

Excerpts from the Memoires of Daniel Hochman, survivor from Boryslaw.

Following a “roots trip” to Poland and the Ukraine in 1992, my father revealed to us kids for the first time a detailed account of his and my mother’s experiences during the Holocaust.

The following document includes excerpts of the memoire written by my father, Daniel Hochman in 1992. He was born and raised in Boryslaw, Poland. My mother, Natalia Hochman neé Blum, was born in Sambor, but spent the years of Nazi occupation in Boryslaw.

I did not edit these excerpts, but did add a few footnotes, based on research I have done on the history of the family and the Jewish community in Boryslaw.

June Dilevsky
junedilevsky@gmail.com

THE EARLY YEARS -- PRE WORLD WAR II

Natalia:

She was born in Sambor, a small town of 25,000 population in Poland, now the western part of the Ukraine. During its more than 700 years of existence it has seen the rule of Poles, Tatars, Ukrainians, Austrians, back to Poles from 1918 to 1939, and finally the Soviets, Germans and Ukrainians since WWII. It was a pleasant, sedate town, the seat of county courts, housing a military command, primary and secondary schools, and acting as a commercial trade center serving the surrounding towns and villages. The population, about 40% Jewish, included a substantial number of professionals in law, business and medicine.

Natalia and her brother, Emil, were the children of Paul (Pinchas) and Maria (Mariam), neé Backenroth, Blum. Paul's parents, Nathan and Erma, lived in Turka, a small town not far from Sambor, where Nathan was a successful merchant. Maria was one of nine children of Israel and Chanah Backenroth (4 girls and 5 boys) living in Sambor and Monastyrec. The Backenroths were a prominent family in the area where Israel, as well as his predecessors were land owners on a large scale. Israel owned in excess of 1000 acres (practically the entire village of Monastyrec) as well as forests and other properties. He was a philanthropist of sorts; on holidays he opened his house to the poor and transients who had no place to worship or celebrate. Other members of the Backenroth family also distinguished themselves in their pursuits, and the archives trace them back to the 18th century.

Natalia's childhood was essentially uneventful (she says "dull"). There was school, a governess, pretty clothes, summers in the grandparents' village, and not much excitement. Paul was managing his business; Maria was active in various charities, meeting friends for tea and some gossip, going to resorts for the summer and always being the lady of the house. It was not until Miss Andzia, the governess, got married and emigrated to America, and Natalia entered high school that she started to experience a social life with friends and, most importantly, boys. It did not last long, however; World War II put an end to all this.

Daniel:

I was born in Boryslaw, then Poland, now western Ukraine. During the first 700 years of its existence, until the mid-nineteenth century it was just a village on the outskirts of Drohobycz, the major city in that area. In the 1840s oil was discovered in the fields of Boryslaw and the village was transformed into a boomtown, with all types of adventurers, entrepreneurs, confidence men, laborers, specialists and professionals streaming in, in search of wealth and power. I believe my grandfather, Feivel Koch, arrived there as a young man around 1880, and established himself as a successful merchant. To enhance his prestige and respectability in the community he married Rebecca Oppenheim, daughter of a well-known Rabbi in the region. Feivel and Rebecca had seven children, four girls and three boys, my mother being the third youngest among them.

As World War I neared an end and the German and the Austro/Hungarian empires were disintegrating, a Polish Legion under Marshall Pilsudski was formed to liberate Poland from its occupiers. Among the "heroes" to enter Boryslaw in 1920 to secure it for Poland from the Ukrainians, was my future father, Henryk (Chaim) Hochman. He hailed from Warsaw, and nobody in Boryslaw knew his family. He was tall and very handsome, a sophisticated "city slicker", and he swept young Genia (Gittel) Koch (as well as several other young ladies of the town) off her feet. Soon after getting his discharge from the military they were married. Grandpa Feivel set him up in some kind of business and love was reigning supreme.

Their marriage, however, could not survive. There were too many differences in their upbringing, lifestyles, values, etc.; when I was about 3 years old, they were divorced. He left for France and my mother and I remained in Boryslaw.

Three or four years later Genia decided to go to Paris to try for a reconciliation, but it did not work. She remained in Paris, where her brother Daniel and his family emigrated two years earlier (the parents of Blanche, Solange, and Bernard) and could help her in getting settled, while I remained in Boryslaw in the custody of my aunt, Salka, and her husband, Chune Ringler. They were a childless couple and from them I received all the love and opportunity to develop, a gift which shaped my life from that point on.

Genia had a rough life in Paris. For a few years she managed to sustain herself as a seamstress, and then married a very kind and gentle man, Joseph Lanz. They had a daughter named Felice born in 1936, and both my mother and my half-sister came to visit me in Boryslaw in 1937. Soon thereafter Joseph fell victim to cancer, and died in 1939. My mother and Felice were deported by the Germans from Paris to Auschwitz on 3 August, 1942.

I never heard or received any letter from my father since he left Boryslaw after the divorce, until suddenly, in 1936¹, without any prior notice, he appeared from the clear blue sky, to visit his son. He impressed me tremendously! He was still young, tall and handsome, elegantly dressed, well groomed, and, to top it all, he bought me the best bicycle the store had to offer. He told me stories about Paris, and America and how he enjoyed seeing the world. He left a few days later, and I never saw him again...

