Memories, Memories....

From Vilna to New York

With A Few Stops Along The Way



A Collection of Essays by

Lily M. Margules

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2022

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Library of Congress Cataloging~ in ~Publication Data:
Margules, Lily M.
Memories, Memories
ISBN 1-57785-158-7

Published by:
Lighthouse Press
a division of ProStar Publications, Inc.
Editor: Randi Canin Goldstein

ProStar Publications, Inc.
3 Church Circle, Suite 109, Annapolis, MD 21401
Email: prostarpub@earthlink.net
www.prostarpublications.com

Dedicated to those
who cannot speak for themselves

Many thanks...

To my friend
Bela Davis

To my editor
Randi Canin Goldstein

and

To my son
Michael Margules

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Listen, My Dear Children 1

II. Vilna, An Ancient City on the Viliya River 5

III. Oh Viliya, Viliya!! 9

IV. Eber-Leib and Rachel Mazur 15

V. Guta Lipkowicz Mazur, D.D.S. 19

VI. A Tribute to My Father 31

VII. Gimnazjum on Archangielska 11 Street 43

VIII. Memories, Memories - Part One 53

IX. The Partisan Hymn and Me 61

X. Memories, Memories - Part Two 65

XI. And We Said Goodbye Forever - Part One 69

XII. And We Said Goodbye Forever - Part Two 73

XIII. Kaiserwald Concentration Camp 77

XIV. Dünawerke Slave Labor Camp 81

XV. Stuthoff Concentration Camp / Steindorf Slave Labor Camp 87

XVI. The Long March of the Living Dead 95

XVII. My Day of Triumph 99

XVIII. In Sickness and in Death 101

XIX. Kibbutz Ihud 111

XX. We Are On Our Way 117

XXI. Crossing the Alps on a Cold Winter Night 123

XXII. Isaac Mazur 127

XXIII. And the World Stood Silent 143

XXIV. Speaking With An Accent 144

XXV. Dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum 149

XXVI. Poems 153

XXVII. Sweet Revenge 161


Baltic Sea
LATVIA
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Panevėžys
Utena
Tauragė
Kaunas
RUSSIA
VILNIUS
Marijampolė
POLAND

Cithuania

Dear Reader:

Give me your hand and I will take you on a bittersweet journey.

You will meet Lily, a young Jewish girl born in Vilna, Poland, where she spends her happy childhood with her caring parents, David and Guta, her younger sister, Rachel, her devoted nanny, Vikcia, and the smartest dog in the world, Rex.

You will see the pink bubble of happiness burst when her dearest mother passes away and shortly thereafter, on September 1, 1939, Germany invades Poland.

Lily's life turns into an incomprehensible nightmare as she is wrenched from the protected world of a carefree schoolgirl and tossed into the realm of a subhuman, with no right to exist.

You will share her struggle to survive, and to keep her only sister alive.

You will take part in an odyssey in which the passing of each day feels like a year, for when you are cold, hungry, and afraid, with no foreseeable end to it, every minute becomes an eternity.

And finally, their family slaughtered and the war at an end, you will hear Lily and Rachel ask, "What do we do now?"

Left with only their shattered lives, and the tattered clothes on their backs, you too will ask, "Where will they go? How can they ever begin again?"

The answers are to be found by turning page after page, which I cordially invite you to do...

LICY MARGUCES
Riverdale, New York
1999

1

Listen, My Dear Children...

The following is an excerpt from a presentation I often give to students at neighborhood schools in New York...

Good morning, class. My name is Lily Mazur Margules.

I am a potential grandmother, a retired X-Ray and Radiotherapy Technologist, and a Holocaust survivor. It is as a Holocaust survivor that I have come here to tell you my story.

First, let me ask if you know the meaning of the word "Holocaust." It is a composite of two Greek words: "holos" meaning "whole," as in total or complete, and "kaustos," which means "destruction by burning." Holocaust means total destruction.

You see before you now a survivor of total destruction, not by heroism, but by the fickle finger of fate, by pure chance and coincidence, a survivor.

