worst accident occured when aunt Regina spilled herself and the food she was carrying for us in the front of the hotel. Luckily she didn't hurt herself seriously.

After one week or so we went back to see the man in charge of placing people at the offices at 15 Row. We answered all the questions listed on the form, IN Our answer to the last and maybe most important questions about our plans for the future we stated our desire to leave New York and settle in Kansas City.

The man was rather astonished reading our answers. First of all he was pleasantly surprised by our English answers, interupting few times to make sure that I was writing everything myself. But what surprised him most, was the answer to the last question, where we wanted his help in moving us to Kansas City. He realized that New York in those days was overloaded with refugees, but nobody wanted to leave, he himself and others like him used to be firmly against the idea of anybody leaving New York. At the end he asked if we wouldn't mind for him to discuss our future with our principal sponsor our cousin Milton Rosenblum. Ofcourse we agreed, and right away we went to Milton's law office which was located just across the street and told him all about it.

The meeting between Milton Rosenblum and the man handling our case, ended with an agreement, that Milton would pay for our train trip to Kansas City, and the caseworker would give us a recommendation letter to Jewish Family Service in Kansas City, attention to Miss Emilia Levine who was then the executive director of this agency asking her to give us any help necessery in settling and starting our new life here.

We spent the remaining few days in New York meeting the Ashheim family, old friends (even related) of grandma Frances back in Tuchow. Then Hania made a call to another good Friend (cousin) of grandma's since her childhood in Tuchow. Mrs. Ida Lehr. This woman wasn't friendly at all. She even didn't invite us to come and see her in her home.

My personal stay in New York wouldn't be completed if I wouldn't see my old friend from Steyr Sigmund Dickerstein and his family in Brooklyn. While there I also visited the Lefkovitz family from Steyr as well, who again like some years before waited in Steyr for return of their daughter from Poland to Steyr, were going through the same waiting period for her to arrive in New York with her husband, FROM STEYR who was the main reason that she went from Steyr to Poland in the first place.

It wasn't easy for us to leave New York after meeting the wonderfull Rosenblum-Pearlman family. We expressed to them our thanks and gratitude, and reciving their assurances of help anytime we deem it necessery.

Night before our departure Joe and Eve Rosenblum took us to Grand Central Station to check in our baggage. These two people were our helpers, guides and most important friends throughout our first four weeks in United States. Eve even mentioned once that we don't act like greenhorns at all, only Jackie's clothing was giving us away. With her help we changed his image as well.

The entire family was with us at the Grand Central Station before boarding our train to Chicago. Even the youngest brother Harald whom we didn't get a chance to meet before was there. He was then a very ill man and passed away shortly afterward.

We took our places in a very nice car, and Joe Rosenblum assured us, that the car with the train from Chicago to Kansas City, wouldn't be that much elegant and comfortable. As it turned out later the car on the Santa Fe train El-Capitan was even more luxurious.

Our first trip on an American train was pleasant and relaxing. We didn't have no problems in Chicago to transfer from Grand Central Station to Santa Fe station. A friendly Jewish lady who was going to visit her daughter in Los Angeles spoke very good Polish and kept us company.

We were anxious to see Frieda and Victor after a year and a half separation, but most of all we wanted to see their new son Martin.

Chapter 125

Kansas City!

We arrived in Kansas City in mid-morning on April 13 1951. The long awaited re-union finally took place at Kansas City's Union Station.

Leaving our car we noticed them right away, just standing there on the platform. Frieda and Victor smiling, and Victor holding Martin on his arm. It took us a while to get used to each other, and having "Hellos, How are yous, and kisses behind us we went down the escalator into the impressive front hall of the Union station talking constantly about this and that and what will be.

First Frieda said, pointing at Martin; 'Look how skinny he is.' Then Hania said pointing at Jackie: 'He was so plump when we left Austria,' and look at him now how tired he is. And so it went on and on.

Believe it or not, but there was no cab around, so we got on the 27 street bus. After few minutes of riding because of all the excitement Victor noticed that we were going in a wrong direction. So we got off the bus at the next stop, and crossed the street to wait for the right bus. Our first adventure in Kansas City ended on 27th and Cherry streets when we entered a building on 2710 Cherry. Pollmans apartment was on second floor, very nice, bright and clean and furnished with brand new furniture in living and bedroom. The rest of the apartment consisted of a small kitchen and dinning room furnished with a new dinette set, a cot to sleep and Martin's baby bed.

Victor was working at that time for Englender Mattress Company in North Kansas City, after rather bed experience while working for the same kind of company, owned then by his cousin by marriage Moses Berger with a partner a man named Kantor who was from the same village as Berger back in Eastern Poland. Ofcourse Victor's remarks offended not only Berger and his partner, but his Uncle Sam Pollman (brother of Victor's father) and father to Frances, Berger's wife, who even threatened Victor with sending him back ~~from where he came~~ TO AUSTRIA.

With Frieda's help we arranged for appointments with the Jewish Family and Social Services located then on Admiral Blvd. Our first and only caseworker was an Irish young woman Miss O'Leary. We were accepted by the above mentioned social services after Miss O'Leary had red the letter from New York to Miss Emilie Levine.

First of all we recived a thorough medical examination by many doctors, among them our future family doctors Dr. Walter P. Jacob and pediatritian Dr. Kantor. After two weeks of staying with Frieda and Victor the Jewish Family Services moved us to Emmerson Hotel on Linwood Blvd, one of those not do elegant apartment hotels of that era.

After few appointments with Miss O'Leary we recived some spending money, used furniture to furnish entire two bedroom apartment from Salvation Army, and from Feder Brothers Department Store on East 27 Street complete sets of furnishings, like dishes, bedding and so on.

Before moving to our apartment on 2706 Benton Blvd we have met Sara and Milton Pollman aunt and uncle of Victor's. Milton was a very nice man. Then we met some of Frieda's and Victor's friends among them some refugees who came to Kansas City together with them. Those were Isak and June Feinsilver and Sam and Edna Rozga.

Little by little we met Victor's aunt Elizabeth and her husband Friedman, and much later Victor's other aunt Bessie and her husband Harry Mallin. We didn't meet the patriarch of the Pollmans in Kansas City uncle Sam Pollman until much later and his daughter Frances and husband Moses Berger, who after our first meeting insisted that I call him "cousin Moyshe".

Our landlord on 2706 Benton was one Mrs. Esther Cosner a very rich lady who used to own grocery wholesale business Lady Baltimore. There we met our first American friends Molly and Elmer Schanzer, who helped us a lot in those days, not financially but with advise ofcourse. Since then our Jackie and the Schanzers younger son became friends and remained good friends until today.

Schanzers other two sons were alredy in those days in school. Steve was the oldest and then was Jerry who as a child was ill with polio and used to wear braces on both legs.

Slowly but sure the rest of our family arrived in America few weeks behind us. While spending an evening with Frieda and Victor in their apartment, Norbert and Ela called from their hotel in New York. Their passage to this country, wasn't any different then ours. From Asten to Salzburg and then to Bremenhaven and finally the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean until they reached the New York harbor.

They stayed few weeks in New York meeting our relatives and Norbert's relatives as well. Few get togethers with our former friends from camps in Austria including Regina Rosenbach a good friend of Ela ended at last when Norbert, Ela and Norbert's mother went to Cleveland Ohio to join there their aunt and uncle Mr. & Mrs. Leon Wiesenfeld, who was a famous Jewish journalist and one of the leaders of the Jewish community in that city. Eventualy they settled in Cleveland to start their new life.

Grandma Frances endured the longest sea voyage, much longer then all of us. The emigration authorities separated her in Bremenhaven from Ela and Norbert, because her destination was Kansas City. They assigned her to a ship going first to Caracas Venezuela. After immigrants scheduled to settle in Venezuela left the ship grandma's voyage continued north to New Orleans. The heat and sea sickness plagued not only grandma Frances but most of the passengers. Everybody was relieved after docking in New Orleans.

The Jewish Federation of New Orleans took a very good care on the new arrivals. they put them up in a very nice hotel, fed them and let them rest, and gave them a tour of New Orleans.

Grandma Frances arrived in Kansas City May 5, 1951. We met her at the Union Station. She was very happy to see us after 5 months separation, and ofcourse Frieda and Victor after one year and a half. She was very much excited to see Martin for the first time and ofcourse her beloved Kubus who after not seeing her such a long time even didn't recognized her.

Grandma's first wish after arriving in Frieda's apartment was to drink a cup of tea with milk.

So on this beautiful May day,,us the remnants and survivors of our families all of us were finally here in Kansas City, Missouri, in a city we used to see sometimes in cowboy and Indian movies fighting each other, in a city which in those westerns was portrayed as a one street "town". Ofcourse a lot changed since those wild west days. Even in those days almost forty years ago Kansas City was already a beautiful grown-up city.

Well! As I said before we were here, but not settled yet firmly. With hope and determination even thou we didn't know what our future will be, we were young and eager to start.

Looking into the future one thought was very important then and still is today. We should do our atmost not to forget our past, our former families and our ways of life, as they used to be. And this always was and still is the most important purpose of this writing. "Remember! Never Forget!"

Epilog!

Almost forty years went by, since that eventful day, and our arrival in Kansas City. Probably the second most important day in our lives. First being our survival at the end of world war two.

As many other families who arrived here in Kansas City after the war and some of those, mostly German refugees who came here before the war we went through the difficult period of adjustment, learning the language, meeting local people who not always acted as friendly as they should, while keeping in mind that only 40 years before, some of them even earlier and other later came here poor and bewildered as well, knowing only about their Jewish heritage, but not knowing how to write or read. I assume that the unfriendliness was a result of Jealousy, that most of our people were much better educated, many with degrees from major learning institutions in Europe.

As far as our family was concerned Frieda and Victor were ahead by one year and a half.After disapointments with his own family, who wouldn't help Victor at all, even with doctor's expences after Martin was born, he was forced to leave the job in Berger's factory and seek employment with Englender Mattress Co, a National chain. When we came to Kansas City he worked there, but was in a process to get a job with Benson Mfg. Co. on 12 and Agnes, a barrel manufacturer, who at that time converted his plant to help the war effort in Korea by making parts for airplanes. On Victor's suggestion I myself filled out an application for employment there. Even thou they promised to hire me, I was never called, but Victor got the call and for time being he was working on two jobs. During the day at the Mattress factory and at night at Bensons.

My first job in Kansas City was with Empire Mattress Co. A brother of Berger's partner used to own this establishement. He hired me when one of his workers left him, because before we came here on Victor's urging he sent a letter to the Jewish Refugee Relief Organization in New York that he would give me a job.

I worked for this company 10 days only, and during that period of time I injured myself twice, once seriously with a sprain ankle, while I was unloading a railroad car loaded with bails of pressed cotton as heavy as over 100 lbs, per bail. When I returned to work after my recovery, which lasted only few days I was fired, with an explanation that the former employee returned.

It wasn't a big loss anyway. Mr. Kantter paid me 75c per hour and I was working 10 hours daily.

The only advantage we had over Frieda and Victor was that because they came here on the invitation of his family they weren't entittled to help from the Jewish Family Services. But us with our recomendation from Jewish Organization in New York, recived a full help from Jewish Family Services. That why I went to the Jewish Voctional Service and met there with one Miss Hale, who as I thought like what I had to say. She even complimented me on my English and was impressed with my education. She gave a referal to the Lee Wald Garment Co. makers of "Jackie Jumper" clothing for boys. I stayed there almost 2 years. My starting salary was $32.50 per week. I started as a packer, but soon enough I learned the entire operation of the shipping and order filing department. Boy! Was I disapointed. The bosses there "Blessed Be Their Memory" Mr. Joe Greenbaum and his son Buddy (Marvin) took me under their wings, with lots of promises, which never materialized. Oh yes! Mr. Greenbaum senior took me to an opthometrist and financed a new pair of glasses for me, so as he put it, would help me with my new position in his organization. When at last I quit my job with Lee Wald I was making $42.50, still not enough to support my family, but at least I learned a lot about the shipping business.

In meantime Hania took a job with Luce Mfg Co, makers of luggage. The pay was good even for a beginner, but the job was to hard for her, including long hours and Saturday. Trying to help out Hania applied and was hired by a Louis Walter Co. who manufactured ladies coats and suits. And this was how both of us got involved in coats business, as it was often called "shmate business".Ofcourse Hania didn't have a slightest idea about sawing but with help of other greenhorns, who worked there, especially thanks to help of Morris Poznanski (now Morris Pous) she learned a lot and survived the initial period, becaming later one of the best workers in the finishing department, sawing buttons, fur collars and buttonholes.

Epilog! (cont)

On the way to work at Lee Wald Garment Company, while waiting at the bus stop at 27 street and Benton Blvd. I spoted a familiar face. A face of a person who was an important part of my childhood back in Cracow. At first I just could not believe that this was Yurek (Jerry) Leuchter with whom I played on Planty in Cracow in early 1920s, at whose grandparents grocery store we used to buy our food, whose mother was a good friend of my mother, and with whom later together I attended Sobieski gimnazium. I was rather pleasantly surprised, but I decided not to aproach at that time. It was obvious that he didn't recognize me.

When I returned home from work Hania told me, that she met a woman with two children who lived across the street from our house on Benton. And then Hania told me later that her name was Leuchter I was sure that the man at the bus stop was Yurek.

Our first get together was rather quiet. We exchanged our stories about our survival during the war. Jerry's parents and many other relatives including the grandparents who used to sell us groceries perished in holocaust. Him and his younger brother Milek who lives now in Warsaw, Poland escaped to the east and settled in Lvov. Later after the Soviet invasion Jerry tried to escape to Palestine through Rumania but got caught by Soviet border guards and sent to a Siberian labor camp. After the war he returned to Cracow, where he got re-united with his brother Milek who under assumed Christian name,,by hiding and joining a Polish underground army survived. Milek remained in Poland working in Polish press. Jerry joined a kibutz in Cracow where he met his wife Ida. They left Poland through Czechoslovakia, Austria and finally reaching Italy, where their first son Marvin was born. In 1949 they left Italy and came to Kansas City where their second son Emil was born in 1950. Few years later they gave birth to a daughter Sonia Victoria (Sasha).

There were many greenhorns living around 27th street and Benton. In another apartment building owned by Mrs. Cosner as well used to live the Dobrowskis, Rozgas, the Gutovitz family and Feinsilvers, and others from surrounding neighbourhoods. We used to seek out each other and even thou we were strangers to each other we acted like a large family. Soon after we met the Mittlemnas, Devinkis (whose name then was Drzewienski), Zelmaniviches, and the other family Drzewienski who moved in to our apartment building and took an apartment across ours on first floor.

The last of Drzewienskis who came to Kansas City was their sister Pola Eisenberg. Both the Drzewienskis our neighbours and Eisenbergs had sons boths with a name Max. Maxi as his parents used to call him was a playmate of Jackie, as long his parents were our neighbours. They also had a daughter, Margot who then was high school age.

This part of the Drzewienski family and Eisenbergs were rather wealthy people who back in Germany operated a dry goods store. After a while they opened here in Kansas City a dry goods whosesale, but were forced later to abandon it, because of a water damage from fire in a business above them. Later they decided to move to New York where they used to own another dry goods store. Mr. Henry Drzewienski died in New York. His wife Esther moved his body for burial in Israel, and settled there herself. Her son Max is married and lives here in Kansas City.