...My childhood years were pretty active. School work came easy to me, which gave me time to play with my friends, ski, play soccer, and, when I grew a little older, help out in Chune's shoe store or grandfather's cleaning agency. Upon finishing grade school, two options were available for further education: a trade school, or the gymnasium (high school). The high school in Boryslaw was private and rather expensive, but Chune decided that I should prepare myself for college, and, even though the financial burden was heavy, he enrolled me in high school. The money problem was solved during my father's visit a year later. He presented his credentials as a veteran legionnaire to the school principal and obtained for me an exemption from all fees and tuition.

Anti-Semitism in Poland was a centuries-old tradition; it became more intense as Poland began suffering from the economic depression of the 1930s. By 1934 the press and the radio became openly hostile to Jews, greater restrictions were imposed on Jewish businesses, and higher education was virtually inaccessible to Jewish students. We, the Jewish high school kids, became a tighter group, keeping ourselves at some distance from the Gentiles, and were secretly joining Zionist youth organizations despite strict prohibition by school authorities.

One day in 1937, during a break between classes, a girl from our classroom approached me to ask a question about a math problem that was giving her trouble. As I was explaining it to her, another one of our classmates by the name of Krzysztof Kochanowski, ran over and yelled, "you dirty Jew, stay away from our Catholic girls!". Without a moment's hesitation, I unwound my right arm, and with a closed fist, hit him in the face. He reeled back across the corridor, hit the wall and sat down on the floor, bleeding profusely from his nose and mouth. The bell rang for the next period, which happened to be math, and I returned to my seat. The math teacher, Jonas Tilleman, was about 15 minutes late entering the classroom, and proceeded with his lecture; but he gave me a long look, and what I perceived as a mischievous smile of satisfaction. The school principal appeared a few minutes later and excused me from classes for the rest of the day. There was no further disciplinary action taken, but Kochanowski never talked to me again.

¹ Given the reference to the U.S., this was probably in 1938 rather than 1936. Henryk Hochman was a seaman on the Polish passenger ship, the M.S. Pilsudski from September 1937 – March, 1938. In his VHA interview (SHOAH Foundation), my father recalls 1938 as the year of his father's visit.

In the winter of 1938 I was fortunate to win our annual school ski race. This was not to the liking of our teacher of Polish literature, who proclaimed in class that apparently skiing is easier than Polish lit for Jews to learn. He began calling on me more frequently for recitations and reports, always using "our ski champion", with sarcasm, instead of my name. I did not want to give him the satisfaction to fail me, and I spent more time on Polish literature that year than on any other subject. He could not help but give me a good grade, and I hope he got an ulcer doing so. His name was Schmidt, and, later, when the war broke out, he disappeared. We were told that he was a German spy, a member of the Nazi "fifth column".

As 1938 drew to an end, Jewish refugees from Germany were arriving in increasing numbers with stories about persecution, violence, and atrocities which were difficult to comprehend. We thought that they were exaggerating to win our sympathy, since "a cultured, civilized nation, like the Germans, could not engage in such actions".

In mid-1939, after the fall of Czechoslovakia, the Munich conference ended in shame, and rumors about a Hitler-Stalin pact to divide Poland were confirmed. There was no longer any doubt that a war between Poland and Germany was unavoidable. In August 1939 everybody was glued to the radio listening to the perpetually escalating accusations and threats between German and Polish politicians, waiting for the hot war to start. On September 1, 1939 Germany attacked Poland and WW II began.

WORLD WAR II -- THE SOVIET PERIOD

Natalia

As soon as military hostilities started, it became clear that Poland will not be able to survive. The Blum family decided to leave Sambor and tried to escape to Romania. They loaded some of their belongings on a horse-drawn wagon and hit the road. After two weeks of travel, they got close to the Romanian border, but never crossed it. Instead, they found themselves in the arms of the Soviet army on its way to occupy "their" half of Poland. Two weeks later, when they returned to Sambor they found Israel Backenroth arrested, the Monastyrec property confiscated, their store closed and their apartment occupied by Russians. Israel was subsequently released and tagged as subject to deportation to Russia. He escaped by moving to Boryslaw and changing identity papers. The Blums were also informed that deportation was in store for them, and, to avoid it, moved to Stryj, another city in the region, where they obtained new papers and settled. Paul was given a job as bookkeeper for a cooperative shop, and Natalia and Emil continued in school.

Daniel :

At the beginning of the war, Boryslaw was subjected to some minor bombing and a few skirmishes, followed by one week of German occupation. It was replaced by the entry of the Red Army on September 24, 1939. During the initial six months of Soviet occupation there were numerous arrests of people that were considered "undesirable", deportations, nationalization of properties, as well as a general lowering of the standard of living to one characteristic of a communist regime. The old currency became worthless and replaced by rubles, but subject to a ceiling of 50 rubles per person.

Chune's store was closed and the inventory confiscated, and we had to move from our apartment to two small rooms in my grandfather's house. A few weeks later my uncle was given a job in a cooperative shop at a salary barely sufficient to cover food. We were told, however, that he was not a big enough "bourgeois" to be subject to deportation.