The famous American writer, Margaret Mitchell, in her saga of the

Old South and Civil War, "Gone With The Wind" wrote: "A civilization, gone with the wind." Standing here before you, I will take the liberty to paraphrase by saying: The whole of European Jewry, with its vibrant culture, was suddenly gone with the wind, during the Nazi era.

I don't think even the most famous Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, eloquent speaker, gifted poet, painter, or composer could properly describe the humiliation, the degradation, the dehumanization, the bitter cold and hunger experienced by those who perished and those who by some miracle survived the Holocaust.

It began in the early 1930s, and ended in 1945 with the all-out victory of the Allied forces in Europe at the end of World War II.

It started after the Treaty of Versailles when an ignoramus, a demagogue from Austria, without scruples or conscience, seized political power in a morally decadent, politically defeated and economically weak Germany. In the native land of Beethoven, Bach and Goethe, this hate monger went looking for a scapegoat, a sacrificial lamb, and found it in European Jewry.

As the world stood silent, he and his politically opportunistic cronies concocted a diabolical "master plan" to eradicate from this earth an entire race. Only the pure Aryans, the people with white skin, blue eyes, blond hair and the right size nose, had the right to live.

I look at your eager and shining young faces, and I must make a confession. Being a very private person, it is not easy, but rather hard, for me to bare my soul and dig deep into my memories right in front of you, you, whom I like to call "my grandchildren."

But I draw my strength from a presence in this auditorium, invisible to you, but very visible to me. It is the presence of hundreds of thousands of people, millions actually — they are fathers, mothers, grandparents and children, doctors, attorneys, pharmacists, tailors, shoemakers, teachers, rabbis and writers, bakers and candlestick makers — people with plans for the future, with talents and ambitions, with everyday worries about how to support their families, how to get better grades, how to write

famous novels, and so on and so forth.

Here with us are the people who were never given a chance to live out their lives, people who were murdered, gassed, burned, and starved to death. People who were declared "sub-humans." What did they do?

What crime did they commit?

Simply, they were Jews.

They were Jews born in the wrong place, at the wrong time. The wrong place, of course was Europe, in countries like Germany, Poland, Hungary, and many others. The wrong time was the Nazi era.

These were the innocent victims of a brute's reign of terror, and the world's silence and indifference.

Now, my children, I will try to tell you simply, from my heart, what happened to me when I was your age...

11

VILNA

An Ancient City on the Vilija River

An old legend tells us that one day, many, many years ago during the fifteenth century, the great Lithuanian Count Gedeminus, accompanied by his knights and excited, barking dogs, went hunting in a big, dark forest.

It was a forbidden and mysterious place. The tall trees, growing densely side by side, did not let the sun pass through. It was dark and cool inside. One could easily get lost and never come out alive.

There was a small mountain with an abundance of plants and bushes covered with wild berries and nuts. A river full of fish, especially golden yellow carp, ran nearby, its waters flowing slowly.

This was a huge hunt, as the big, dark forest was home to bears, deer, wolves, foxes and many other wild beasts. But Count Gedeminus had only one thing in mind: to find and kill the king of them all, The Big Black Boar, known to be the most ferocious and dangerous animal, but whose meat was sweet as honey and melted in your mouth.

Many knights had attempted to find him. Many hunts were con-

ducted in vain. But the Big Boar was never caught, and triumphantly roamed the dark forest.

At the beginning of today's hunt, Count Gedeminus said to himself, "Today must be the day," and declared out loud, "Today I must conquer the Big Beast."

They hunted for hours and hours, and many animals were successfully killed, but Count Gedeminus wasn't satisfied since none were the Big Black Boar.

Then, suddenly, disoriented by the noise of the barking dogs, and so many hunters, the Big Beast came charging wildly in the direction of Gedeminus.

"Here he is!" sang his excited heart. Gedeminus aimed once... then twice... and the Big Beast gave a loud roar and fell to the ground.