I write about this family, because grandma Frances had a rather warm friendship with Mrs. Regina Brown mother of Mary Drzewienski wife od Fred Drzewienski, who with their son Sam were the first Drzewienskis in Kansas City. As years went by they had two daughters Karen and Ida. Throughout the years they became one of the wealthiest family in this area. Sam and Karen are married and have their own children. Ida will be married soon.

Without mentioning any names some of the newcomers here in town colaborated with Nazis in concentration camps and ghettos, and on many occasions were recognized by former inmates, but thanks to a decision of local survivors, they were able and some still are living out their lives in peace I am quite sure with heavy and guilty conscience.

Epilog! (cont)

Already in those days of 1951 the 27 & Benton neighbourhood was considered as a changing area. Whites were moving out and the Black population was moving in. Still there were many buildings occupied by Whites only and some by Blacks only, and many were mixed. Besides us the newcomers,many Jewish old-timers and young people as well lived there.

It wasn't to hard then to figure out how to move around the city by bus or streetcar. On our second day here in Kansas City I went with Victor to North Kansas City so he could show me his place of work at Englender Mattress Co. While there I filled out an application for employment, but I was never called. I returned home on Cherry street by myself without any problems.

There were all kinds of stores and service companies around 27 & Benton and a block away on Prospect Ave. First few yards away there was Parkview Drug Store, then Liquor Palace owned by Mr, and Mrs. Maizlish, a very nice couple. We never bought spirits in their store but bread and salami for lunch to take to work. Next there was a laundromat, barber shop and others.

On Prospect a newcomer Gutovitz already opened a shoe repair shop, and there was there a cleaning shop owned by Black people and a cinema for Blacks only, and even a store with used furniture. On the corner of 27 & Prospect was Ben's Food Market serving mostly the Black community.

We used to buy our groceries first from Milgram at 33 & Troost, but we switched later to Safeway at 28 & Prospect, a walking distance from our apartment. Nearby on Lockridge street used to live the Lipszyc family with their son Jack and later arrivals from Sweden relatives of Rozgas and the Blum family.

Another large concentration of newcomers from Europe was in a large building on 29th and Main street. Many others had spreaded all over the city mostly on the Missouri side.

Soon enough the Rotman family arrived from Austria and joined their nephews the Mandelbaum boys, who by then were already back from Korea. They used to live couple of buildings away from us on Benton as well.

And so it went. Everybody was doing their best finding employment in their profesions. Tailors were most popular because of a large garment industry here in Kansas City. Then other trades used to hire shoemakers, carpenters and so on.

As far as I know it wasn't easy at first for Amsterdams in Cleveland. Their family the Wiesenfelds and cousin Sandra who came to Cleveland before the WAR. and later married a wealthy businessman Walter (his first name) didn't offer to much help. They had found for them an apartment in a changing neighbourhood as well. Walter gave Norbert a job in his furniture store and made him carry heavy pieces of furniture. Ela found a job in a garment factory as a spreader in cutting room but quit after few days. Norbert's mother was hired by the Hebrew Academy to perform hard work in the kitchen, Ofcourse all this changed with time, and Ela gave birth to their first child, a boy Larry Abraham named after Norbert's father Eliezer and after grandpa Abraham. They moved to a better location on Mayfield. With Wiesenfeld's help Norbert got a better job with Mantle's Furniture store, where he worked himself up to become a top salesman and store menager. Ela went back to her old profesion knitting, after finding some influential customers. Esther Amsterdam quit her job at the Academy. By the way, Larry Amsterdam was born June 9, 1952.

Back in Kansas City Frieda gave birth September 10 1952 to their second son Arnold Melvin, named after grandpa Abraham and in honor of Victor's mother Malka. Those were very hard times for all of us here. Frieda got ill and needed not only doctors help, but help around the house. Hania was forced to quit her job with Louis Walter Company and help her sister. For time being Victore even insisted on paying Hania for her help. Grandma Frances took care on Jackie at home.

Eventually Frieda recovered sufficient to take care on her family and the newborn baby. Yet the results of her predicament, never really went away. Many complains from her about her health continues until today.

At that time Victor after working for a while on two jobs decided to stay with Benson Company only, and kept working for them for many years to come.

All "greenhorns" from our area used to get together for conversations in front of buildings where they used to live, after hard days of work in hot factories where they used to work to bragg and complain to each other about their successes and failures. Some of them exaggerated about their accomplishments and salaries at work making other jealous. Hot summer days and nights with high humidity kept families outside. Later everybody had found out about Swope Park. So instead to congregate in front of the buildings we used to take buses after work to enjoy the cool evenings in Swope Park, and on Sunday afternoons.

I got first taste of winter in Kansas City in early January 1952, after leaving work at 23rd and McGee and seeing all those cars stuck and blocking streets around Union Station. Buses were stuck behind cars as well, so I experienced my first long walk from Union Station to 27 and Benton since my walks from Palasan to Fergana in Uzbekistan.

In spring of 1953 I finally decided to leave Lee Wald Garment Company and look for another job. Again I went to Jewish Vocational Service and got an appointment with Mr. Bernstein who was the executive director of this organization. My former caseworker there Miss Hale left the job after she got married.

Mr. Bernstein gave me a referal to Mr. Sam White who then was a personel director at Youthcraft Coats and Suits 306 West 8th Street. Mr. White was Jewish a very nice and able man. As always I filled out an application and told him about my experiences at Lee Wald. Evidently he liked my crudentials, because he called in Felix Lehman the shipping room supervisor and recommended me to him.

In my new job I became Felix Lehman's assistant. My starting wage was $1.20 per hour, which was already better then at Lee Wald. So as it turned out after couple of weeks I have learned $55.20 per week including 4 hours overtime on Saturdays. Later after they learned about my abilities in running a shipping room my overtime hours kept growing, and on many occasions I used to make up to $80.00 which was pretty good in those days. I gained confidence not only of Felix but of the president of the company Leon Karosen, his vice-president and sales manager Robert Chick and Karosen's father in law Virgil Gibbs. They gave me a raise and keys to the entire factory with rights to enter the building at any hour of day and night, which later turned out as being to tiresome with those assignments for long hours work.

And this was the way, how my 30 years long association with Youthcraft had begun. Years of "little" joy. Years of long hours, Saturdays and Sundays, Holidays, National and Jewish Rosh-Hashanah included. Years of yelling by Karosen and Chick sometimes for no reason at all, just for the heck of it, for fun as they used to put. Yellings which sometimes culminated with white bubbles of spit coming out of Chick's mouth. And many stupid remarks by Felix and his holering at the employes to a point that his forhead veines seemed to be on the verge of bursting contributed only to tension and good people leaving the company.

Overall Youthcraft was a good company. Producing good product, respected all over United States, making a tremendous business in late 1960s with a peak as late as 1978. Throughout these years the company moved from 306 West 8th to 412-416 West 8th when they merged the production department only with Louis Walter company owned by Leon Karosen's brother Julius, in 1956. They separated in 1967 when Leon Karosen took over the Poindexter building at 805 Broadway a 7 story facility where we produced in some good years up to 250,000 coats and suits per year. In early 80s business started to slow down, which finally forced Karosen to close the production department and move to North Kansas City at 16th street and Burlington. In this new facility we used to have just shipping room, offices and finishing and repair department with few cutters working as well Coats and suits were shipped in, in long trailers from New York, Ohio, California and Florida. The workmanship and quality of this merchandise was poor, and the company kept loosing customers. After my retirement in November 1983 situation became worse, and finally at the end of 1988 after almost 40 years in business Youthcraft Coats and Suits ceased to exist.

OVER

I had another job opportunity before I was hired by Youthcraft. There used to be in those days in operation a small dress factory Myra Kay not to faraway from the garment district. When I talked to the owner he knew alredy that in few days he will go out of business. Still he told me that he would hire me, and even pay me more money then I was making at Lee Wald. So as it turned out, the man was a big liar. To bad that in those days I didn't understand the popular expression; "Don't call me, I will call you" which in plain words ment: I don't have no intetion to hire you.

Well! Anyway,,after an absence of 7 months Hania returned to work at Louis Walter Co. This was already year 1953, and with my new job and Hania's returning to work things were looking up for us. Even before giving birth to Larry, Ela made her first visit to Kansas City and later grandma Frances traveled by Greyhound bus to visit Amsterdams in Cleveland.

With better earnings we bought ourselves a new bedroom furniture, new sofa and chairs, 19 inch television set and new stove to replace the junky old-fashioned which belonged to Mrs. Cosner our landlady, and let us not forget our first electric vaccum cleaner.

On our first vacations in 1954 we went to Cleveland to spent Passover with Ela and Norbert. Later during the summer grandma's cousins from New York Paula and Sol Pearlman visited us in Kansas City.

In 1955 Mrs. Cosner forced us to move, because she converted the building on 27 & Bentonm to residences for Black people. For the first time then we considered to buy a home, Not just us but most of the newcomers. Believe it or not but many of our people after considerable short period of time started to move up. Many of them owned already cars, homes and even business. Like for example the Indik family who having a background in baking bought the New York Bakery at 31st and Woodland from the Backer family who moved to 71st and Troost. The Devinky family was already on the way to riches. Lipszyc family bought an apartment building on Troost and opened their own junk yard which earned them lots of money, besides many holdups and even bodily injuries. Later they added some more apartment buildings to their fortune. Those are just few examples how people prospered in those days and in the future. Ofcourse there were many more doing very well. Still many more of us needed to be satisfied with hard work to make a decent living. But as long as our health permited we didn't complain.

In 1954 short by 3 month of being 5 years old after passing a test Jackie went to kindergarten in Greenwood school on 27 and Indiana. In those days schools were still segragated, a nearby school on Benton Blvd was for Black kids only. Everyday rain or shine grandma Frances accompanied Jackie, Larry Schanzer and Maxi Drzewienski to school. Either Mrs. Schanzer or Mrs. Drzewienski used to bring them back.

Most everybody used to attend English language classes at the old Jewish Community Center on Linwood Blvd. People who had found relatives elsewhere in America and even in Australia went to join them. Others arrived in Kansas City from other parts of the country, or from Poland and other European countries.

Our new apartment was located at 3954 Park, just off 39 street. The building belonged to Mr. Tabolski, who owned a grocery store on 35 and Troost. Just around the corner on 39 street was located Odessa Butcher Shop owned by the Bulavsky family, and acroos the Park Ave was the old Epstein's Butcher Shop. There used to live there many oldtimers who came to this country forty years before, like the Suess family, who came from Dombrowa a village near Tuchow grandma Frances' home town and many others with whom grandma Frances had a very warm relations.

Couple of blocks away was Jackie's mew school Horace Man. At first he didn't like his first grade teacher but slowly got used to her. Grandma Frances traveled again to Cleveland this time by train. Hania and I continued to work hard and joined the Kehilath Israel Synagogue, so Jackie would be able to go to Sundays school. So finally we became affiliated with a Jewish Organization. We bought ourselves a new refrigerator before moving to our new apartment on Park. By that time Victore owned already his third car 1953 or 1954 elegant Rambler Nash station wagen.

Epilog! (cont)

I guess soon after we arrived here in Kansas City all those years of problems during and after the war finally caught up with grandma Frances. Our family doctor Walter P. Jacob who was a refugee from Nazism as well diagnosed grandma as ill with "Angina Pectoris", a serioud heart problem. Since this day grandma started a very good care on herself including slowing down and rigid diet, which gave her another 27 years of living.

Grandma always took a vital role in all phases of our lives, even if it led in some occasions to many misunderstandigs, but I guess it always was and still is a problem if you share your life and quarters with parents or in-laws.

Another misfortune in our lives came after we moved about two years living on Park. Jackie was then in 3rd grade, when a cold and sore throat later affected his kidneys. He was very ill boy, and his predicament simply was a terrible affect on us. It was very hard for Hania and me to go ahead with our lives and work. In a matter of facts all this came up at the time when she switched her job from Louis Walter to another coat manufacturer Fashionbilt just across the street. After few weeks of work there Hania was forced to take a leave of absence. Jackie spent 3 or maybe 4 weeks in Menorah Hospital, and Thanks to G-d and Hania's tender care and ofcourse good Dr. Kantor he finally got better. After another months at home, eating more he at last regained his strengh and was able to return to school, being a good student besides his absence he recived good grades and passed to 4th grade.

According to agreements and regulations Hania after a waiting period and after paying some fees joined the International Ladies Garments Workers Union.

I presume that to some extend this Union was a factor in improving and maintaining workers rights. But I dodn't think that this Union here in Kansas City was as strong as in the East. Piecework prices didn't change in ages and remained the same for a long lonf time. Only hourly wages improved. But worst of everything were working conditions, especially the unbearable heat in summertime. Another problem for an average worker was who gets the better and easier work and who was damned to work harder. This problem existed in all factories the so-called "section supervisors" used to be the real bosses, not a department supervisor. Another group which was in command were women workers with big mouths! Those were the ones who kept the section supervisors under their thumbs, therefore getting the best work available. Quite few of those loudmouths' used to be our refugee women.They even had other powers, like when to open the windows, when to close to regulate fans, and had first choice in picking their work tables.

Ofcourse there was a similar situation at Youthcraft production department (factory) where most of the jobs were dominated by Italian women. Immigrants as well who came to this country after the war to join their relatives who used to live here for generations. These people even didn't bother to learn English.

There was a different situation in shipping department where most of the workers like packers, order fillers were Black. From time to time they used to hire white young people out of school during vacations, and rich young boys, sons of Chick's or Karosen's friends. Because of low pay with few exceptions nobody ever stayed to long on the job. One of the reasons that actually none of the work never went smooth.

Social highlights at the factory took place 3 or 4 times a year. Three times each year salesmen from all over the country 11 or 12 of them used to arrived to pick up their new lines and attend sales meetings and fashion shows. Car coats so-called "Suburban Line" was always ready right after 1st of January. The regular Youthcraft line of long dress coats and suits usually went out at the end of March, and the spring coats and suits line was shown between 15 September and 30th of November. While salemen were in town there always was a lavish dinner party at Oakwood Country Club, with very good food, music, dancing and speeches ofcourse, with a pep-talk by Chick and Karosen for salesmen, and praise for certain emplowes, like for me and Felix for job well done, which didn't stop them next morning to holer at us while salesmen used to pick-up their lines before going on the road.

Epilog: (cont)

We survived pretty well the initial 6 or 7 years in United States. Some of our friends became wealthy in that period some struggled, others just kept working hard. Those were the days not only ~~trying~~ to keep cool in Swope Park during hot summers, ~~days~~ of short travels outside the city by cars with people who had owned them, in our case with Victor and Frieda or Jerry Leuchter. We used to go out quite often to the movies, most of the time to the nearby Linwood cinema on 30th and Prospect (for Whites only). We never skipped shows presented at the Municipal Auditorium downtown with big names like Bob Hope, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, Jack Benny, Eddie Fischer, Jimmy Durante, and others

In 1958 we felt comfortable enough to buy our first car, and used 1953 Oldsmobile from a son in law of our next door neighbour Mr. Suess. The car was in pretty good shape with minor scratches until the time when I damaged it quite bad in a self created accident by driving it into a waterplug. Ofcourse we got it repaired, and paid with our own money, because we didn't carry a collision insurance.