I continued my high school education with a few new subjects added to the curriculum, such as history of the Soviet Union, principles of Marxism-Leninism, Russian language and literature, etc. The official language was Ukrainian.

On 19 June 1941 I graduated from high school and received a diploma with straight "A"s in all subjects. In accordance with Soviet law, I was entitled to priority admission without entrance examination to the university of my choice, anywhere in the Soviet Union. The world of science was opening to me and I was very happy. It did not last long, however. Three days later, on 22 June 1939, Germany attacked the

Soviet Union, and a number of oil wells in Boryslaw were set on fire by German bombs.

THE HOLOCAUST YEARS

On 1 July, 1941, when the German army entered Boryslaw the city's population numbered approximately 50,000 ; 20,000 Ukrainians, 15,000 Poles and 15,000 Jews. The Ukrainians hated the Poles, the Poles hated the Ukrainians, and both the Poles and the Ukrainians hated the Jews.

Within hours after the Germans' arrival, a group of Ukrainian hooligans, soon joined by other Jew-haters, armed with knives, clubs, chains and axes started a pogrom unlike any since the beginning of the century. They grabbed people off the street, broke into houses, and rampaged through the town beating, stabbing, and torturing any Jew they could find, while the Germans stood by watching approvingly. After three days, the commanding officer had enough and called the orgy to a halt. 350 men, women and children were dead and another 150 maimed or seriously injured². My first encounter with death occurred at that time, when I found the bodies of my grandfather and grandmother on the street, not far from where they lived. We carried them to the cemetery and buried them. Chune's old parents and one of his sisters were also among the dead.

A few days later the more permanent military occupation and police authorities arrived and, subsequently, the following orders pertaining to the Jewish population were issued:

- a. we had to wear our identification, a white arm-band with a Star of David, at all times,
- b. we were not allowed on the streets from sunset to sunrise,
- c. we were not permitted to travel, or use any means of public transportation,
- d. we were not permitted to shop in any store, other than those specifically designated for Jews,
- e. we were not permitted to own or use arms, phones, radios, bicycles, horses, furs, or jewels and were ordered to surrender all such items to the German authorities,
- f. we were not permitted to enter any public buildings, theaters, or libraries, other than those designated,
- g. finally, all legal rights of Jews were suspended or cancelled.

² The actual number of victims of this pogrom has not been verified. Estimates (primarily from witness testimony) range from 200-1000 people.

About the same time, we were forced to establish a *Judenrath*, (Jewish Council) of the most prominent Jews in town, who would act as liaison with the occupation authorities, maintain order in the Jewish areas, collect ransoms and taxes, distribute ration cards, and, most importantly, establish an *Arbeitsamt* (employment bureau) to ensure that all Jews aged 16 to 65 be made to work. In August 1941, the Jewish living area was restricted to two ghettos, the two poorest sections of the city. All Jews living outside those sections were given one day to move, leaving most their belongings behind³.

My work assignment was to a company owned by a Volksdeutch (meaning of German descent) subcontractor to the German oil production company which was put in charge of the Boryslaw oil industry. My job was to dig ditches and storage dumps, install pipelines, carry bricks and mortar for the brick-layers, and respond to whatever other demands were placed by the construction crews. Due to the fact that I was a high school graduate and could calculate volumes and weights I was also charged with the responsibility of reporting to the office the weekly performance results of our team of 8-10 people. Since the oil wells on which we worked were dispersed over a large area, encompassing the city as well as surrounding suburbs, I was able to move from location to location, and in the process, develop many contacts with Gentile workers and farmers.

The systematic extermination of the Jewish community began in November, 1941 with the first *Aktion*. While the word can be translated from German to mean "action", it actually is better represented by "hunt", with the Germans and the Ukrainians being the hunters. and the Jews the hunted. At dawn on November 29, the two Jewish ghettos were surrounded by special troops of the German SS and Ukrainian police, all armed to the teeth and accompanied by police dogs. A house-to-house search and detention of men, women and children, young and old, followed. We escaped by hiding in the cellar which was miraculously missed by the intruders. The hunt lasted 2 days and ended when approximately 1500 people were gathered⁴. They were loaded onto trucks and transported out of town, where they were forced to dig their mass grave and undress before they were shot...

..In the winter of 1941 a new enemy reared its ugly head: hunger. Living the previous 2 years under the Soviet system we became accustomed to the irregularities of their distribution system; any time there was flour or sugar or grain available in stores we would get in lines and buy as much as possible. Chances were that there would be a shortage later on. Thus, as the Germans came, most households had some accumulation of basic groceries which sustained them for a few months. These supplies ran out, however, and the Germans did not bother to provide any food to the Jewish distribution outlets. We

³ The date of the establishment of the Jewish ghetto/s in Boryslaw is uncertain. It was an open ghetto, i.e., not walled or fenced in. In addition, the town of Boryslaw, was spread out over the foothills. According to survivor testimonies and archival materials, Jews continued to live in and around Boryslaw, outside of official Jewish residential areas throughout most of the Nazi occupation. The order to establish was issued from Lemberg in October, 1941. However, other sources indicate that implementation of the order was postponed. Forced labour lists from 1942-1943 that some Jews continued to live outside the designated areas even relatively late in the occupation.