Shouts of victory sounded in the air, and a celebration began. Soon the enormous boar was skinned and put to roast over an immense pit. A lot of eating, drinking and loud singing went on, well into the evening. At the end, everybody felt sleepy and tired. Our hero lay down on the fresh smelling grass and fell asleep, snoring loudly.

As he lay dreaming about his conquest, he heard a distinctive voice from afar. The voice commanded,"Gedeminus! To celebrate your victory, you will build a fort, a great castle, right here at the bank of this river. It will stay here for years and years to come, as a symbol of your victory."

Gedeminus woke with the taste of the delicious sweet meat on his lips and gave the order for such a castle to be built, "Right here on this spot, to proclaim my great victory of the Big One." And so it was done.

A fort was erected. Many conquerors came and went, many battles were fought, but the city grew, spreading to both sides of the Viliya River.

It was here in this ancient city that I was born and spent my childhood with its many parks - Katarinka and Cielentnik amongst them; its monuments, the Ostra Brama Cathedral, the Choral Synagogue on Zawalna Street, the Zakreta Meadow, the Yivo Institute, the Jewish hos-

pital, the CBK and Straszuna Libraries, the Jewish theater on Wilenska Street, the old, crumbling buildings on the narrow streets of the Vilna Ghetto - all have a permanent place in my memories.

If I close me eyes I can still see the old castle standing silent and full of mystery on the Zamkowa Gura (the castle hill) solemnly guarding the city, built by the Great Lithuanian Count Gedeminus many years ago.

Then there is another legend, this one about how Vilna came to be known as "The Jerusalem of Lithuania." It is said that the little General from Corsica, Italy, who crowned himself the "Emperor of France," passed through Vilna. During his triumphant march through Europe on his way to conquer Russia, Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have arrived in Vilna dressed in his splendid uniform and sitting high atop a white stallion, surrounded by his huge army.

Full of happiness and pride, the General spoke to the cheering crowd who lined up to greet him. "Vive la France!" they shouted, "Vive le grand General!" He was in his glory.

After a short distance, Napoleon came to a different section of the city. The streets became narrow and the buildings old. Through open windows, he heard voices chanting in an odd half-song. The crowds were dressed differently. To his amazement, he saw bearded men with tired and pale faces, carrying heavy books. They shouted their welcome in an unfamiliar language.

"Where are we?" asked Napoleon of one of his aides. "I will try to find out, sir," was the aid's reply. The aide spoke with one of the bearded young men, then returned to Napoleon. "We are in the Jewish section of the city, which they say has many religious schools. Young men come here from all over Poland and Lithuania, to study to become rabbis. "Mon Dieu," exclaimed Napoleon, "We are in 'The Jerusalem of Lithuania'. A victory, without firing a shot!"

And so, a great honor was bestowed upon Vilna, when Napoleon Bonaparte himself named it "The Jerusalem of Lithuania."

III.

OH VICIYA, VICIYA!

I am sure you have heard of the Mighty Mississippi in America, the Yellow River in China, the Blue Danube in Europe, or the Orange River in South Africa. Now let me tell you about my river...

The majestic Viliya River in Poland runs through my native city, Vilna, dividing it into two parts. If you want to go from one to the other, you will find yourself on the "Zielony Most" (Green Bridge), an old picturesque structure with a beautiful view of both sides.

I've had a special fascination and kinship with the River Viliya since my early childhood. Even today, after so many years in New York, when I look out my window at where the Harlem and Hudson Rivers meet, I immediately remember my happy and carefree days on the beaches and in the slowly flowing waters of the Viliya. I look down and have to smile, so many memories come back to me. Here are just some...

In the late spring, on the precipice of summer, there was a lot of excitement in our home on Pilsudckiego 38 Street. Decisions had to be made.

Where would we rent a summer cottage this year? What new clothes would we get? What needed to be mended? There was a lot of planning, preparation and, of course, packing.