In September 1958 we moved in into our brand new home at 8329 Oak street. The first step to a wealth, which we only dare to dream about. Ofcourse Frieda Victor and kids were our next door neighbours.

Still I fergot to mention that in summer of 1956 we became full pledged American citiziens. Grandma Frances decided to pass then, but became a citizien many years later, when with her fragile health was obvious that without being a citizien she wouldn't get no help from United States Government.

So we achieved the American dream by owning a house. Our next move was to join the Jewish Community Center, mostly so our boys would have some fun like playing baseball, swimming and other activities. Hania and I have participated in many performences of the Center's Resident Theater.

Going back to late fifthies or early sixthies first memorial had been held at the old Jewish Center on Linwood to paid tribute to the Heros of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the other six millions martyrs of the Nazi era. Since then such a memorial is being held annualy and attended mostly by the holocaust survivors living here in the Kansas City Area. The American Jewish population, born in this country never was and still isn't interested in such ceremonies.

A Memorial to Six Millions Martyrs an aluminium sculpture by Maurice Newman distinguished artist was dedicated in front of the New Jewish Community Center June 9, 1963 from the donations of survivors and many others. This dedication was honored by the presence of the former president of United States Harry S. Truman who in a message to The New Americans Club of the Jewish Community Center, formed at a meeting three years before said: "The tremendous effort and perseverance you have displayed to realize The Memorial to Six Millions Martyrs finds full justification in the result-a stirring warning that we are never done with war against prejudice and persecution. Let us resolve to work together toward making this humanity's century, a century of lasting peace and universal justice".

The New American Club used to be an important part of our lives, with many parties, dinners, dances and had been run by committies which changed every few years until six or seven years ago. Nowaday Mr. Jack Igelnik the last elected chairman of the committee is still the chairman mostly in name taking care on the monument located now at 115 street and Nall Ave in front of the brand new Jewish Center, and making sure that the annual Memorial Service is still being observed. Most of the activities now are prepared and performed by the "Chevra of the Second Generations": (Children of the survivors.)

We kept in touch all the time with our relatives in New York and with friends and other relatives all over the world. Grandma's cousin Dr. Joe Rosenblum, his wife Eve and Louis son of Pauline Pearlman visited with us while driving to see their son in San Diego. And they really were impressed with our accomplishments.

During Summer vacations of 1959 Jackie went through a hernia operation, and was out of action for most of the summer.

Our new neighbours on 83rd and Oak were all nice people. Some of them like the Bitner family still live here. Eight of the original twelve families never moved out.

Epilog! (cont)

Our boys got friendly with Gary and Linda Bittner. Their friendship lasted throughout grade school and highschool. Jack, Martin and Arnold went to college. Gary took a job with Internal Revenue Service, and Linda went to college as well.

Another family who still lives up the street are the Rittmasters. Their son Marty was older then our boys, but always played ball with them and acted like their adviser. Rittmasters daughter and Marty are married now with children.

Down the block used to live the Denton family with their twin daughters, who were younger then our kids. Ofcourse Dentons live now on Kansas side. Marilyn Shapiro who with her parents lived down the block as well, never got friendly with other kids. Her parents are not alive anymore, but Marilyn still lives in the house alone.

There was this large weed field across our homes. City promissed for many years to develop a park on this spot. It took them almost thirty years to even-up the place,, tear out weeds, build a baseball diamond, and create a childrens playground. The park is not perfect, but it is better then a weed-patch which left me with hay fever for life.

In 1959 Ela in Cleveland gave birth to twin girls Marilyn and Gizelle. Ofcourse there was a Simcha in the family, and Amsterdams moved into their new home at 3667 Berkeley Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. There Norbert joined an Orthodox Synagogue not faraway from their home. In Sinai (Synagogue's name) being a"frumer Yid" he worked himself up the ladder, starting as a "Gabay", then vice-president and finally few months ago was elected as presidenty of the congregation. Now Ela say that he practically lives in the "Shul".

In December 1959 Hania spent few day in the hospital because of women problems. The pocedure she went thrógh is called "DNC". Then again she had the same surgery in 1960s and 1970s.

Our kids Jack, Martin and Arnold transfered to Hartman school couple of blocks away from our homes on Oak street. Jack was in 4th grade, Martin in 3rd and Arnold in 1st. After the 6th grade they transfered to the new Bingham Jr. high on 75th and Wyandotte.

Jack started his Bar-Mitzvah class at Kehilath Israel Synagogue in 1960, His Barmitzvah was on Dec. 8, 1962. There was a very nice ceremony, with Kidush, many guests who even came visiting at our house in the evening. Norbert, Ela and Larry came from Cleveland, leaving the twins with their grandmother.

In Cleveland Norbert gave his children a very good Jewish education, by sending them for afternoon classes ~~and Sundays~~ to Hebrew School and ofcourse Sundays to Sunday school in Sinai synagogue.

Jack's Bar-Mitzvah followed by Martins in June 1963. Nobody came from Cleveland then. Anyway all our boys were doing well in school.

Overall those were the days of Bar-Mitzvas for kids of all newcomers. I remember we used to run from one synagogue to another just not to offend people. Many of them even invited people for special receptions in the evenings at their homes, giving precednce for double standards as well. Just so their kids could collect presents, which most of the time were $5.00 bills they used to invite a hord of people to synagogue for services, and just few chosen to the reception at home. Ofcourse later people got wise and if they werent' invited to both celebrations they made a practice to skip the synagogue part at all. Sometimes you needed to be a genius to figure out if and where the evening reception took place, because it was a very much guarded secret.

This was a time of playing baseball in a Jewish Center on their fields at the new facility at 82nd and Holmes. Our boys used to play in all kinds of leagues organized at the Center on Saturday afternoons. Many of times they were selected to the All Stars teams. Jack's team once won the championship in his class, and he even played one season on the Center's team in the South-East Baseball League.

Hania and I kept working. Especially for Hania it was a very hard nut to bite. There was no picnic for both of us but we tried our best. Grandma Frances kept cooking for us. On weekends we took care on our laundry, and cleaning the house. Freddie the Butcher used to deliver our kosher meat directly to the house, and on Thursdays or Fridays we bought our groceries from Milgram's on Wornall at 75th street.

Epilog (CONT)

So as far as work was concerned we were sweatng it out IN FACTORIES on hot summer days with temperatures on the flor, sometimes over 100F.

In meantime Victor took television repairman course trying to make good in television repair in days when television was in full bloom. Working evenings after work, success in this area somehow never caught up with him.

It was then when both Victor and Frieda embarked on buying and selling old furniture, which evetually led to a prosperous furniture business, with new furniture being stored in warehouses around the city. Frieda used to lament how hard her sister next door had to work, but never suggested for her to quit and join their business as a small partner. Not until many years later, after they switched to real estate, after building first new residential homes in high class areas, and together with Mr. Blum needed partners to invest in order to build commercial buildings they took us in as partners, in those ventures.

Years in Southwest High were rather good for Jack, Arnold and Martin. Jack was a good student making few times National Honor Society. He joined Michaelson AZA. The advisor of this group was our neighbour Larry Rittmaster, In those days Jack made many new friends like Eliot Fish, Doug Rope and others, and ofcourse girls as well. I remember a story about an outburst of anti-Semitism in Southwest, when some gentile boys provoked a group of Jewish boys, Jack among them. The confrontation ended in a fight in which Jack got bruised, but none of his Jewish friends even wink a finger to help him. They were just standing there looking on.

During his years in Southwest Jack met Elaine Burstein. They went out and dated for six or seven years with a short interruption. I must mention here how deeply we care and love her. It is an honor to have her as our daughter in law, a granddaughter of Rabbi Mordechai Burstein, a personality who left his mark on the Jewish community in Kansas City. Her parents Al and Vi Burstein wonderful people as well and we respect them and admire. Elaine is a very caring person. She loves her family tremendously and the mankind as well. She is a great educator as former teacher and as a vice-president of Learning Exchange here in Kansas City.

In June 1965 we went to Cleveland to attend Larry's Bar-Mitzvah. And what a disastrous, as far as I was concerned trip it was. It started the Thursday evening before the Bar-Mitzvah here in Kansas City when our train which supposed to take us to Chicago at 10pm never arrived because of flooding someplace in Colorado. We were forced to wait until 2am for a train from Houston, loaded with passangers. There was almost no empty seats. Our Jack was sitting next to a little Black girl, and another Black girl sitting back asked him if the little girl was his sister. It was the same situation when once we attended a baseball game in the old Municipal Stadium against Baltimore Orioles, when Brooks Robinson who was White and Frank Robinson who was Black waited for their turn to bat, and a boy sitting in front of us asked his father if they were brothers, and the father gave him a strong push almost making him fall off his seat. Anyway going back to the trip we arrived in Chicago few hours to late to catch out train to Cleveland. Insted to leave at 1pm we didn't leave until 5pm. Because of some repairs the train was delayed on tracks someplace between Chicago and Cleveland and we didn't arrive there not sooner then 11pm, and then to our big surprise the cab driver didn't know where 3667 Berkeley was, not until Jack told him that it was someplace off Taylor Blvd.

Well besides our adventures the Bar-Mitzvah was a very impressive affair. The reception Sunday afternoon looked more like a wedding reception, and Norbert forced us to wear tuxedos with white jackets and black slacks, and women long dressed. We shleped all this stuff with us on the train. This was the last time in our lives when we saw our benefactors from New York Pauline Pearlman and her husband Sol. They passed away few months later. When I took off from work for those few days I told Felix my supervisor that I will be back next Monday, but I knew then that I won't be back before Tuesday morning. I told him then that we had problems and delays with trains. He wasn't to happy but didn't have no choice but TO accept my explanation.

Epilog! (CONT)

The state of confusion, disturbances and demonstrations of 1960s and early seventies didn't affect our three families and our kids as well as much as many other families across the country, maybe with one exception. Ofcourse they picked up some habits of those days, like longer hairs, dressing code, and minor changes in their attitude.

After graduating from Southwest High School in 1967 Jack choose University of Missouri in Kansas City, even thou he would gladly leave home for some other university elsewhere, but we explained to him that UMKC was all we could effort. UMKC was Elaine's choice as well. He studied business administration and Elaine education. One year later Martin was accepted to UMKC to study pharmacy. When Arnold graduated from High School everybody thought that he would study medicine but everything changed after his first semester at Kansas University. He switched to UMKC and later decided to study Psychology.

Larry Amsterdam in Cleveland was a student at University in Cleveland. Later when he decided to be a doctor of dentistry he studied in New York and at the University of Pennsylvania. At the university in Cleveland he met his future wife Judy Shencker. The twins Marylin and Gizelle went first to the University of Cincinnati where Marilyn finished her studies with degree in bacteriology, and Gizelle continued her education at Ohio State University in Kent and finished as Doctor of Opthomalogy.

None of our kids were ever called up to serve in Vietnam. Jack's number was 176. Martin's number was much lower, so to protect him from draft Victor made arrangement for him to serve in National Guard for six months. After his return he resumed his studies at UMKC to become a pharmacist. After reciving his degree Martin worked most of the time for different Revco Drug Stores. For awhile he used to own his own pharmavy at the 84th and Woenall Shopping Center. While working in a pharmacy in Kansas City, Kansas he met Lorinda, a divorcee with a six or even years old son. They married in 1976 and divorced in 1989 after a tumultous marriage.

After arriving in Cleveland Norbert's and his family's life wasn't as easy as we here in Kansas thought. I guess his relatives the Wiesenfelds didn't treat them as it would be expected from them to treat a survivor from a bloody war. His job in the furniture company of his cousin by marriage Walter who is still married to Norbert's first cousin Sandra who came to this country in 1938 was a nightmare. The only decent thing Wiesenfelds had done for him was to arrange a job with the Mantel Furniture Company where he still works. But Wiesenfelds are not alive anymore, so Norbert's another uncle Sigmund Amsterdam and his wife Lola who survived the holocaust. Another brother Adolf Amastedam passed away in Wroclaw Poland in 1965. His son and Norbert's first cousin Joe whom I used to know in Cracow before the war lives in Florida with his wife. His daughter Helen is radio dis-jockey. Joe used to have all kinds of jobs and ventures in Cleveland and even lived in West Germany for a certain period of time. Still there are other cousins in Cleveland, like Sandra's daughters. As I understand there used to be problems with interpretation of all those wills left by those deceased Norbert's relatives, and Norbert and his family didn't recived a fair share.

Let us not forget that Arnold's Bar-Mitzvah took place in September 1965. It was a very nice affair as far as Arnolds performance was concerned. He was an excellent student at his Hebrew School in Kehilath Israel and his teachers predicted a glorious future for him in Jewish studies. But none of those things materialized. Ela only came from Cleveland to be with us.

Couple of years later Ela spent vacations with us here in Kansas City with Larry and the twins.

Throughout the years we used to own a share of new cars. In 1962 we traded our first Oldsmobile for a brand new Ford-Falcon. In 1967 we bought a new Cheveole Impala, and gave the Falcon to Jack who put 600.00 downpayment on the Impala. In 1969 we traded the Falcon for a brand new Chevy-Nova for Jack. In 1974 we traded the Impala for a new two door Impala, and then in 1980 we bought a new Oldsmobile Omega, which we traded in 1987 for a new Oldsmobile Calais.

Grandma Frances visited with Ela and her family few times between 1951 and 1965. Her last trip to Cleveland was in Summer 1965 for Larry's Bar-Mitzvah. Even then she wasn't sure if it was wise for her to travel, but she went anyway because all of us went. She was always afraid that something will happen to her on the road, even thou Victor offered many times to take her there.

Sometime in late 60s grandma spent few days in hospital again complaining about her heart and legs. When she came back home we hired a person to take care on her while we were at work. She was then 75 years old.

In 1968 Hania and I made our last trip to New York, ofcourse by train. Those were the days when passanger travel on trains was on a fast slide down. As always we changed trains in Chicago. For this part of the trip we reserved a sleeping compartment. Needless to say the trip on the New York line was a disaster again. Frequent stops in the middle of nowhere at night weren't pleasant at all. But the clincher came when air conditioning broke down and was replaced with unbearable hit. We spent part of the night in the lounge car, but had found a nightmare upon returning to our compartment.

Overall besides traveling the trip was a success. We visited with our relatives and renewed contacts with many of our old friends. On the way back we stop for couple of days in Cleveland.

In 1971 Jack and Elaine graduated from UMKC. Jack with a degree in business administration and Elaine in education. Few months before they got engaged and set the wedding date for June 20, 1971. It was a very happy surprise to all of us. After all it was quite and honer to marry a granddaughter - daughter of "Yihes" (prominent people) such as Bursteins. ELAINE LATER MADE MASTER DEGREE IN SOLED READING.