⁴ Reports of the number of victims of this first *Aktion* vary, usually cited as 500-700 people.

had ration coupons, but no rations. The farmers and black marketers hit upon a bonanza. They would come to the Jewish quarters with some basic food stuffs like potatoes, flour, dried fruits and vegetables, and leave with jewelry and clothing. A 1kt diamond ring or a pearl necklace would fetch 50 lbs. of flour or a sack of potatoes. The poor people of course had nothing to barter and were dying of starvation. The most heart-breaking sights were the children, with bulging eyes, nothing but skin and bones and swollen bellies, just like you see on TV from Somalia. Every day dead bodies were found on the streets and disposed of by the tens...

...One day in August 1942, as we were at work on a site south of the city we were surrounded by German mounted policemen, gathered in a group and marched off in the direction of the town. As we went along similar groups were added from all directions and we quickly became a column of 200-300 escorted by armed German and Ukrainian police, marching through town toward the railroad station... When we arrived at the railroad station we were herded into a warehouse in which another hundred people had already been detained. By the end of the first day we were about 500 prisoners, and on day 2 another 300 were added. By then the situation became critical. With no food or water, no sanitary facilities, the heat and the tight quarters and the crying and the yelling, all added up to a scene from Dante's Inferno. Some started to die.

That night the Jewish police arrived with water and bread and a contingent of some 50 policeman to maintain a semblance of order. The chief of the Jewish police was Mr. Eisenstein, the father of my friend from high school whom I had helped in math. Mr. Eisenstein remembered me, and when he spotted me in the middle of this *Gehennah* he told me to try to stay as close to him as I could. On the afternoon of the third day the number of prisoners was close to 1000, and the train to transport us to an unknown destination arrived⁵. The loading of the cattle cars did not start until that evening; I was fighting my way to stay close to the car door. As they started to slide the door shut I jumped out, right into the arms of Mr. Eisenstein. As the Germans and the Ukrainians were busy with their activities, he quickly joined me with the other Jewish policemen. As soon as the train left the station, we marched back to the Jewish police station, where I stayed until the next morning...

Since this *Aktion* was finished, I went back to the ghetto and the next day, back to work. At this time⁶ I was given an assignment to a bunk in the new camp and a badge marked "R", for *Ruestungsindustrie*

⁵ This was the first transport from Boryslaw to Belzec, the first stationary extermination camp, built as part of "Operation Reinhard", which became operational in March 1942. According to German records, an estimated 15,300-16,000 Jews were transported to Belzec on this transport from Boryslaw, Drohobycz, Sambor and Stary Sambor. Most estimates of deportees from Boryslaw in this number in the several thousands.

⁶ This probably occurred a couple of months later – October or November, 1942. This would be more consistent with other, outside sources.

(meaning defense industry), stamped with a Gestapo seal and a serial number. They said it represented my "passport to life" and will exempt me from all future *Aktionen* (which continued to take place).

One day in the fall of 1942 I was in the office of my firm preparing the weekly report, when a beautiful young woman came in asking permission to use the phone. She was blond, nicely built, heavily made up, and neatly dressed, with silk stockings and high heels -- a sight not often seen in those days. Her eyes told the story, however. They were sad and terrified---they were Jewish eyes. As she was leaving the office I said to myself: "isn't it a shame that a beautiful Jewish girl like this perfect *shiksa* cannot escape serious trouble?"

A few weeks later I met her in the ghetto.

I was introduced to her by two sisters whose rooms she shared, and who knew me for many years, being friends of my cousin and piano teacher, Helena Rehhaut, killed in the first *Aktion* with her whole family. The beautiful young woman was Natalia. She lived in Stryj when the Germans arrived and in the initial few months was subjected to the same treatment other Jews received. She was assigned to hard work building a dam on the river. After a few months, she was able to acquire false papers, and moved to Boryslaw, where she rented a room and got a job in a gasoline refinery. She attended church, and lived as a Catholic for almost a year, until one day, she began to receive threatening blackmail letters. Her only refuge was the ghetto.

It is an unbelievable and marvelous characteristic of the human spirit which, amid tragic disasters, when everyone is focused solely on his or her own survival, allows a person to develop a strong emotional attachment and concern about another. I was in love with Natałka (that is how she was called then), and her life and safety became as dear to me as my own. I spent most of my off-work hours with her in the ghetto, talking about our childhood, school, books we read, and even venturing into speculation about the future, as if the outside world did not exist.

But it did exist! On 16 February 1943, as the news of the Russian victory at Stalingrad reached Boryslaw, the Germans and the Ukrainians went berserk rampaging the ghetto. They grabbed some 600 people, took them to the fields near the municipal slaughterhouse, and shot them. Among the victims was my mother's youngest brother, Benjamin Koch.

In April-May 1943, news spread about the uprising, and the demise of the Warsaw ghetto. The Jewish community of Warsaw, which 2 years earlier numbered more than a half million people just ceased to exist.

In July, the final deportations of Jews from Sambor and Stryj took place and these cities were declared Judenrein (free of Jews). Any Jew found there would be subject to immediate execution, and any Gentile harboring a Jew would also be punished by death. Nataalka's father and brother managed to escape from Stryj just a few days before the final curtain, and arrived in Boryslaw, where we still had some 3000 people in the ghetto and about 2000 in the camp.