Then one day, early in the morning, a horse driven wagon would come to our back yard and the driver would come to the service door, ring the bell, and announce to my mother with great solemnity, "Mrs. Dentist, I am here to serve you."

First, the driver and his horse had to be fed, and given something to drink. Then began the loading of the wagon. When it was finished, the driver always promised Mother to take good care of our belongings, and off he went to deliver them to our summer cottage.

My sister, Rachel and I, then six and ten years old, as well as our nanny, Vikcia, and Rex, a prominent member of our family and very excited dog, had to get ready to leave.

We went each summer from the hot city to the fresh air of the countryside. Mother and Father stayed behind.

"They have to work," it was quietly explained to us. And so came goodbye kisses and tears, and promises to listen to Vikcia and behave. "See you on Thursday," Mother assured us, and so it was.

Loaded with packages full of goodies, Mother would arrive every Thursday evening to spend Friday, her day off, with her girls. We would count the days before her arrival. Father would come Saturday nights, as his day off was Sunday.

On our first day in the country, right after breakfast, a picnic basket was packed and Vikcia, Rachel, Rex and I would start our walk to the beach dressed in our new swimming suits and Panama hats.

It was quite an adventure.

Close your eyes and imagine a narrow country road with bushes of wild roses, raspberries, blackberries, and nuts growing all around. It took us through green meadows, fields covered with rows and rows of golden wheat, rye, barley, and green alfalfa. You had to admire the sight of enormous, red poppies and dark, blue cornflowers growing between them.

We walked past small farm houses painted white with red roofs, quiet pastures with lazily grazing black and white cows. Sometimes a deer or rabbit would scurry between the bushes.

A small stream ran nearby. You would bend and drink thirstily the cold, crystal clear water, and never forget its taste.

We had two favorite stops. One was a beautiful lake covered with white water lilies — a feast for the eyes — and the other was a strawberry farm — a feast for the palate.

The farm's owner was a local fellow who had emigrated to America then returned bringing back seedlings of a special kind of berry, large in size, light pink and white on top, juicy and sweet. He called it "pineapple-strawberry."

When you came upon the farm, you saw rows and rows of berry plants. Some were covered with white flowers, others were full of luscious fruit. We would pick them ourselves, putting more in our mouths than in our baskets. They were just delicious. We paid the farmer's wife and had a short walk to our destination: the beach.

We would jump into the cold river, swimming and frolicking. Faithful and forever our guardian, Rex would set about barking and running along the shore. "Stay near the beach," ordered our nanny. "Don't go in too deep," she would say in her stern voice. She, herself, was frightened of the Viliya and would never go near it if she could possibly help it. She sat in the cool shadow of a nearby tree and busied herself preparing our lunch.

I would jump out from the river and bring Vikcia my small pail full of water to wash her hands and face. On a very hot day, after our long walk from the cottage to the beach, she would come to the water's edge and lift her long skirt just enough to step into the cool water and wet her feet.

Our dear nanny was happiest when our mother or father came from the city and took us to the beach. Full of gratitude, she spent the day in the kitchen cooking, baking, making preserves and singing sad Polish ballads in a loud voice.

Rex was never allowed in the dining room during meals, but would sneak in stealthily. Rachel and I would slip him the best morsels. He was so smart. My parents may have been on to us, but they never said a word.

Now let me tell you about the part of the Viliya that runs along the Volokumpia Beach. It was a beautiful and very busy river. On our side the beach was covered with light, yellow sand that looked white in the sun, and surrounded by trees and bushes full of birds, bees and all kinds of friendly insects.

On the opposite side of the river was a high embankment covered with all kinds of greenery. There were weeping willows, tall white birches and red maples. On a calm day when there was no wind and the water stood still and undisturbed, you could see the reflections of the trees and water plants right on the surface. It was truly a magnificent sight.

The Viliya was busy in the spring, summer, and fall. There was a ferry boat huffing and puffing slowly up and down the stream. The ferry made huge waves in the water, shuttling passengers back and forth, stopping at Antokol, Pospieshky, Volokumpe and Verky.