Still everything wasn't completely well. Even before their engagement, first Rabbi Mordechai Burstein passed away and later Elaine's grandmother on her mother's side passed away as well. And then somehow Jack contacted "Manonucleosis" He spent long time in hospital and then recuparated at home. He lost many hours at the university. We were very much concerned of a possibility that he might loose a semester, which would postponed his graduation.

It was a beautiful wedding, first in the new building of Beth Shalom Congregation on 9400 Wornall Road. Rabbi Margolis performed the marriage ceremony. Many guests and members of both families local and from out of town attended. Ofcourse our out of town family was Ela and her family. The young couple left on their honeymoon in San Francisco, and later settled in a rented apartment on Plaza. Elaine's first job was in the accounting office in Menorah Hospital, before she was assigned to a teaching job in Rockhill elementary school She was a wonderful teacher and kids loved her very much.

Jack accepted an offer from Kroh Brothers a large management and real estate company in this area. He worked for them part-time since high school and through college.

In 1970 Elaines brother Marty married Cindy Ominski, and their oldest brothere Dr. Jerry Burstein was already married to Sherry Lerner who was a M.D. as well.

Many years went by since we first arrived in Kansas City. A long way from the first party given by June and Isak Feinsilver for the first birthday of their daughter Evelyn. As people settled firmly in Kansas City and their financial status kept improving many more parties followed. Bar-Mitzvahs for children first, then weddings, anniversaries and briths for grandchildren, and on some occasions even grandchildrens weddings. Families of former greenhorns tried hard to outdone each other and show off their wealth.

The wars between Israelis and Arabs in 1967 and the Yom-Kipur war left a mark on the Jewish community in Kansas City. The annual Ghetto Memorial sponsored by The New American Club and The Jewish Community Center became even more meaningfull especially the Kadish ceremony at the Ghetto Monument, where among others names of my parents Jakob and Rose Mondschein, Hania's Fathers Abraham Leniower, her grandmother's Mariam Salomon are inscribed.

We firmly believe that since Elaine came into our family our financial situation improved for better.

Epilog! (CONT)

All these years we kept in touch either by mail or telephone with all our relatives and many friends in Poland, Israel, Canada, Austria and ofcourse here in United States. After writing letters to each other, when our financial situation improved we talk twice a month to Ela in Cleveland and from time to time with my adopted cousin Heniek Zimetbaum-Nussbaum and his wife Leona. He met her in Cracow after the war. They used to go out together until she and her family left for Israel. As you alredy know Heniek married Leona when he later arrived in Israel with uncle Ludwik and aunt Rose. The same Heniek who was depending on all kinds of tricks just to avoid the draft into Red Army in Soviet Union, took part in some of the fiercest battles in Sinai first war against the Egyptians. Heniek and Leona have one son Alexander named after his real father who perished in holocaust. They live now in Forest Hills, New York. Leonas parents perished in holocaust and couple of their children as well. But Leona and her brother and other sisters survived first in a ghetto of Dembica, a small town on the way between Cracow and Lvov. Their was a miracle story of survival, after one of the sisters aproached a peasant couple who was buying clothing from Jews in ghetto for re-sale in their village. The sister told that there was a better way to make money, then buy and sell old clothing. And she offered the stunned man and his wife lots of money for shelter in their house. All of the five brother and sisters were stunned themselves when the peasant couple agreed to hide them. First only one sister went to the village to check out the safety and surroundings. Others followed later after their sister reported that conditions were acceptable. They digged out a deep hole for themselves under the stable's floor to hide there just in emergency, and believe me there were many emergencies, mostly when the couple's son the village drunk used to come visiting. He was no good, hated Jews and wouldn't hesitate to report on them and his parents as well to the Germans. Leona with her sisters and brother spent the war years mostly in the attick over the stable. To save her tenants, and to keep her suspisious son from them, this peasant woman practically used to drawn her son in alcohol. The woman and her husband were paid generously for their "good heart", even until recently throughout all these years after the liberation until they died.

For many years we kept in touch by writing and telephone as well with my uncle Julius (my mother's brother) and his wife aunt Regina. He was a chief doctor in a local hospital in Lynn, Mass. He was the one whose health was fine, but died from a massive heart attack in 1973 leaving his blind ill wife with a pacer who passed away three years later in 1976.

It is always tragic when someone close to our hearts must to leave us. But still thanks to uncle's and aunt's generosity, and because they didn't have children on their own they left in their will substantial amounts of money to their nieces and nephews, with some exceptions (for some reason), including us, who recived from them $12,000.00. Still on uncle Ludwik's insistance we were forced to give to cousin Fritz Schwarz who was one of those left out of the will an amount of $1,300,00 each.

Another big break for us came along, when Hania recived restitution money from the West German government in a cash payment of $12,000.00 and a pension for life as a compensation for health problems during world war two.

Even thou we still kept working, and our work was hard, those were the best years of our adult life. Grandma Frances recived $700.00 for parts of her lost property in Poland. It was great to see Elaine's and Jack's happiness. They worked and traveled to Europe and many places around the country. And then I really can't describe our joy when our grandchildren arrived. First Andrew on December 23, 1974 and second Emily on May 11, 1977. Elaine quit working until children were big enough to go to school. Jack kept advancing at his job for Kroh Bros. until he earned a tittle of a vice-president. Andrew and Emily after going to pre-school at the Temple Bnai Yehuda, when they reached their kindergarten age enroled into Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, and are students there for all these years. Andrew now in 9th grade and Emily in 7th. Both of them are excellent students with a 4.0 average.

Yes! We really have been blessed and ofcourse still are with a wonderful daughter in law and our wonderful as well grandchildren. ~~M~~On many occasions I had had a tremendous urge to pinch myself to fully graspxmi my and Hania's happiness and good feelings, which we never dreamed that we will be able to achieve.

I assume that bym now after almost tweny years of marriage, you Elaine and Jack and your grown lovely children know everything what went on in our lives until now. We never kept any secrets from you. So the time came just to put on paper the remaining details of our three families lives.

During the high interst years your mother invested our money wisely, which in turn enabled us later to join Victor Pollman and Sol Blum in some commercial real estate partnerships, ~~mhimm~~ which assured us of steady income ~~mfmix~~ after we retaired.

The family get-togethers IN YOUR HOME during the High Holidays and Thanksgivings always had been a highlight of our social life. A tradition we still enjoy tremendously, and hope to do so for many more years to come, including all those birthdays, anniversaries and mother's and father's days. It always was and is A PLEASURE ~~mxxmmmx~~ to be together with Elaine's parents and other members of her family, and meet many of your friends at your home, especially two lovely and great people: Connie and Warren.

On June 20 1977 couple of months after Emily's birth we attended the wedding of Larry Amsterdam ~~mmd~~ and Judy Shencker in Philadelphia. Because of her health grandma Frances wasn't able to participate. She spent couple of days with Victor's cousin Esther Claire Lega. There was a lovely ceremony and reception in synagogue. Larry and Judy still needed one more year to complete their studies at the University of Pennsylvania. After 26 years in United States it was, that we traveled by plane for the first time.

In 1977 Elaine, Jack, Andrew and the baby Emily moved from their first home on 6717 Cherry street to their present location on 424 West 70th Street.

This was the year as well when Arnold Pollman met Vicki Stein from St. Joseph daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sol Stein. Their marriage took place in September of ~~m~~1978 in Saint Joseph. In a matter of facts their honeymoon got interrupted on September 23 1978 (Saturday afternoon) ~~mmmm~~ (21 Elul) when grandma Frances left us forever. Because of Shabat funeral arrangements went into late at night, and the burial was scheduled for Sunday, September 24 1978.

Few weeks before grandma's health started to deteriorate. Two or three weeks before her death~~m~~ she experienced pains in her back, so Frieda took her to Menorah Hospital. It was during the workday, so Hania and I were at work. In her last days grandma wasn't well, but more on a valiant side, insisting all the time on going home. Doctors kept moving her from one department to another, and finally decided to put her in a recovalescent home (Old Age Home on 79th and Holmes). I am not quite sure if she knew for sure that she was in old age home. I think she thought that it was somekind of a hospital. When she passed away on that Saturday afternoon Hania's conscience kept bothering her for many years, thinking all the time, that if she would kept her home, grandma would probably live much longer. She is buried at the Kehilath Israel Blue Ridge Cementary. A very nice crowd of friends attended her funeral, and even more of them came to the house for "Shuva" prayers. "Blessed Be Her Memory". Ela and Norbert arrived late at night of September 23 on 24 to attend mother's funeral.

In 1970s and 1980s Frieda and Victor worked very hard in their furniture business first and then in real estate. For rest and recreation they used to travel a lot. They went few times to Cleveland. In comparison to them we didn't go noplace (~~mm~~ except Larry's wedding) during the period between 1968-1979. Frieda and Victor traveled always by car (except one adventure loaded trip on train). They been few times to Ozarks, Colorado, Florida and other places. In the 1970s we been only once in the Ozarks in summer of 1979.

In 1970s as well Diane granddaughter of Eve and Joe Rosenblum, studied art in the Art Institute here in Kansas City. We tried hard to be helpful and make easier for her away from home, but as her mother put it to us recently she was a free spirit who didn't want to impose and to be on her own. SHE DIED IN A MOTOR CAR ACCIDENT IN SAN FRANCISCO.

Epilog! (cont)

During the decades of 60s, 70s, and 80s many survivors of the war, members of our families left us forever in some cases because of age, but mostly because of deteriorating health.

Here in United States as you already know grandma's Frances cousins passed on first in 1960s Sol and Pauline Pearlman, I think Pauline's brother Harold died in 1950s, and then another brother Milton Rosenblum who left behind his wife Sid. We don't know if she is still alive. Joe and Eve Rosnblum passed away in 1970s. The last time we saw Eve was at Larry's wedding in Philadelphia.

In Kudowa, Poland grandma's cousin Monek Rotter died sometime in 1970s, followed by his son Simon who died at the young age 32. Monek's wife Lonka age 84 still lives in Kudowa.

First member of the Nussbaum family to die after the war was Paul Balin my first cousin who passed away at the age of 72, during a get together of the entire family in Israel at uncle Ludwik's house while taking a nap in a chair. His wife Stefa lived much longer, way into late 70s. I think Lipe Goldstein was next. He was a husband of my cousin Esther, best childhood friend of my mother. Esther Goldstein Died in Bat-Yam, Israel February 11, 1984, a person with a character of gold.

My uncle Salo the architect from Gliniany a lifelong Zionist whose dream always was to live someday in Israel, realized this dream in 1949. He enjoyed the Holy Land and the newborn State of Israel until early 1960s, when he passed away. His wife Dina died many years later.

The next victim of illness and age was my aunt Rose, uncle Ludwik's wife who passed away after a long illness on August 1, 1969, just one month short of being 81 years old. Her husband uncle Ludwik survived his wife by almost 10 years. He died on March 31 1979. He was 97 years old. Three years short of 100 years.

Aunt Mala who used to live with her second husband Ferdinand Korngold in Antverpen, Belgium, died few years before uncle Ludwik. She was born in 1897, so let us say she was in her late seventies. Her husband Korngold wanted to transfer her body from Antverpen to Cracow. I don't know if he was able to accomplish this, and I don't know if he is still alive. Last to die was Roman Kahane, husband of my cousin Zosia in Israel, three or four years ago.

There is nobody left from generation of our parents. They used to work very hard to produce "Menschen" out of us. We thank them for all they have done for us their children. We, your parents are children of the era of 20 years between the two world wars. Now the ball is in your hands, members of the baby boom generation of the post- war era. We tried our best to make "Menschen" out of you, and I am pleased to say that we succeded. And so did you. Mother and I are bursting with pride looking back on your accomplishments but most of all on yours and ours pride and joy our grandchildren Andrew and Emily. Thank you! Elaine and Jack.

Always remember the three sisters from Tuchow: Hania the "Brave" one, FRIEDA the "Worrier and Complainer" and Ela the "Worried" only. Don't get detached from your family your cousins, brothers and sisters. Maybe our views sometimes seemed oldfashioned for you, but don't forget they were ment for the best.

In the begining there used to be six of us. Hania and I, Frieda and Victor, and Ela and Norbert. And then came Jacob David, soon after Martin and Arnold, followed by Larry, Marilyn and Giza. Years went by and Elaine joined Jacob David, Lorinda (now divorced) joined Martin and Vicki Arnold. Other simchas followed when Judy joined Larry, Kenny-Marilyn and Steve-Giza. Some years went by again, and thanks to God the family was blessed again. Elaine and Jacob wefe Blessed with Andrew and Emily, Arnold and Vicki with Anna and Carla, Larry and Judy with Alissa and Rachel, Marilyn and Kenny with Julia and Dayna. Steve and Giza expect one pretty soon, and another blessing is expected for Arnold and Vicki in few months.

We hope that all of us will keep having many more "Naches" from all of you for many more years to come. "Alevay"

Besides many happy occasions few rather anxious and un-happy moments on Elaines side of the family kept us on the edge and worried. Not to long after Emily's birth Elaine herself was seriously ill and needed a surgery. We prayed for her recovery and rejoyced when she got well again. And again we were worried and concerned when her father lost his finger in an accident while cutting grass. There was another surgery involving Al, Elaines father but, everything turned out OK. Vi, Elaines mother went through some serious surgeries for breast removal and cataract, and so her aunts Ruth and Jean and cousin Janette. Uncles Norman Glazer and Harry Lerner passed away after long illnesses.

Shortly before Elaine and Jack married her family moved from their home of many years on Paseo Blvd to a new residence in South Kansas City on Santa Fe Trail.

Before the end of 1979 we went to Cleveland to participate at the wedding of Marylin to Kenny Dachner on December 30 1979. The Kansas City branch was all there except Martin.

The two hour flight home turned out to be a 16 hours adventure because of unfavorable flying conditions.

Back home on January 16 1980 after returning in the evening from grocery shopping, while unloading the stuff I was attacked and beaten up by a young Black man who robed us by taken our money, credit cards and mother's gold watch. I spent couple of days in hospital for observation, and it took me couple of weeks to recover from bruises and pain in ma jaw. Police arrested a man, and they were sure that he comited this crime, but during the hearing in court I wasn't able to indetify him.

For us it was and still is an exciting second half of the 20th century, living through important events, confrontations and decisions which in the future no doubt will affect the entire mankind.

A privilege for us was to become United States citiziens, and the trill taking part in first free election ever in 1956.

And then came "Sputnik" and the beginning of competition in space between United States and Soviet Union, Berlin Airlift, Demonstrations in East Germany and Hungarian and Czech drives for better and free life, so brutally crushed by Soviet Union and their East European allies.

Locally there was this devastating flood shortly after we arrived in town, and meeting former president Harry S. Truman on the corner of 9th and Grand while waiting for the traffic light to change.

Even thou in those days I didn't know to much about baseball, I was excited as much as anybody else about Philadelphia Athletics moving to Kansas City, and few years later about Kansas City getting a football franchaise. We used to attend many baseball games thanks to Youthcraft courtesy. As far as football is concerned I rather watch on television. Accompanied by Jack I saw only two live football games.