While the "R" badge afforded those of us in the camp some temporary security and freedom to visit our families in the ghetto, for those living in the ghetto there was very little hope. The Russian front was still more than 1000 miles away, there were no partisans active in the area, and most, if not all of those trying to reach Hungary across the Carpathian mountains, or hiding on false papers were caught and killed. Only a miracle could save them, but no miracle occurred.

The liquidation of the ghetto began in August⁷ and lasted until the end of 1943. It took the form of a continuous series of Aktionen in which the captured victims were detained in an old theater until train transportation to the death camp was available. Every 2 or 3 weeks another transport would leave, carrying about 500 people. All of my remaining family in the ghetto: Aunt Salka and Benjamin's wife and two children, as well as Natalia's grandfather, Israel, and his son with a family of four were deported at that time. From my family only Uncle Chune, who obtained an "R" badge and could move to the camp, and Aunt Bronia with her husband and daughter, hiding in a Christian home remained alive.

Immediately, as the liquidation of the ghetto started, Nataalka disappeared without a trace. A few days later, as I was still searching for her, I was approached by a man who gave me a letter, and offered to take me to her if I would meet him after dark. She had joined her father and brother who were hiding in the attic of a house owned by Wladek and Olga Grzegorzcyk with another family of four. The hideout was the ingenious creation of Wladek, who completely sealed off a small section of the attic, making it look like the end wall of the house. Inside there were two small rooms, but due to a sloping roof, there was only a small area where a person could stand erect. Access to the hideout was through a tight crawl space under the roof, which would be unsealed only for logistic needs...

...The Blums were there just at the right time and with the resources needed to make a deal which would save themselves as well as the Silberbergs. Another problem arose, however. It had become very risky for the two Grzegorzcyks to logistically satisfy the needs of nine adults, including themselves, out of a small household known in the neighborhood to consist of 2 adults and a baby. This is where my help became important. With my familiarity with the area, ability to move about, and the various contacts I had established with potential food suppliers, was able to augment the supplies without creating suspicion

⁷ Other survivor accounts date the beginning of the liquidation of the ghetto to the spring of 1943.

among the neighbors. During the Fall and Winter of 1943 and into the Spring of 1944 I was busy working during the day, buying and storing supplies after work, and from time to time, delivering them to Wladek at night.

At the end of 1943 the ghetto was liquidated and all that remained were about 1,500 workers in the camp. The camp routine was to get up at about 5:30 AM, get some bread and "coffee", and at 6 AM assemble in the yard to organize the work teams. Those who worked north of the town would form a marching column and proceed through the town to their work sites; those working in other parts of the industrial area would go to work by the shortest route available. The return to camp after work was less structured due to variations in working hours and multiple shifts. In the evening we would sometimes have a chance to shower in the communal showers, then get more bread and some "soup", and go back to our bunks to rest. Since my work involved sites all over the area, I was able to continue to move around and attend to my other duty. I secured false ID papers for myself in case I should be stopped at night carrying my large back pack, but I never had the need to use them.

The Soviet offensive was halted for winter at about the pre-war Polish borders, but from time to time we would get "visited" by Russian reconnaissance planes during the day and small bombers at night. In February- March the front started moving again, and when it reached Tarnopol, a city about 250 miles to the east of us, I decided not to return to the camp any more. I stayed in different hiding places each night: an empty house, an unmanned oil well, a farmer's barn, an open air equipment storage area, or just in the forest on the outskirts of town. In the mornings I would return to town, where from a certain alley I could spot the working column from the camp on their way to work. Seeing that, I could go to my work site, and continue with my activities.

One morning in April 1944, as I was following my routine, I saw the marching column from the camp approaching, but this time they were surrounded by armed Germans with police dogs, and Ukrainian police, moving north in the direction of the railroad depot. It was obviously the end of the camp, and my signal to disappear. I remained hidden for the rest of the day, and that night joined Natalka and the others in the attic at the Grzegorzcyks, where I remained until liberation.

The dragnet for Jews did not end even as the city was declared *Judenrein*. There were some Jews that escaped camp liquidation by being away at the time, others who were found in hideouts or in bunkers in the forests, and still others who, after making it so far, had no means to continue. If they were women or children, they were shot. Men still able to work were kept under guard in the now empty camp, and then deported as the final group in June, 1944.

There were also righteous, good Gentiles who suffered in the last weeks of this orgy; two Catholic families were executed for harboring Jews.

In July, 1944 the Germans were retreating rapidly. Their army did not resemble the arrogant victors of 1941 in any way. They were dirty, and tired, some without weapons, coming through town from north to south, then, a few days later, from south to north, and then from north to south again. They were trapped between the rugged mountains to the south, and the advancing Red Army to the north and west. They decided to use Boryslaw as a rest stop and were assigning German soldiers to private homes for R and R. Two of them barged in on the Grzegorzcyks demanding food and a place to rest. They stayed for two days, unaware that eight Jews were hiding in the same house, not more than 50 feet from them...

... We remained in the sealed attic of the locked house, scared to give any sign of life, and hoping that it will all end soon.

In the early morning of August 8th, we heard some small-arms fire, some commotion, and then some orders shouted..... in Russian.