Enormous barges loaded with goods travelled along the center of the Viliya, including a multitude of tree logs transported from nearby forests to the city.

One could see many boats and kayaks full of muscle-bound youngsters, sailing, singing, and enjoying the river. Some of them were members of the Maccabi Sports Club, a Jewish club located right on the Viliya. People were fishing, swimming, and having a great time.

I don't remember when I first learned how to swim. It just seems like something I have always known how to do, and it's one of the sports I love best. I think my father, an excellent swimmer himself, must have taught me as an infant. When I got older, my biggest pleasure was swimming with him near enough to the ferry boat to catch its big waves. When the captain's horn would sound, announcing her arrival at Volokumpie, we were right there.

Rachel was not allowed to swim with us. Father said she was too young. "Maybe next year when you can finish eating all your spinach," he would tease her good-naturedly. Rex was assigned to stay behind and guard her. They sat on the beach, keeping watch over Daddy and me.

Ours was a long and harsh winter during which the Viliya rested, frozen. She stood still and silent, covered with white snow and a thick layer of ice. You could walk or ride or slide from one side to the other, but it was dangerous. Sometimes the ice would get soft in one place and people would fall in. There was a whisper about drowning. We were strictly forbidden to skate on the ice, and with all the stories we heard about falling in and drowning, we never dared.

Both banks covered with white snow, standing immobile, the Viliya looked like an enchanted forest chiseled by Mother Nature. It was a picture out of a fairy tale. Then, in the early spring when the sun started to shine, the ice broke. The river woke from its long sleep, and huge chunks of ice started to float downstream.

The new cycle began, and the Viliya came to life once more.

When I was attending school, my classmates and I would often come to see our river. It was a long walk from where we lived but we loved every moment of it. We coined the phrase, "Na Schlonderke" which meant, "Let's go down to the Viliya." Once there, we would play ball, run around, or just sit and look at the river and tell tales about pirates and boats full of treasures, lost sailors looking for singing mermaids lying on sunny rocks by the warm waters, and more.

Oh, we lived in a golden, dreamy world, and the beautiful, majestic Viliya played such an important role.

IV.

EBER-CEIB AND RACHEL MAZUR

As a child, I was enchanted by the beautiful stories told us by my mother during long winter evenings. As the snow fell outside, my sister and I were cozy in our warm room, hanging on our mother's every word.

She told us tales of distant, unknown lands, of enchanted forests and magic sorcerers, of princes and valiant knights, and bad wolves, and slick, crafty foxes.

The best part was always just before we went to bed, when mother would spin tales about people we knew, tales about our family. Here is one of them:

> *My paternal grandparents, Eber-Leib and Rachel Mazur, lived their entire lives in Poland, in a small town called Sokolka, a "shtetl" (Yiddish meaning "village") near Bialystock. Very religious, but poor, they had a hard time making ends meet.*
>
> *Grandpa Eber-Leib was a sturdily built fellow of medi-*

um height with a long black beard. Early every morning, he would go to pray at Sokolka's tiny synagogue, and spend most of the day there studying the Talmud, the Mishna, the Gemora, or enjoying his greatest pleasure, discussing and arguing with the rabbi himself the meaning of a paragraph or a sentence from one of the scholarly books.

Grandma Rachel was a slightly built woman and the breadwinner of the family. From morning till night, she was busy in her small grocery store. There was no cash business, credit was the magic word. A heavy, black ledger book lay on the counter filled with all the details of who bought what and how much they owed. Sometimes a customer would call in the middle of the night and Grandma Rachel would open the store to sell a candle and maybe a pack of matches.

Naturally, being an obedient wife, Grandma Rachel bore a child year after year. With every child there was joy and happiness, and candles were sent to the synagogue, but each child died in infancy. Eber-Leib would say morosely, "This is the will of Almighty God" and Rachel, crying inside, would sit silently with her eyes red and her head down.