In 1950s France was defeated in Vietnam, followed by partition of the country into communist North and anti-communist South. In this country John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected president and the war in Vietnam intensified after he sent American troops to fight there. Kennedy was assasinated in November 1963. War in Vietnam continued into president Johnson years who took over after Kennedy's assasination and later was re-elected. The country got split among the pros and cons of the war and many young people refused to serve and participate in the war. Riots and demonstrations on campuses raveged all over the place confronted by police and National Guards who didn't hesitate to shot and even kill people. This was the "Hippie" era. Era of beards and long hair and using of all kinds of drugs, which since then never stop and continues until today.

Revrend Martin Luther King led the Black people in demonstrations in the South and elsewhere for their civil rights. Many of them died and their White suporters as well, including Dr. King who was assasinated.

President Johnson decided not to run for re-election, and Richard Nixon, vice-president in Eisenhower era, known mostly for his debate with Nikita Krushchev then Soviet Leader in the Kitchen of American exhibit in Moscow, Krushchev who replaced Josef Stalin after his death in 1953, tried unsuccessfully to make some changes in Soviet Union.

Who don't remember the summit between Krushchev and president Eisenhower, in Paris France which went sauer because of the U2 incident, when Soviet shot down an American spy plane over their territory and put on trail the pilot of plane for espionage. And then Krushchev's visit in New York for the United Nations General Assembly, and his banging on the table with his shoe, and "We will bury you" statement.

And how about the confrontation between Krushchev and Kennedy over the missile crisis in Cuba, and the Soviet flotila of war ships heading in Cuba's direction to break the U.S. blockade, which never occured because Krushchev underestimated Kennedy and backed down.

Arab-Israeli wars kept us on edge. Israeli victories on battlefields were countered by terrorist attacks by the PLO and other terrorist organizations inside Israel and abroad. One of the most savage were the attacks which resulted in killing of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympics in Muenich, attacks on the airports in Rome and Vienna and bombing of the PAM flight 103 an route from London to New York in December 1988.

Airplane highjacking in the air by Arab terrorists and taking hostages used to be and still is as common as a way of life. I guess the most bizarre highjacking was of a French plane full of Jews taken by German terrorists to the Entebe airport in Uganda, so they could kill them, and the dramatic rescue by the Israeli commandos.

Riots came to Kansas city in Spring of 1968. During his second term in office president Nixon and his National Security adviser, later his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger opened the way for normalizing relations with communist China, but the Watergate scandal led to Nixons resignation and the presidency of Gerald Ford who in 1976 lost to Jimmy Carter.

In the midst of all of this here on our home front a doctor at the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Health Center told Hania that she is a borderline diabetic. It was a shock for all of us in the family. It was a time of diet, time of loosing weight, time of no sweets and most of all time of frustration. Since then Hania's sugar blood level is on a steady course of up and downs, mostly down, but never much to high.

Finally after years of killing in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, United States and North Vietnam signed and agreement. American troops left South Vietnam and the communist North Vietnam took Over. Many prisoners of war never returned home and there is a strong evidence that some of them are still in Vietnam. In Cambodia the Khelmer Rouge regime kept murdering their own population, until North Vietnam intervined and occupied the country.

Jimmy Carter's presidency which started in January 1977 after he defeated Gerald Ford wasn't successful at all. The American economy was on the way down with high interst rates and soaring inflation. The Shah of Iran was forced to step down and leave the country in favor fanatic Moslems and their leader Ayatolah Khomeni, who on his return from France where he lived in exile turned the country into Islamic Republic run by power and murder thirsty clerics. Khomeni declared United States as a "Satan" and the greatest enemy of Iran. His hatress culminated in taking hostage over 100 workers and members of American Embassy in Teheran and kept them over one year when an agreement worked out with the help of Algeria assured their re-lease in January 1981, when Ronald Reagan was taking over the presidency of United States.

In December 1979 Soviet Forces invaded Afganistan. The guerrila war waged by Afganistan's Moslem rebels lasted a decade, untill February 1989, when Soviet troops finally withdrew, but not before leaving many casulties behind.

The space age rivality between United Sates and Soviet Union culminated with American landing on the moon, and Soviets puting a cruising small laboratory in space. Americans still continue their space ventures by sending space shuttles into orbit.

Epilog! (cont)

Ofcourse such adventures and competitions in space not aiaways went well. Explosions on both sides Soviet and American as well led to xxxxx deaths of astronats and cosmonats. The worst of those disasters was not to long ago, when a rocket carrying a shuttle exploded of the coast of Florida shortafter taking off from Cape Carneval and killing all American astronauts abord.

The decade of 1980s started with president Ronald Reagan in office, who enjoyed an xxxxx enormous popularity, even thou he didn't do to much much. As per stories coming out of the the White House, he liked to leave important decisions to the "boys". He wanted reduce spending and the country's deficit, but spent more and increased the deficit more then any other president before him. He escaped death from an assasin's bulet, who injured him seriously, but he survived. During his term Israeli invaded Lebanon, took parts of Beirut and shot down 80 Syrian Soviet made planes and destroyed an enormous amount of Soviet made xxx tanks. They forced out from that country Yasir Arafat and his PLO, but after a forced Israeli withdrawal under international pressure PLO returned.

Israeli retained a buffer zone in southern Lebanon with help of Christian Lebanese Army. Moslem factions in Lebanon still fighting after more them ten years for the control of the country. Throughout those years Iranian extremists kidnaped many Americans and other Nationals holding them hostage, somewhere In Lebanon. The group claiming the responsibility for those kidnapings calls themself "Herzbolah" (Party of God). They even killed more then 240 U.S. Marines who were members of peace keeping force there among with France and Italy. Eventualy they all withdrew.

During Reagan years United States finally entered a dialog with PLO after Arafat assured the American governmet that he recognized Israel's right to exist, but at the same time he carries out an "Intifada", a stone throwing war mostly by young children against Israeli soldiers who later chase them, and try to arrest them. Many Palestinians got killed by Israeli soldiers and even more put away in prisons,

Reagan met three times with the new Soviet leader Gorbachev, which finally resulted in eliminating of some missiles and nueelar weapons from Europe. Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader after more then 70 years of Soviet power to recognize that in order to make things better in Soviet Union reforms were necessary. He declared "gladnost" (better relation with Western countries) and "perestroyka" (reforms for better living conditions).

Reagan initiated a terrific arms buildup in defense of our country and I am quite sure that this buildup scared Soviet from following their expantionist policies and turn to a policy of peaceful cooexistance.

Mr. Reagan was operated few times for removal of cancerous polyps, and always was lucky enough to recover. He was many times in hot water but overall served our country well. During his term there was prosperity, low inflation, and American soldiers never fought abroad. His wife Nancy as per White House insiders used to be in midst of many important president's decisions and tried hard to protect him from many not so friendly outsiders.

I guess the most harm came to Reagan from the Iran-Contra affair.

The visit of Egyptian president Sadat in Jerusalem and his speech to Israeli parliament, and the following peace treaty mediated by president Carter in Camp David between Israel and Egypt (Begin-Sadat) signaled and era of peaceful coexistance between the two nations, and hopes that other Arab countries would join in the process. But as years went by, except the peace between Israel and Egypt nothing changed. PLO and Moslem hardliners continued their hostilities against the Jewish State and relations between Israeli and Egyptian went really saurer after the assasination of president Sadat on October 6 1981 by Arab extrimists.

In 1980 skirmishes on Iraqui-Iranian border escalated into a bloody war between the two nations which finally ended by ceasefire after 10 years.

In 1981 Israeli Air Force destroyed a nuclear reactor in Baghdad, Iraq. Israel claimed that Iraq was ready to manufacture plutonium for nuclear weapons.

The 1980s began in crisis: The crisis of the hostages, the crisis of Afghanistan, the crisis of striking shipyard workers in Poland.
Now the decade is ending with the unexpected: Communism's walls crumbling, new powers rising in the world, hostages still held.
Here is a chronology in words and photographs of an eventful 10 years, years of tumult, disaster and accomplishment.

1980: America held hostage

Jan. 4—President Jimmy Carter announces sanctions, including a grain embargo and a boycott of the Moscow Summer Olympics in protesting Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

April—More than 125,000 exiles begin arriving in the United States from Cuba during a boatlift between the Cuban port of Mariel and Key West, Fla.

April 24—U.S. military operation to rescue 52 American hostages in Iran fails. Eight U.S. servicemen die when two aircraft collide in the Iranian desert.

May 18—Mount St. Helens volcano in Washington state erupts, hurling ash and darkening skies for hundreds of miles. Blast kills 57 persons and causes about $3 billion in damage.

July 27—Iran's exiled shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, dies in Egypt.

Aug. 14—Electrician Lech Walesa leads strike at Gdansk shipyard to start Polish worker revolt against Communist state. Eventually 10 million Poles join the independent trade union Solidarity.

Sept. 20—Iran-Iraq border skirmishes escalate into war. Eight-year conflict eventually leaves more than 1 million dead, including thousands of civilians.

Oct. 11—Earthquake in Algeria kills 6,000 and leaves 400,000 homeless.

Nov. 21—Fire at MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas kills 87 persons.

Dec. 8—Former Beatle John Lennon shot to death in New York City.

Ronald Reagan is elected 40th U.S. president on Nov. 4, defeating Jimmy Carter.

1981: Year of assassins

Jan. 20—On the day Reagan is inaugurated, American hostages are freed after 444 days of captivity in Iran.

March 30—Reagan seriously wounded in assassination attempt in Washington.

April 12—Shuttle Columbia, world's first reflyable spaceship, launched into space.

May 13—Pope John Paul II wounded by gunman as he greets visitors in St. Peter's Square in Rome.

June 7—Israeli air strike destroys Iraqi nuclear reactor outside Baghdad. Israel said Iraq planned to manufacture plutonium for nuclear bombs.

***Anwar Sadat** . . . Egyptian president assassinated Oct. 6*

June 12—Major league baseball players begin 50-day strike.

July 29—Prince Charles, heir to British throne, marries Lady Diana Spencer.

Aug. 3—Air traffic controllers go on nationwide strike, and 11,500 are fired two days later after defying Reagan's 48-hour back-to-work ultimatum.

Sept. 25—Sandra Day O'Connor sworn in as first woman to sit on U.S. Supreme Court.

Dec. 13—Martial law declared in Poland; Solidarity banned.

1982: Year of invasion

April 2—Argentina invades British-held Falkland Islands. Fighting costs more than 1,000 lives before Britain recaptures islands June 14.

June 6—Israeli troops invade southern Lebanon, site of Palestinian guerrilla strongholds, and drive all the way to Beirut.

June 30—Proposed U.S. Equal Rights Amendment banning sex discrimination dies after reaching deadline without the necessary ratification by 38 states.

Aug. 21-Sept. 1—Palestine Liberation Organization forces pull out of Beirut.

Sept. 14—Bomb blast kills newly elected Lebanese President Bahshir Gemayel. Gemayel's brother Amin succeeds him.

Sept. 16-18—About 600 Palestinians are massacred in Beirut refugee camps by Lebanese Christian militiamen allowed in area by Israeli authorities.

Sept. 21-Nov. 21—National Football League shuts down during eight-week players' strike.

Sept. 24-30—French, Italian and U.S. peacekeeping forces arrive as Israeli army withdraws from Beirut.

Sept. 29—Seven persons in Chicago area die of cyanide poisoning in Tylenol tampering case, which remains unsolved.

Nov. 10—Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev dies.

Nov.-Dec.—Worst recession since Great Depression of 1930s ends.

Dec. 2—Retired dentist Dr. Barney Clark becomes first recipient of permanent artificial heart. He lived 112 days.

1983: Superpower chill

March 8—Reagan denounces Soviet Union as "evil empire."

April 18—U.S. Embassy in Beirut destroyed by truck bomb and 63 persons are killed, including 17 Americans.

June 18—Sally Ride, aboard space shuttle Challenger, becomes first American woman in space.

Aug. 21—Former Philippine Sen. Benigno Aquino assassinated in Manila as he returns from three years of exile in the United States.

Sept. 1—Korean Air Lines Flight 007 shot down in Soviet airspace over Sakhalin island by

Lech Walesa . . . awarded Nobel Peace Prize Oct. 5

Soviet fighters, killing all 269 persons aboard.

Oct. 22—"No nukes" demonstrations across the United States and Europe to protest planned deployment of medium-range missiles in Western Europe.

Oct. 23—Truck bomb explosions at U.S. and French compounds in Lebanon kill 241 U.S. servicemen and 58 French paratroopers.

Oct. 25—U.S. forces invade Caribbean island of Grenada, oust leftist leadership.

Nov. 23—Soviets walk out of arms control talks, protesting deployment of new missiles in Western Europe.

Dec. 20—PLO mutiny forces evacuation of leader Yasser Arafat and 4,000 followers from last stronghold in Lebanon.

1984: Morning in America

Jan. 1—American Telephone & Telegraph broken up into seven regional companies, "Baby Bells," as part of settlement of federal anti-trust suit.

Feb. 9—Soviet leader Yuri Andropov dies. Konstantin Chernenko named to replace him four days later.

Feb. 26—Reagan orders withdrawal of American forces from Beirut.

May 7—Moderate candidate Jose Napolean Duarte elected president over ultra-conservative rival in war-torn El Salvador.

June 4-7—Indian troops storm Golden Temple, the Sikh shrine in Amritsar, and drive out militants responsible for terrorism. More than 1,200 persons die in the assault.

July 18—Twenty-one persons shot to death in a McDonald's restaurant in San Ysidro, Calif., by James Oliver Huberty, who is killed by police gunfire.

July 29—Summer Olympics begin in Los Angeles despite Soviet-led boycott of 14 nations.

Oct. 23—NBC airs BBC footage of 3-year-old drought in Ethiopia, resulting in outpouring of charitable contributions. Famine kills an estimated 1 million.

Oct. 31—India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in revenge for Golden Temple attack. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, succeeds her.

Nov. 6—Reagan elected to second presidential term, defeating Walter Mondale.

Dec. 3—Leak of deadly methyl isocyanate gas at Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, kills 3,400 persons, injures 20,000.

1985: Year of terrorism

Feb. 16—Israeli army begins withdrawal from Lebanon.

March 10—Soviet leader Chernenko dies. Mikhail S. Gorbachev, youngest Politburo member, named leader the next day, ushering in era of "glasnost" and "perestroika."

March 16—Associated Press correspondent Terry Anderson kidnapped in Beirut. By end of decade eight Americans are held, Anderson the longest.

May 24-25—Cyclone roars ashore in Bangladesh, killing 11,000 people.

May 30—In most prominent of series of espionage cases, John Anthony Walker, retired Navy communications specialist, is arrested for passing secret documents to Soviets.

June 6—Body believed to be that of long-sought diabolical Nazi doctor Josef Mengele exhumed in Brazil.

June 23—Bomb explodes on Air-India Flight 182 off Irish coast, killing all 329 people aboard.

July 13—Rock's biggest names stage Live Aid concerts in London and Philadelphia, raising $85 million for African famine relief.

Aug. 12—In decade's worst air disaster, Japan Air Lines 747 crashes near Tokyo, killing 520.

Oct. 1—Israeli jets, retaliating for killings of three Israelis in Cyprus, attack PLO headquarters in Tunisia, killing at least 68 people.

Oct. 2—Actor Rock Hudson dies of AIDS at age 59.