The advance Soviet patrol was soon followed by front line troops and by 10 AM we broke out of hiding, and into the street. Having been away from the sun for months, under-nourished, dressed in rags and bare-footed we were quite a sight; but we were there to greet our liberators! They were something to behold! Young and strong men and women with guns, and tanks, and cannons, and trucks, and personnel carriers, all new and, for the most part, American.

Well fed and neatly dressed, they were magnificent! We smiled, and we danced, and we laughed, and we were happy to be alive.

We were FREE !!!

Some twenty years later the Grzegorzcyks were guests of the State of Israel, where they were honored for being Righteous Gentiles. A tree bearing their name was planted by Wladek at Yad Vashem, where it still grows today...

THE NEW LIFE

On the evening of our liberation day, as we gathered together at Wladek's I asked Paul and Maria for Nataalka's hand in marriage. They gave us their blessings, and on the next day, 9 August, 1944, we registered with the authorities as husband and wife. We remained in Boryslaw for a few days, meeting other survivors who began to surface from their hideouts in the woods or from Gentile homes. In all we numbered about 200 people⁸. A few months later, those who were deported to Russia in 1941 returned to Boryslaw, and a few more survived the German concentration camps to which they were deported in the final days of the war (among them Dina Rehhaut, and Frieda Koch, now living in Paris). The full count taken after the war revealed that from the pre-war Jewish population of 15000, less than 400 of us survived.

We moved to Drohobycz temporarily where Milek and Nataalka's parents established residence, and for a while worked in the administration office of the railroad. In October 1944, as soon as the universities were re-opened, we moved to Lvov and I started my engineering education. In Summer 1945, the Polish faculty was moved to Gliwice, in the newly-established Polish territory, and we moved with it, to continue college.

In the spring of 1946, another bolt from the clear blue sky shook us back to reality. In Kielce, a city in central Poland in which some 200 survivors from the pre-war Jewish population of about 40,000 tried to get a new start, a mob of Polish "patriots" engaged in a pogrom, killing some 25 people in clear view of the local police. This event took place one year after the allied victory in Europe, or two years after our liberation by the Soviets, and shocked us to make some important decisions about our future. We decided that first, since we were subjected to the Holocaust because we were Jews, and survived it as Jews, we wanted to remain Jewish for the rest of our lives; and second, that in view of the events in Kielce, we were not going to stay in Poland beyond the current school semester.

In June 1946, we packed our belongings in two suitcases, one containing my books, and proceeded to Klacko, a small town on the Polish-Czech border. A few nights later we illegally crossed into Czechoslovakia, where the border patrol escorted us to a gathering place, in which other groups of refugees were waiting for transportation to Bratislava, a city at the south-west corner of the country. There we again walked across the border to Austria, took a train to Vienna, and, eventually, to a UN-operated transit camp in Linz. From there we were sent to West Germany, and finally, in August 1946 arrived in Stuttgart. We had selected that city because of the very fine reputation of its Technical University, and I was planning to continue my education there. When we arrived in Stuttgart, Nataalka was 6-months pregnant, and we started looking for an assignment to a hospital for delivery later in the

⁸ Other sources count the number of survivors in Boryslaw registered a month after liberation as less than 100.

year. We were told that there were no hospital beds available, and to come back in a year, or so. Anna was born in a school for midwives on November 24th.

In February 1949 I received my engineering diploma, and soon thereafter applied for admission to the USA under the quota for displaced persons. We left Stuttgart in July, and after a couple of weeks in transit camps, and 10 days at sea on an American army transport ship (the General Muir) we arrived in New York. On the evening of the same day we were put on a train for Milwaukee, Wisconsin, since the Jewish Family Service there had sponsored our immigration.

We arrived in Milwaukee on 30 August, 1949. Nataalka became Natalie, Daniel became Dan, and our new life had begun !

Appendices

Maps (2)

Pictures :

Nr	Subject
1	Sambor, 1939
2	Sambor, 1992
3	Boryslaw, 1939
4	Boryslaw, 1939
5	Boryslaw, 1992
6	Boryslaw, 1992
7	Maria, 1918
8	Maria, 1955
9	Paul and Maria, 1955
10	Genia, 1939
11	Henryk, 1935
12	Joseph, 1939
13	Chune, 1939
14	Natalia, 1928
15	Natalia and Emil, 1930
16	Natalia, 1948
17	Daniel, 1927
18	Daniel, 1930
19	Daniel and Felice, 1937
20	Felice, 1941
21	Daniel, 1948
22	Daniel and Natalia, 1948
23	The Milwaukee Journal, 9-30-49
24	25th anniversary, 1969
25	Camp barracks, Boryslaw, 1992
26	Mass grave of Jewish victims Boryslaw, 1992



1



2

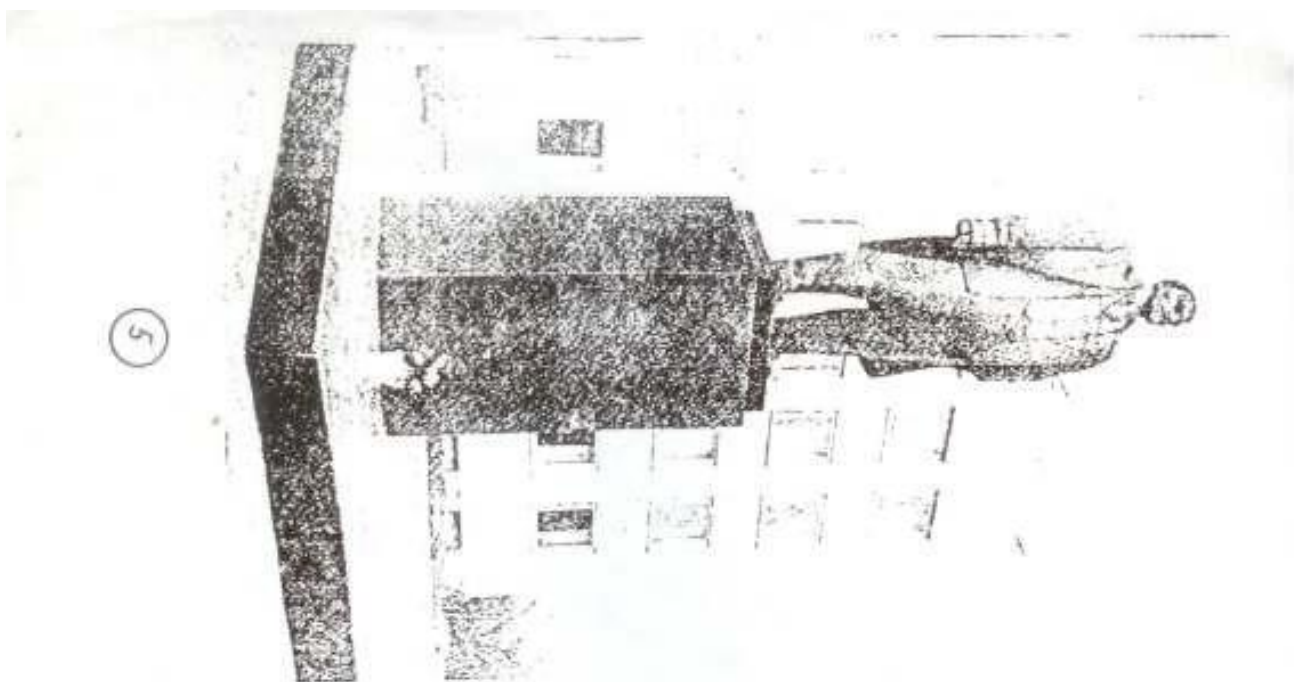


3

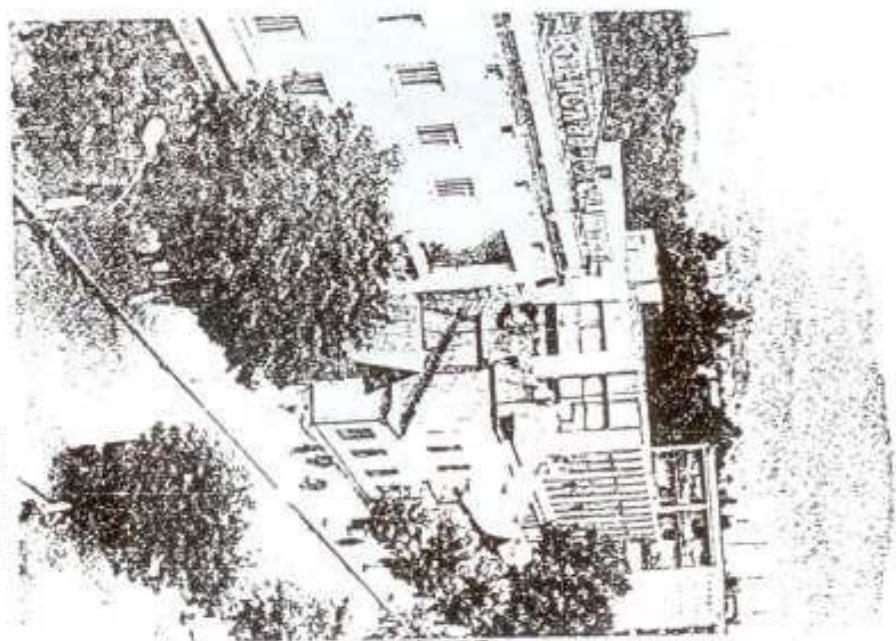


Вулкан Паусыя (или Лопка) у. Егорово, 20. 1910 г. р. 10.
Фото

4



5



6

Дом семьи И. Л. Жениной

Иванов-Жуков



7



8



9



10



12









22



24



25



26

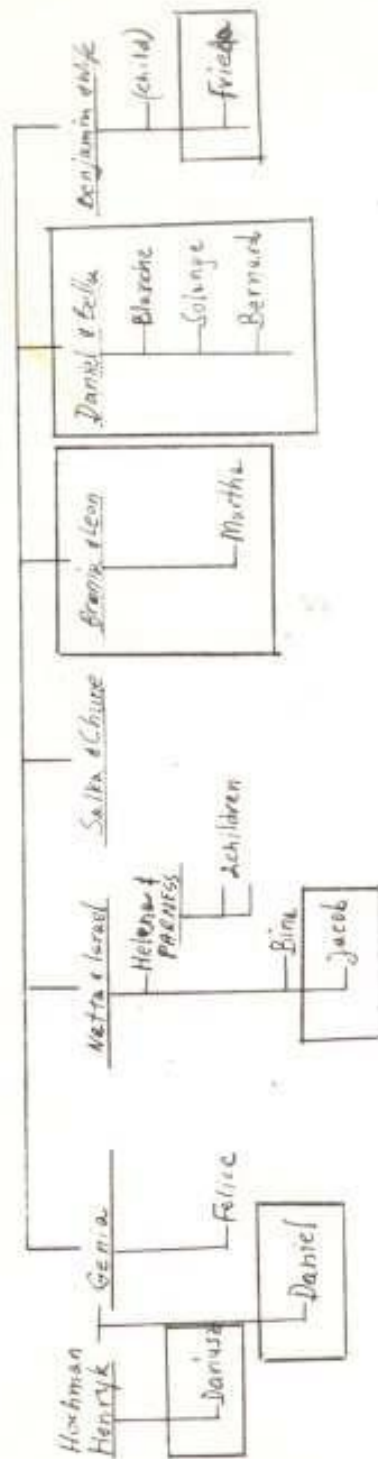
LIVING RELATIVES
as of 1-1-93

<u>Granparents' Generation</u>	<u>Parents' Generation</u>	<u>Your Generation</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Residence Country</u>
Lusia Baustein				Israel
	Daniel & Natalia Hochman	Anna June Jerome	Rachel Aviv, Eshel Abigail	USA Israel USA
	Emil & Tema Blum	Arnon Adi	Ilil, Inbar Netta Yaara, Gitai	Israel Israel