Oct. 7-10—PLO terrorists seize Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro and kill American passenger. Hijackers dock in Egypt, negotiate with Egyptians and PLO. U.S. planes intercept Egyptian plane carrying hijackers to Tunisia and force it to land in Sicily.

Nov. 13-14—Colombia's erupting Nevado del Ruiz volcano melts snowcaps, causing massive mudflow that buries town of Armero, killing 25,000 people.

Nov. 19-21—Reagan and Gorbachev meet at Geneva summit, first meeting between superpower leaders in six years.

Dec. 12—Arrow Air charter DC-8 crashes after takeoff in Newfoundland; all 256 people aboard die, including 248 U.S. servicemen returning from Mideast for holidays.

Dec. 27—Terrorist gunmen stage simultaneous attacks at check-in counters at Rome and Vienna airports. Eighteen people die, including four gunmen, and 121 are wounded.

Victor Amburgy of San Franciso, one of 151 hostages on hijacked TWA Flight 847, hugs an unidentified girl upon his return to Andrews Air Force Base in July 1985.

1986: Year of revolution

Feb. 7—Jean-Claude Duvalier flees Haiti, ending his family's 28-year dictatorship.

Feb. 25—President Ferdinand Marcos leaves Philippines in face of popular upheaval after rigged elections; Corazon Aquino becomes acting president.

Feb. 28—Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme assassinated by lone gunman in Stockholm.

April 2—Bomb explodes on TWA jet over Greece; four killed.

April 5—Bomb at West Berlin discotheque frequented by U.S. servicemen kills two, injures 200. U.S. says Libya involved.

April 15—U.S. air strike against Libyan military and political targets in retaliation for discotheque bombing.

April 26—Explosion at Chernobyl nuclear power station near Kiev in U.S.S.R. kills at least 31, hurts some 300.

Aug. 21—Cloud of toxic gas from volcanic Lake Nios in Cameroon envelops several villages, killing 1,746 people, and injuring 874.

Sept. 26—William Rehnquist becomes chief justice of Supreme Court; Antonin Scalia sworn in as new associate justice.

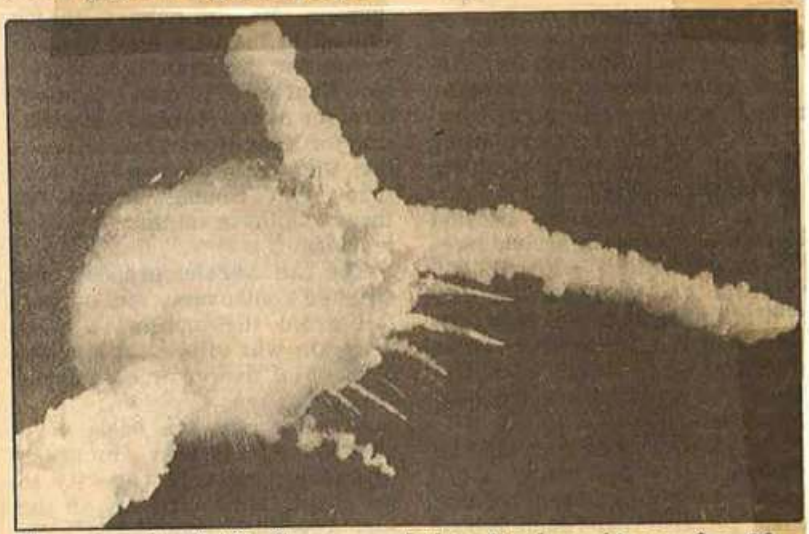
Oct. 22—Tax reform, major amendments to federal tax code eliminating many tax breaks and loopholes, signed into law.

Nov. 4—Democrats take control of Senate in U.S. national elections.

Nov. 14—Arbitrager Ivan Boesky pleads guilty to criminal charges in burgeoning Wall Street insider-trading scandals.

Nov. 25—Reagan reveals diversion of Iranian arms sales proceeds to Nicaraguan Contras, and dismisses aides John Poindexter and Oliver North in unfolding Iran-Contra scandal.

Dec. 31—Fire at Dupont Plaza hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico, kills 97 people. Three employees later plead guilty to arson.



The space shuttle Challenger explodes after launching on Jan. 28, 1986, killing all seven crew members and grounding the U.S. space program for more than a year.

1987: Year of scandal

Lt. Col. Oliver North is sworn to give his testimony before a congressional committee in July, 1987, during the Iran-Contra controversy.

Jan. 5—Reagan presents nation's first trillion-dollar federal budget.

March 19—In sex-and-money scandal, televangelist Jim Bakker resigns as head of PTL and Christian theme park Heritage USA.

May 5—Joint House-Senate committee hearings on Iran-Contra affair open in Washington.

May 8—Democratic front-runner Gary Hart quits presidential race amid reports of extramarital affair with Donna Rice. Hart re-enters race in December, then withdraws for good.

May 17—Iraqi warplane fires missiles at frigate USS Stark on patrol in Persian Gulf, killing 37 sailors.

May 28—West German teenager Mathias Rust lands small plane in Moscow's Red Square.

Aug. 7—Central American presidents sign peace pact calling for democratic reforms, amnesties and end to outside support for insurgencies.

Oct. 14—Eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure falls into abandoned well in Texas and is pulled out alive 58 hours later as entire nation watches.

Oct. 19—Black Monday on Wall Street. Dow Jones average drops record 508 points on U.S. stock exchanges; other world markets decline.

Oct. 23—Senate rejects nomination of Robert Bork to Supreme Court.

Nov. 29—South Korean jetliner disappears over Burma with 115 aboard; woman later confesses to planting bomb as part of North Korean conspiracy.

Dec. 8—Reagan and Gorbachev sign treaty to destroy 2,611 Soviet and American medium-range missiles.

Dec. 9—Palestinian uprising begins in Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with rioters protesting auto accident that killed four Arabs.

Dec. 20—Philippine passenger ferry Dona Paz collides with tanker; more than 3,000 killed.

1988: Nature's fury

Feb. 21—Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart steps down from pulpit in face of allegations of sexual wrongdoing.

Feb. 25-26—President Eric Delvalle of Panama tries to fire military chief Gen. Manuel Noriega, indicted in U.S. on drug-smuggling charges. Noriega ousts Delvalle, precipitating crisis and failed U.S. attempts to remove Noriega.

March 23—Nicaraguan Sandinistas and rebel Contras sign cease-fire agreement. Talks on permanent truce break down six months later.

April 4—Gov. Evan Mecham of Arizona impeached and removed from office for financial irregularities and other offenses.

May 15—Soviets begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

Summer—Worst drought since Dust Bowl days, prolonged record high temperatures nationwide, catastrophic forest and brush fires in the West, and pollution-choked beaches combine for grim American summer that heightens fears of "greenhouse effect."

Manuel Noriega

July 3—Iran Air A300 jetliner shot down by U.S. warship Vincennes in Persian Gulf, killing all 290 aboard.

July 6—Piper Alpha oil platform explodes in North Sea, killing 167.

Aug. 8—U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cueller announces Iran-Iraq cease-fire.

Aug. 17—President Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan and U.S. ambassador killed in suspicious plane crash.

Sept. 12-16—Hurricane Gilbert, with winds up to 160 mph, strikes Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Mexico and Texas, killing 300 people.

Sept. 26—Sprinter Ben Johnson of Canada stripped of Olympic gold medal for steroid use.

Sept. 29—Shuttle Discovery launched in first shuttle flight since Challenger disaster.

Nov. 8—George Bush elected president, defeating Michael Dukakis.

Dec. 7—Earthquake in Soviet Armenia kills 25,000.

Dec. 16—U.S. holds first direct talks with PLO.

Dec. 21—Bomb explodes aboard Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland; 270 die.

1989: Year of freedom

Jan. 7—Emperor Hirohito of Japan dies at age 87 after 62 years on throne and is succeeded by his son Crown Prince Akihito.

Jan. 24—Serial killer Ted Bundy, suspected killer of as many as 100 women across U.S., executed in Florida.

March 24—Tanker Exxon Valdez spills more than 10 million gallons of oil in Alaska's pristine Prince William Sound.

May 4—Oliver North convicted on three counts, acquitted on nine.

May 31—Speaker of House Jim Wright announces resignation in face of ethics charges.

June 3—Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran dies at age 86.

July 3—Supreme Court grants broad authority to states to restrict women's rights to terminate pregnancies.

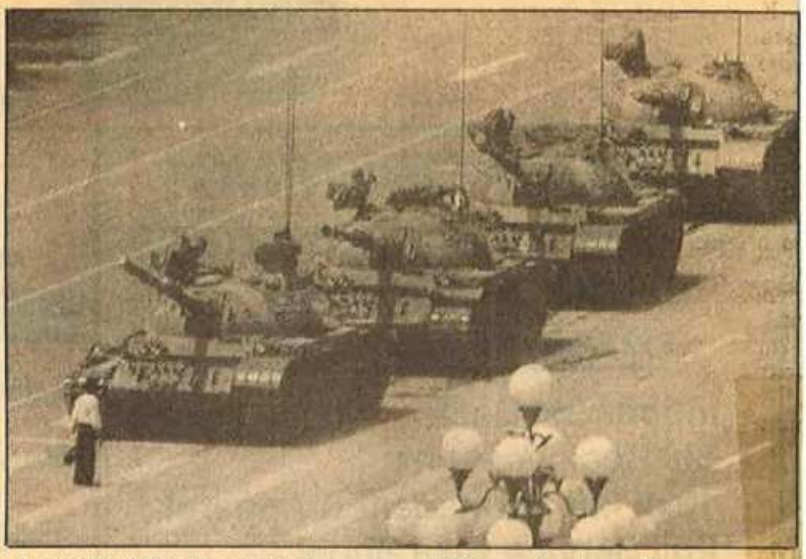
Aug. 18—Assassination of presidential candidate touches off crackdown on drug lords in Colombia.

Aug. 19—Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Solidarity becomes prime minister in Poland, first non-communist head of government in East Bloc since World War II, after Solidarity sweeps June elections.

Aug. 24—Pete Rose banned from baseball for life.

Aug. 24—Unmanned exploratory spacecraft Voyager passes within 3,000 miles of planet Neptune.

Sept. 17-21—Hurricane Hugo sweeps through Caribbean and into South Carolina, killing 62.



An unidentified man blocks a row of Chinese tanks in Tiananmen Square in Beijing during the student protests and China's violent crackdown last June. The man was pulled to safety by bystanders.

Oct. 17—Earthquake measuring 7.1 on Richter scale rocks San Francisco Bay area, killing 67, causing estimated $7 billion in property damage.

Nov. 9—East Germany opens borders, beginning of the end of Berlin Wall.

Nov. 22—Lebanon's President Rene Mouawad assassinated by bomb after only 17 days in office.

Dec. 2-3—Bush and Gorbachev meet at Malta summit to speed end of the Cold War.

Dec. 3—East German Communist leader Egon Krenz and ruling party Politburo resign, along with Central Committee two days after Parliament votes to eliminate Communist Party's constitutional guarantee of power.

Dec. 6—Fourteen women killed at Montreal engineering school by gunman who says he hates feminists. He commits suicide.

Dec. 10—In climax to mass protests, hard-line Czechoslovak Communist President Gustav Husak resigns after swearing in Cabinet dominated by non-Communists.

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Years of crises fade away for a shiny new decade

Epilog! (cont)

Entering the decade of 80s, everything (WAS GOING) rather well for all of us here in United States. Everybody seemed healthy and we had "Naches" seeing our children doing so well. Then came the joy of having grandchildren. Many times I needed to pinch myself to realize how good life in this United States was for us.

Finally on October 17 1980 Hania quit working. It was one of the happiest days of our lives. I started to plan my own retirement, and counting days until November 30th 1983. Felix my supervisor at Youthcraft retired in January 1980. For couple of years he kept working part-time. I thinkk he left for good in 1982.

I took over for good on the day when Karosen told me that kx from then on he is going depend on me much more, but he didn't mention a raise in my salary at all. His attitude reinforced my desire to retire at the age of 62. Even thou as of late 70s business was xx slacking off considerably because of imports I still worked very hard. The situation in the garment industry forced Karosen to close the factory on 8th and Broadway and to move into a smaller place in North Kansas City and make the coats elsewhere all over the country by subcontractors. Because of bad workmanship and quality with each passing month business was geting worse. I was sick of the whole operation and at last in August 1983 I told Karosen about my planed retirement in November. He couldn't believe at first and assured me that he will try to persuade ME any chance he get to stay on, without offereing more Money.

I left Youthcraft as planed on November 30 1983. I got a farewell diner, not from Karosen, but from my co-workers. From salemen I recived $500.00 U.S. saving bond. After all those over 30 years with Youthcraft, Karosen after hearing about the bond from salemen, matched the amount with a bond from himself. When I was 65 yexrs old I recived from the company a profit sharing check, again for all my 30 years in the amount of slightly over $1,200.00. And this WAS good and nice, because a designer who was employed by Youthcraft 10 years recived a profit sharing check in amount of $5.00, which later the company asked him to return ~~it,~~ because it was to large, and replaced it with a check for $2.50.

On June 20 1981 Elaine and Jack celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary.

In 1980s Larry Amsterdam went into partnership with some other dentists in Baltimore. The partnership went through with many ups and downs, and finally dissolved in 1989, and Larry and Judy bought the whole practice for themselves. Lets hope they will do well.

In June 1984 Giza recived her Doctor's degree in opthomology from Ohio State University. On June 13 1984 second daughter Rachel was born in Baltimore to Judy and Larry Amasterdam.

July 8, 1984 Giza finally after many years of going out together xxx married Steve Lander who is a lawyer and has a degree in CPA as well. As on previous "symchas" we attended this wedding in Cleveland. Ofcourse the entire K.C. "Meshpuha".

We came to Cleveland on a plane, and rented a car there to travel to Catskill Mountains to meet Victor's uncle Mr. Milton Yust and his family. We spent pleasant few days in Liberty and Monticello, visiting the famous Grossinger Hotel and other resorts. Mr. Yust and his wife Dora were very nice to us. They invited us to stay for a dinner. Needless to say Mrs. Dora Yust is no longer alive. She passed away in 1988. She was a "Sabra" born in Palestine in the part of the xxxxxx country what is now Syria.

In Monticello as well we met Victor's cousin Burton, his wife and his young son, and daughter Thelma of Victors another uncle Haskel from New York xx who was married to Gladys who is no longer alive, xx Thelma is a mother of a 10 years old boy. Her husband is a CPA. We didn't get to meet uncle Haskel and aunt Gladys and Thelma's husband.

The trip from Cleveland to Catskills x by car was the first for Hania and me on interstate U.S. highways. We traveled before but only on xxxx State highway to the Ozarks. I must admit it was quite an experience and we admired not just the scenery of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York State but Victror's skills and knowledge of xxx high speed highway travel. Ofcourse he made some mistakes. Once leaving Highway 80 and instead going east to New York State we were heading on Highway 79 to Pittsburgh. Extra more then 100 miles.

Epilog! (cont)

Prior to our retirement in 1983 in April of that year we spent quiet 10 days during Passover Holidays with Ela and Norbert in Cleveland. Both of us Hania and I needed this rest.