	Roman & Rachel Ramon	Saul Zohar Gatt	Sharon, Mataa Jordan Jasmin, Daniel Pia Lin	Israel Israel Germany
	Jacob & Dina Rehhaut	Bernard		Israel USA
	Blanche & Louis Jacquot	Silvie Guy Michel	(2) (1)	France
Bela Koch	Solange & Gerard Billey	Florence Claire Lydia	Jonatan Estelle Sophie (1)	France France
	Bernard & Jeanine Koch	Isabelle Laurent Didier		France
	Frieda Koch			France
	Martha & Schmuel Braun	Orna Yael Ariel		Israel
	Raoul & Rita Harmelin	Daniel Michael (?)		Australia

Holocaust Survivors

Koch Family

Feivel & Rebecca



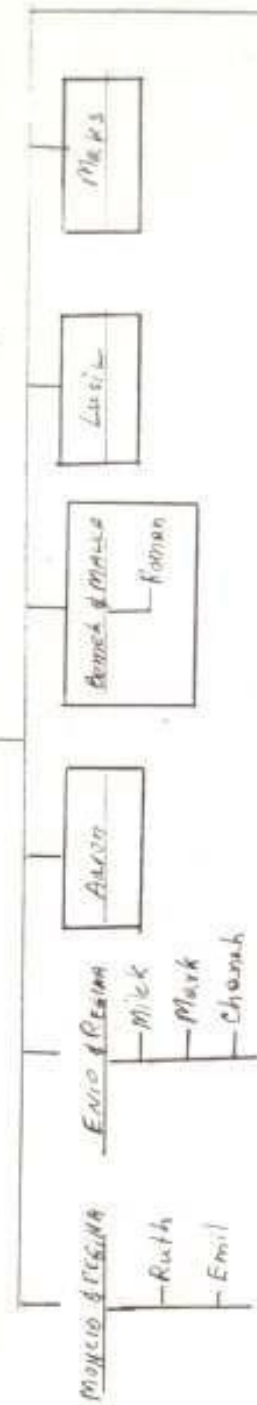
Indicates
Survivor



Holocaust survivors

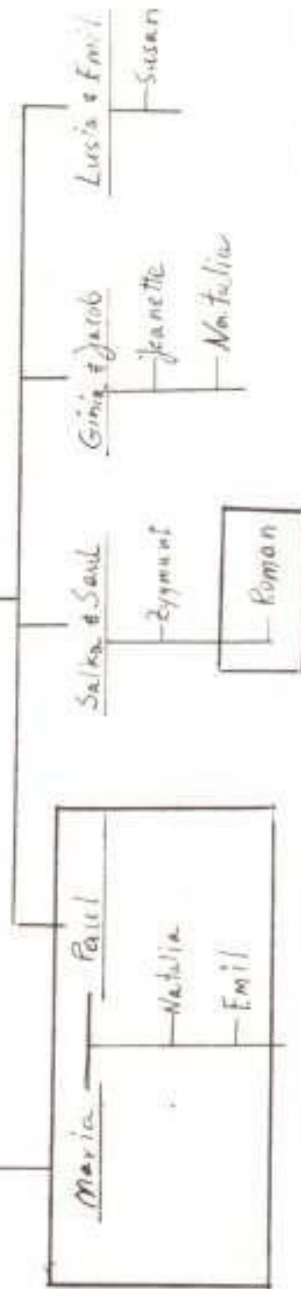
Baerleboth Family

Israel & Channah



Baum Family

Nathan & Erna



indicates
SURVIVOR