There is liming in Cleveland one Frances Peper. I don't remember her maiden name. She was married to Fred Peper brother to Lola Amsterdam wife of Sigmund Amsterdam who used to be a brother of Norbert's father. Anyway all these people, are not alive anymore. Frances (Franka) Peper is a born Cracovian. She always visits with Ela and Norbert on Saturdays afternoon. She has a son Steve who is a teacher. We met Franka during our first visit to Cleveland in 1954. Since then we became friendly and enjoy very much her company when we come to Cleveland. Franka and I have a lot incommon, because of our beloved Cracow and we always reminisce about the old times even thou she is older and I didn't know her in Cracow before the war.

After coming back from their honeymoon Giza took a job with a "HMO" in Akron, Ohio. Finally after all these years she opened her own practice in Cleveland. Steve, Giza's husband worked as a CPA, and now works for the Jewish Federation of Greater Cleveland.

Marylin worked for few years in hospital as a bacteriologist, first full time and after the arrival of Julia November 27 1984 part time, and then quit working all together. Kenny her husband first used to work in his father's business, but now he is a manager of a large scrap metal company.

Here in Kansas City Arnold and Vicki were blessed with their first baby girl Anna Francesca born March 27 1981. She is now a student at the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy. Carla Marie second daughter of Arnold and Vicki was born February 2 1985.

Those were good years for all of us, even thou Frieda kept complaining as always, and having from time to time serious problems with her "Esophagus" which always needed a specialist's attention.

In summer of 1985 we traveled again to Cleveland. This time by car on highways all the way. Our route went through Sant Louis, then with a stop overnight in Effingham, Illinois not to far from Missouri-Illinois border. Second day of traveling took us through rest of Illinois, Indiana passing through Terre Haute and Indianapolis and then going east into Ohio, through Dayton and Columbus. From there we turned north on highway 71 where in the evening we stoped for rest in a motel near Mansfield, Ohio.Next mid-day we arrived in Cleveland on highway 271 and checked into a hotel and then went to Ela's and Norbert's home to spent few days with them.

Victor always kept asking me, when I will help him out in driving on certain stretches of highway. Really I wouldn't mind, but I guess in reality he never trusted me to take over the wheel of his car. Probably if it would be my car the story would be different.

Anyway after few days in Cleveland this particular year we went to Canada. We traveled on highway 90 to Buffalo and from there to Niagra Falls where we stood for couple of days in a hotel on the Canadian side. From Niagra Falls we went to Toronto to visit our old friends Chaya Schnall and Dov Marmur and their families. Those were people who shared with us all those miserable years during the war in Soviet Union. Going back home we crossed into United States through Windsor on Canadian side passing later the city of Detroit.

Anytime we went traveling east we always included New York City in our plans, which never materialized because of Frieda who insisted that it would be to dangerous for Victor to drive in New York. It was one of those excuses of her to be a"puper" because she didn't feel like to go to New York.

Going into 1986 everything was going pretty well for all of us. In the beginning there were no indications that a tragedy, illness and other disaster would strike our family like a thunder.

Sometimes in spring or early summer 1986 Victor went for a check-up and his doctor after running some tests diagnosed him with diabitis. Ofcourse it was a shock for all of us, but we knew that many people with diabitis live a normal life thanks to many new drugs.

Epilog! (cont)

Victor's sugar blood count was high. High enough to justify insuline shots. Besides this he was loosing weight fast. He saw many doctors including a dibitis specialist, but none of them even hinted a possibility of a much greater problem.

It was a busy summer in many ways, and even being ill Victor decided to drive again on our annual trip to Cleveland. Not suspecting all the troubles hiding just around the corner we left Kansas City in the new Victor's 1986 Buick Park Avenue, just in time to be in Cleveland for the "Simchat Torah" holiday. He still was strong enough to drive all the time all the way to Cleveland. As always we were greeted there with open arms. The weather was much cooler then in summer. It was raining most of the time on the highways and in Cleveland as well. It was already second half of October.

We spent in Cleveland close to 10 days. We left Cleveland last of October, and Victor was rather in a hurry to get home. In a matter of facts we made it back in 2 days instead the usuall three days on our previous trips.

The celling fell few days later when during a diner in synagogue we noticed that Victor's face was getting yellow with each second tiding away on a watch.

Visits to doctors and a stomach scan which followed, confirmed the worst diagnosis we could expect. Victor had cancer of pancreas, an incurable condition.

Dr. Jacob Kraft performed the surgery. All he was able to do to make some kind of openning for food to come through. The tumor was un-reachable and unoperable. Still Victor came through the over six hours surgery with flying colors.

In conversation with the family Dr. Kraft gave Victor 3 to 15 months to live and he was oposed to him taking any radiation and cobalt treatment, thinking that Victor wouldn't survive such and ordeal.

Victor's stuborn nature helped him a lot during this terrible illness. In hospital they kept him only couple of days in intensive care. When he came home from hospital, there were times that he strongly believed in his recovery. He went through the therapy. He took his shots and medications as doctros prescribed. It didn't take him to long to pick-up, maybe in a slower pace on his everyday activities including taking part in meetings and negotiations with his partner Sol Blum in cases where Blum was helpless without Victor.

Soon Victor was driving again, went buying groceries and even was thinking about going on a trip to Colorado and went on with his daily walking routine as well.

Needless to say even thou he was trying to eat as much as possible, he could not gain his lost weight. There was a period when he went back to hospital.

In April of 1987 Ela came from Cleveland to be with us for a week, which we appreciated very much. There was no joy in our family in those days.

Slowly but sure at the end of summer or early fall Victor's condition started to deteriorate more rapidly. He was loosing his appetite, and suffered from pain more often. There was no other choice but to go to hospital again.

With this last trip to hospital started the beginning of Victor's end. We visited him in hospital as much as possible. Many times he even didn't know if we were there.

Victor died on November 4 1987. Martin and Arnold brought us the news early on this November day. Frieda was with us spending the night in our home. A good strong minded man left us forever. To us he was not only a brother-in-law, but like a good father, always ready to help with advise and otherwise, even thou on some occasions we didn't agree with him.

According to his wishes, there were only graveside services. But his friends didn't forget him and showed-up an-masse at the K.I. Blue Ridge Cementary where he is buried.."Blessed Be His Memory". A man, a fighter, who survibed the holocaust not only in the wilderness of Soviet Ural Mountains, but as a soldier with the Red Army, carrying on his back and shoulder a large anti-tank weapon.

Epilog! (cont)

The bankrupcy and the collapse of the Kroh empire in 1987 contributed to our problems. I don't need to write about those anxious days of that period, because you as the victims, know first hand what happened and do not need to be remained about this tragic times.

Eventually Jack went into Business on his own with some partners. The name of the new company is Color Technology Inc. We hope and pray that they succeed.

Victor's passing away left a tremendous mark on all of us and followed by many problems as far as our health was concerned. First was Hania who took very hard Victor's illness and his death. Her sugar level and blood pressure started to climb. For the first time in many years she needed medication to control both.

I myself tried to keep cool until this day in the middle of December 1986, when I discovered a small lump in my left breast which proved to be malignant, and which led to surgical removal of my breast. I went through 25 radiation sessions, which later after six weeks resulted in "Pericarditis" (inflamation of heart's lining) which at first I thought was a heart attack. It took me a long time to recuparate. I recovered, but I am still being checked out by my doctors twice a year. I amm thankful and grateful to Dr. Solomon Lewitton surgeon from Prime Health our health provider for his care and advise. Ofcourse most grateful I am to my dear family; Hania, Elaine and Jack who stood by me, and spent the long hours in hospital while I was in the operating room. And let me not forget Frieda who with her many problems at that time tried desperatly to find a raid to come to hospital and be with Hania.

Times go fast by, and wounds have a way to heal, but thoughts persist, no matter how hard we try to forget, they are still in our minds whatever we do. Hania and I try our best to go on with our lives. But with Frieda is a different story. Her mind works different way. She complains constantly of a problem which goes back over 20 years back. Then her stomach problems, Victor's death, high cholestrol and high blood pressure and dizziness contribute even more to her anxiety. We always thought that Martin's divorce from Lorinda would calm her down. But, not a chance. Martin has many problems on his own, and his mother likes to be on the top of everything, like if her son would still be a little boy. When Martin was a little boy we gave him a nickname "Tinke" short of Martin. And anytime Martin wanted something very bad he kept yelling; "Tinke veel" (Yiddish, Which means, Martin wants). And whatever Martin wants even today, Martin does. In away Martin and his mother are both alike. They are both stuborn, and nobody can tell them otherwise.

Throughout all these years in United States we considered many times to bring Norbert and Ela and their family to live here in Kansas City. Ofcourse the main reason was, that with Norbert's energy and some knowhow in business, him and Victor maybe would make big in real estate or even in furniture business. Well all those plans didn't materialized. Norbert and family then were already to deep rooted in Cleveland. Their kids liked there, had their friends and as far as Norbert was concerned with his religious background which he took so much into his heart after his father's death, he would never be happy here in Kansas City.

As way back in D.P. camp in 1949 a sunshine came into our lives when Jack was born, so during the gloomy days and weeks of 1987 and 1988 another bright sunshine arrived when our dear Andrew was Bar-Mitzvah in January 1988. We were so happy and proud of him. It was like for a while a heavy stone left our hearts. As everyone present in synagogue admired the way he conducted himself and recite the entire Shabat service including the Torah reading, we rejoyced.

And then came June 24 1989, our dear, sweet and beautiful Emily's Bat-Torah. Another day of "Naches" and feelings of joy and pride. We all new that Emily could recite prayers like any boy, maybe even better, but being a girl she was'nt allowed to do so. She just said what she was suposed to say in a beautiful way as well. Two extraordinary kids, our grandchildren and children of remarkable parents. Many relatives and friends attended from both sides of the family, the two symchas. Our only regret was that Victor didn't live long enough to enjoy the two performences. He would be extrimly proud.

Epilog! (cont)

Our group from Cleveland came to both Simchas. In January 1988 they were all here including Larry and his family from Baltimore except Marilyn and Kenny, because she is afraid of flying. To Emily's Simcha in June 1989 only Norbert and Ela came because Larry was in process of buying out his partners, Giza didn't feel to good in her first few months of pregnancy, and ofcourse Marylin was still afraid of flying, exactly like her aunts here in Kansas City. On both occasions Frieda was nice enough to host branches in Andrew's and Emily's honors for the family guests here and from out of town in Doubletree and Marriot hotels.

We enjoyed and were honored to be invited and participate in the festivities on the occasion of the 50th wedding anniversary of Elaine's parents Al and Vi Burstein during the Thanksgiving dinner in Elaine's and Jack's home and later at a fabulous dinner at the American restaurant in Crown Center with their sons Marty and Dr. Jerry Burstein with his wife Katy and daughter Jennifer. On previous occasion we met their son Jonathan. Both beautiful and very smart young people. I understand that Jonathan was admited recently to study at the University of Leningrad in Soviet Union.

Many years ago we attended the wedding of Marty to his wife Cindy. Later we met their children Melisa and Michael.

Little we knew during the celebration about the dark clouds gathering over our heads.

After Elaine recived her degree as "Education Specialist and then took the job with Learning Exchange we met many of her co-workers during many gatherings in Elaine's home. By name I only remember Virginia, a very nice young lady. Ofcourse I never forget when we met Connie and Warren in then Stix, Baer and Fuller store. Only the name Campbell registerd then in my head, so I thought That Warren was Campbell the State representative who was then Jack's and Elaine's neighbour.

It was much later when we finally realized that Warren is Dr. Wheelock, Connie Dr. Campbell. Him a profesor at UMKC and Connie the president of Learning Exchange. Ofcourse both known in Kansas City area and beyond for their skills in education. Connie and Elaine appear at many educational gathering on radio television and their views and opinion often published in the local press. Elaine gives much of her time to Jewish education as well. She serves recevtly as one of the vice-presidents of Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy in addition of being vice-president of Learning Exchange and chairman of the Board of Education at the Hebrew Academy. Some years ago Connie and Elaine wrote a book about teaching children on kindergarten level. CONNIE AND WARREN ARE MARRIED.

Now as far Connie and Warren are concerned we consider them not as good but much better of anybody we ever met, ofcourse family excluded. Their inteligence, views of humanity and human relations is extraordinary and we hope that they think of us as friends as much as we think of them.

Throughout all these years I always was dreaming about seeing Poland and Cracow once more in my life. Not that I love this country. After all much grief we left behind, THERE and the atitude of Polish people not always was as it should be toward the Jewish people. Still I love Cracow. The place of my birth, childhood and youth, which still I would like to relive in a walk through my past. But most of all I would like to be in Cracow to visit and say a prayer on the grave of my Blessed Memory Father.

Together with Jack and Warren we planed such a trip in spring of 1989. Everything was ready to go , when sudenly my dear Hania went through a mild heart attack. After few days of hospitalization a long period of recovery had begun. Nine months went by since then. She is much better now thanks to God.

Ofcourse we called off the trip to Poland. I still hope that some day in the future I still will be able to see my unforgetable Cracow again.

Changes in Eastern Europe caused by Gorbachews reforms in Soviet Union, and economic breakdowns because of communist policies, made political situation in Eastren block counties like Poland somehat unstabble, and the attitude of Catholic church toward Jews didn't change to much, as statements by Cardinal Glemp Indicated in his speeches.

Epilog! (cont)

Still before the last decade left us ~~with~~ another shock CAME when Vi, Elaine's mother went to hospital after re-occurrence of an old problem, when her breast was removed 7 or 8 years ago. after few visits to hospital and treatment we were told that Vi's condition improved for which we are thankful to God.

Martin's problem with Revco Drugs his former employer after draging for over 2 years still are not resolved. In meantime his hopes of making lots of money through a deal with a man whom he met through his friend Ross never materialized.

Martin's brother Arnold joined with his family Ohev Shalom synagogue and became very much involved in this synagogue's activities. Their two girls Anna and Carla are doing well, smart and well behaved kids. Vicki is still working for a theatrical company in Overland Park, and the whole family is expecting another child in April. I am quite sure that Victor would be very happy to see Arnold involved in synagogue. As things xxxx stand now problems concerning Martin Lorinda are not over yet, which have a terrible affect on Frieda. Anyway whichever way we turn, there is always something going on.

There is almost three years after Kroh's bankrupcy. The xx older brother George made a deal so he is free now. The younger John refused to make deal and is xxx still in prison. The fallout of the disaster still keeps falling. How long who knows? We in our hearts, hope it will end soon.

Our family in Cleveland as far as we know is OK. The furniture company where Norbert worked the last 38 years is going out of business and will close in March 1990. Norbert plans to retire and keep working elsewhere 3 days a week. Ela is still making sweaters, and Norbert's Mother Esther will celebrate her 90th birthday in few days. Their kids are doing fine and Giselle and Steve expecting their first child in February.

At this point our memories especially those of the last five decades are coming now to an end. When our normal ways of lives were interupted 50 years ago, we didn't know what to expect and what the future will bring. Despite of misery, hunger, sickness and very hard work somehow we survived. Many of our family members didn't live to see the end of Nazi Germany, mostly those who perished from the hands of Nazis.

Coming to United States after all these years was a blessing. But life wasn't as easy as we expected. Ofcourse many of the survivors made real good, others needed to work harder. The Jewish population of America, mostly those who came to this country in late 1800s and early 1900 didn't welcome us with open hands. Some synagogues even refused us the membership. I understand that here in Kansas City Rabbi Maurice Salomon was the xxx first to accept the new greenhorns in K.I. synagogue.

The post world war two newcomers tried their best to preserve their Jewish traditions from Europe. Many of them still speak Yiddish among themselves anytime they get a chance. Tradition and observance is very important to them. But to pass it to their children was another story. Still many succeded but others didn't fare so good. We are proud of our kids Jack and Elaine and their children Andrew and Emily for up-holding those traditions as much as possible.

Way back in Poland even thou I wasn't an excellent student and my priorities were in play and soccer I would do my best not to disapoint my blessed memory mother and get a degree to achieve something for my life. I wasn't strong enough to take up studies here in America even thou Hania wanted very much for me to do this. I admire and have respect for people who were able to achieve their goals even in their later years, like Elaine's father who got his master 's degree when he was in his sixties.

Here in this writing you got what you read. In plain words, plain grammar and plenty mistakes, but XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX I accomplished what I wanted to do all these years. My only regrets are, that I wasn't able to establish my roots in full, meaning names and places of our ancestors before our grandparents.

The following "Post Scriptum" should finish this writing. I really enjoyed to put all those thoughts on the paper and I hope you will enjoy reading them. Still I amm not finished yet. If something new should come to mine or Hania's mind, you can be sure I will write about it.

Post Scriptum!

In shallow hastily dug graves in the woods, fields, outside villages, small towns and large cities, many bones lie unmarked all over Europe. And so this story ends. It seems that these people were never born and never existed. In truth these bones stretch from the French coast to the Urals and beyond, dry bones of murdered giants. And in truth a marvelous thing happens; this story didn't end there, for the bones stand up and took on flesh. God breathed spirit into the bones, and people turned eastward and went home. In the glare, the great and terrible light of this happening,,God seems to signal that the story of the rest of us need not end, and that the new light can prove a troubled dawn.

For the rest of us perhaps. Not for the dead, not for more then fifty million real dead in the world's worst catastrophe. Victors and vanquished, combatants and civilians, people of many nations, men, women and children, all cut down. For them there can be no new earthly dawn. Yet though their bones lie in the darkness of the grave, they will not have died in vain, if their remembrance can lead us from the long, long time of war to the time for peace.

(The above paragraphs are excerpts from Herman Wook's "War and Remembrance".)

We Polish Jews, born in Poland, whose ancestors used to live there since XIV century when Polish King Kasimir the Great had allowed to settle there in order to help to revive the Polish economy (even thou there are indications that Jews used to live in Cracow during XII and XIII centuries) had always thought that we were an internal part of that country, no matter what. Jews with names like Hersh or Yosel called themselves Henry or Joseph. Throughout the years of Polands independence between the two world wars used to have many political and religious organizations widely recognized by Polish authorities, but in case of nationality there existed a split among Jews who used to call themselves Poles with "Mosaish" religion, and those who insisted being Jews by nationality and religion. In reality one nation with two different symbols of belonging.

All this changed after Hitler's holocaust. It seemed that certain circles of Polish population doublecrossed their former friends and neighbours. Their aim to take over Jewish wealth and even posessions of not so wealthy drove them to cooperation with Germans in killings and deportations.

Ofcourse many decent Polish patriots, sacrified their own lives for Jewish. A penalty for harboring a Jew in Poland during the war was death. Still in Western Europe the punishment for the same crime was not so extrime. Helping Jews exposed people to great dangers. Nevertheless there were Christians endangering themselves and their relatives for providing aid to Jews in all European countries. How many of them perished? God only knows.

There existed in Poland a clandestine organization whose sole objective was to provide heaven and aid to hiding Jews. Many members of this organization are still alive, and some of them reside here in United States.

Particulary important is a story told by one profesor Jan Karski, now a resident of Washington D.C. and profesor at Georgetown University. In 1942 profesor Karski acted as a courier of the Polish Underground State who traveled back and forth between Warsaw, London and Washington and had personally witnessed the beginning of the "Final Solution".

In the middle of 1942 Jewish leaders in Warsaw invited profesor Karski on a secret guided tour of Warsaw Ghetto. There he saw the horrors on two separate occasions. He saw German youths killing Jews at random. He saw starving people waiting to die on the streets of the ghetto. He saw many other unhuman conditions, but most of all he saw terrible dirt, suffocation, and felt enormous stench and more stench wherever he turned. Second time around he couldn't take it any longer and asked the two Jewish leaders to escort him out of this hell.

Post Scriptum! (cont)

So profesor Karski had carried messages and pleas from Jewish leaders in ~~xxxx~~ occupied Poland to Western governments, and told them what he saw, while touring Warsaw Ghetto. His aim was to make aware of Jewish plight in Poland not only government leaders but leaders of American Jewry as well.

Evidently all Karski's pleas bounced off deaf ears of people such as members of British war cabinet, including Anthony Eden then British Foreign Secretary. In Washington he spoke to president Roosevelt, and three members of American government. He also spoke to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, and numerous Jewish leaders, to writers and political commentators ~~x~~ such as very important journalist in those days Walter Lippman and then Supreme Court Justice a Jew himself Felix Frankfurter who as he stated "had found the whole story very hard to believe".

Karski could not discuss all the above matters with nobody else, because this would ~~xxxx~~ have demonstrated how Allied governments, which alone were capable of providing assistance to Jews, left them to their own fate.

Fifty years went by. There are only handful Jews left ~~xxxx~~ in Poland. 5000 of them. Some live under Polish indentity. Others mostly children of holocaust survivors who never left Poland assimilated with Polish population by marriage. Their children with some exceptions know very little about Judaism. I imagene, life wouldn't be easy nowaday for a Jewish child in a Polish public school.

There is a small percentage of Jewish young people who are not ashamed of their tradition and try very hard to practice Judaism under very ~~xxxx~~ difficult circumstances

Despite anti-Semitism and hatress (mostly practiced by the old generation) many Poles for some reason can't forget Jews, even thou majority of them never saw a Jew in their lives. The young ones know about Jews from stories told to them by their parents and grandparents. And those are the people who still talk and write about Jews and their rich history in Poland. The young writers and intelectuals write about Jews in magazines, periodicals and daily press as well and talk about them in radio and television.

In their stories they still maintain that long time ago Poland was important to Jews and Jews were important to Poland. Three and a half million Jews constitued largest Diaspora in Poland as far as numbers were concerned. They used to be famous as scholars of Talmud and Hasidism, and all other learnings secular and religious. They used to be business people helping Poland in her economy on many fronts, doctors, lawyers, scientists, public servants and ~~xxxxxxx~~ advisers to high government officials and many other profesional people.

Like in any other nations Jewish population was divided among the rich, middle class and the poor. As far as religion was concerned only two groups existed. The very religious rich and poor alike closed ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ inside the oldfashioned ghettos, not forced to live there but by their own choice. The other group was the not so religious and assimilants who used to live all over Poland in cities, towns, shtetls, villages next door to their Polish neighbours. Both of those groups always kept a kind of a bond with Poland in thousand ways, bonds not always approved by leaders of the two peoples.

And then came holocaust. In 1945 after shooting and murdering stop, those who survived and those who came out of hiding and those who returned from far-away lands started to leave again. There was no place for them in Poland. They couldn't live on cementaries, shocked, scared and walk on earth soaked with Blood of their murdered families. Only "some remnants" adopted Poland as their home again.

As children, each one of us used to have a long time ago nearby the house where we used to live a special small paradise, a childhood paradise of our own, a playground, a road and a street which led to a far unknown world. Each of us cherrished our own wild meadow, a place for carefree experiences, a make believe garden or castle. Places where a small hill covered with snow and ice, a hole in the ground, trees or muddy pond used to be ways to an unbelievable adventures.

Post Scriptum! (cont)

And then came the early adulthood. When our thoughts had turned to other things, other adventures but mostly to girls. Especially this one particular girl. The one with a nice smile, blond hair and blue eyes. Ofcourse each of us kept dreaming about those girls, followed her in thoughts and secret glimpses, but never had have nerve enough to approach her and tell her about those feelings face to face.

It comes to mind an old Polish song, which exactly described feelings of a young boy toward a girl next door.

You walk by me but pretend not to see me
Days and nights go by
But my naive heart is dreaming
That at last you will notice me!

Upon our return after the holocaust, those blond, blue eyed girls were gone forever, and those old magig places seemed so grey, small and sad. The old house turned into graveyard, and the street in front of it was like a road of no return. Dreams of our youth disapeared, simply went away. The brutal truth of life came out in full force. Our loved ones we expected to find, were no longer there.

Three phases clearly characterised Jewish fate during and after holocaust. Three categories of death: First death: Biological. Second death: Past. And third death: Oblivion.

Biological fact; They are no more there. The Past fact; They will never come back. And the third fact; Oblivion. Who will remember them in the future.

If history would take a different path, Jews still would live in Poland. So no matter what the past is gone. Jews will not come back from the past, not only as persons, but as population. The nation of Polsih Jews don't exist anymore. Only remnants remain.

Yet from bones and ashes a new nation came to life. A Jewish nation, on Jewish land in the State of Israel. The martyrdom of the six million victims of Nazizm made the new State possible. The State which shows to the world how to defend the honor not only of it's own citiziens, but honors of Jews all over the world.

Young Poles are learning now about Jewish past in their country, more then ever. Let us hope that many priceless books of remembrance of Polish Jewry will be preserved and serve as a source for historians and scholars for many generations to come. And let us hope as well that our new Jewish generations will strive to preserve the histories and fate of Jews in Poland and remember how they used to live not just in large metropolies but in villages and shtetls all over the country.

Below you can read a translation of a poem written by one of those young Polish intelectual who describes feelings of a shtetl's inhabitants and their entiment toward Jews before and after holocaust. I would judge this poem both ways. Maybe just maybe, there is some truth in it.

The other two poems are my own translations from Polish. Both were written by Jewish men who as I had been born Cracow, spent their childhood and youth there and as I still can't forget this beautiful and ancient city. The writer of the first poem is "anonymous"signed by "Kuba"

The author of the second poem is Alexander Rosenfeld, former Cracovian now residing in Jerusalem. He wrote it in 1983. The two poems appeared in Polish press.

Poem No.1

Where are those little towns
Where biblical songs joined by winds
With Polish songs and Slovian sorrow.
Where are those little towns
Where old Jews in gardens
In shadows of cherry trees
Wept over the Holly Wall in Jerusalem.
There are no more those little towns

continued on next page.

continued from page 548.

Although mist of poetry, moon, wind and stars above
Will remember them forever.
Where are those little towns
Where hundreds years old blood
Wrote the tragic history
Of the most suffering two nations on earth!
Those towns still live in eternity!

Poem No.2 is a Memorial to the Jewish Cracow.

I remember the old streets of Jewish Cracow
Stradom (Old House), Kazimierz (Kazimir),
Jakub str.(Jacob str.), Szeroka (Wide),
Miodowa (Honey str.), The Rabbi Meisels str.
Zielona (Green str.), Podbrzezie (Shore str.),
Mrs. Orzeszkowa str. Skawinska (Skawa str.)
And Brzozowa (Elm str.)

I remember those who raised in Ghetto,
Jewish fighters. Soldiers of hope.
Who like stones thrown
Went to death. One after another.

In Memory of Hebrew Academy!
In Memory of Yiddish Theater!
In Memory of Years, Months and Days!
In Memory of Jewish Cracow!
In Memory of Mizrachi and Beth Yakow!
In Memory of Maccabbi and Jewish Gym Assn!

Where is this Cracow now? Where is Vistula River?
What happened to us?
Where is Rome? Where is Crimea?
And where is Poland?
Our Cracow stretched out from Plaszow to Swierdlowsk.
From Auschwitz to Siberia.
Going after us to Paris, London, New York and Tel Aviv.
All parts of the Globe.
And we still after all those years remember and love you.

We dream of Planty and chestnut trees.
The chain of memories is longer than our slavery.
Our Cracovian-Jewish childhood,
Days of youth, happiness, frolics and fights.
Days of love, days of defeat and days of worries.

Who then as us, knows you better
Sidewalks of Cracow,
And what kept hurting us before
Still keeps hurting.
Our Jewish fate.

At this time on Planty rain is falling on
Those chestnut trees.
Autum is still around but in our hearts winter settled already.
It's getting dark. Time to go back.
Gates are being closed.
And my unforgetable Cracow
Falls asleep again!

Post Scriptum!

Poem No. 3 is author's comparison of his feelings as far Cracow and Jerusalem are concerned.

Golden crown - Morning star!
A touch of my lips caress you.
My Cracow. And my arms embrace you.

I left behind "Kanonicza" (Cleric street)
For Via Dolorosa.
Even thou the same God looks upon me
From the Wailling Wall
As from Wit Stwosz Altar*

When I see a shadow of a donkey,
At Damascus Gate,
I see myself at Florian Gate** as well.

I am thrown between History, Bible and Torah,
Which had sworn against my finding,
Of a permanent place for me.
But I am in defiance of all the winds.
Damn sun in the sky and tall palm trees.
I will never forget "Sukiennice"***
And stones of the Old Market as well.

Like a fateful bird which suffered with the city,
You can't push me out from your heart my Cracow.
It's a bad nest who refuses it's own children.

Explanations!

*Wit Stwosz Altar in Saint Mary's church in Cracow, a masterpiece in sculpture. According to a legend the famous artist and sculptor Wit Stwosz was a Jew who escaped Spanish inquisition. After converting to Christianity someplace in Upper Austria he came and settled in Cracow. He was the genius who created the Altar. Being a gifted painter as well Stwosz used to initial his pictures with Hebrew letters. Somebody decifered those letters as Stwosz Cohen. Of-course the Catholic church never made public those findings. During the occupation Germans declared and claimed Wit Stwosz as a German and took the Altar with them to Germany. After the war the priceless art was returned to it's original place in Saint Mary's church in Cracow.

**Florian Gate. A gate to the city in the walls of the old Cracow. Still standing at the original spot.

*** Sukiennice (Cloth Mart). An old gothic building constructed in early middle ages on the Old Market Place to help Polish commerce to compete on international markets. (Still standing as a monument of the old glory).

So here it is. The story of our past ends right here. We hope you will read and remember. You need to remember that your great-grandparents and those before them used to be religious Jews, many of them educated in "Yeshivas" like grandfather Abraham Leniower whose knowledge of Torah bordered with a wisdom of a scholar. Him and others before him on both sides of our families used to wear beards and earloks and dressed like orthodox Jew and women wore wigs on their heads. Never be ashamed of your family's past. Be proud of it and respect it. All your ancestors were honest and hard working people. It is just a shame, that we know so little about them.

We the survivors of holocaust are gratefull to the United Sates of America, for the opportunity given to us to start a new life in this great country, and for chance to work and prosper.

Having all this in mind I am finishing this story with the same word I had begun to write it: "Remember" Always Remember.

C.M.