This went on for twelve long years until one day little Grandma Rachel rebelled by taking matters into her own hands. First she closed up the store, then she sent a boy to bring Grandpa home from the synagogue. She put on her holiday dress, fetched the fattest chicken with white feathers, prepared some provisions, and when Grandpa arrived, no doubt concerned and surprised, she told him to put on his best suit,and saddle the horse and buggy. In her firmest voice, she announced, "We are going to the rabbi. The sage will give us advice on what to do and our home will be full

of children."

After a long ride they came to their destination. The rabbi's modest house was full of visitors. Everyone brought a gift which was readily accepted by the rabbi's wife.

When, after a long wait, it was Grandma Rachel's turn, she fell at the feet of the rabbi, sobbing so hard she couldn't utter a word. He gently asked her to get up and take a seat in one of the old, squeaky chairs. She composed herself and slowly started to tell him about the misfortune that had befallen her life and home.

Listening patiently until Grandma Rachel was through, the rabbi finally looked straight into her eyes and said, "My good woman, you will return home now, and soon you will have a newborn child. But you must dress the child only in white. Everything white, even shoes and socks. Pure, white linen clothes. Only white."

The rabbi instructed that this must continue until the child himself asks "Mama, why am I dressed differently than all the other children? Why am I always in white?" "This will be the sign," he explained. "Then it will be time to burn the white clothes, and begin dressing the child like all the others."

On their way home, Eber-Leib and Rachel felt their hope renewed. They did what they were told to do and sure enough, their family grew.

First born was Ethel. As a young woman, Ethel emigrated to the United States and married a man named Sam Gurewitz. This new branch of the family Mazur-Gurewitz made their home in Minneapolis, Minnesota, then settled in Tucson, Arizona.

The second child was also a girl. I don't remember her name, but she spent her life in Sokolka, taking care of her

parents, where she also married and had a son, my cousin, Hackel. In 1930, Hackel would emigrate to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Third born to my grandparents was my father, David.

Last born was my uncle, Isaac, who would be the first to emigrate to Buenos Aires, and who not only became my cousin Hackel's benefactor, but Rachel's and mine in our hour of need, when we were left to pick up the pieces of our lives after the Nazi war.

Not long after the birth of her last child, Grandma Rachel became very sick. She spent most of her days lying in bed, coughing. But every Friday, without fail, she sent a few candles to the synagogue.

Whenever her friends or old customers would come to see her, to tell her the latest gossip from the shtetl, or bring her something warm to eat, she would tell them again and again about her journey to the sage, the miracle that followed, the four robust, happy children that were born, and her plans for their prosperous futures.

V.

GUTA CIPKOWICZ MAZUR, DDS

My Beautiful Mom...

Guta Cipkowicz Mazur, DDS, was a beautiful woman, inside as well as outside. She was a true lady whose quiet dignity, serenity, and inborn elegance permeated her being and made her seem much taller than her 5 foot 3 inches.

Not only was she a consummate professional, but a liberated woman long before it became fashionable. My mother attained her place in society with such grace that not only was she not threatening to her male counterparts, but truly respected and admired.

And no matter how busy she was or how full her day was, she always had time to share with her daughters, especially me, the eldest. I would accompany her on her daily errands each morning before she went to her office, which was located in the front portion of our home. It was a great joy for me just to walk beside her. This was a woman who never left the house without matching hat, shoes, handbag and, of course, gloves.

Strangers tipped their hats, gave her admiring glances, and complimented her with statements like, "My fair princess" or, "Oh, my beautiful doll!" Since it was bad manners to pay any attention, mother would lower her head with a small, sweet smile on her face. I, on the other hand, would hold my head high and strut like a peacock, and she would reprimand my naughty behavior. She used to say "In summertime, just before the harvest one might walk along a field of golden rye and see stalks moving in the wind. Some are tall, proud, and look straight up to the sky while others bend down due to the load they bear. The ones looking up are empty, useless, their kernels scattered about the ground. The ones that are bent are full and useful for baking bread, feeding hungry children. Don't be an empty head yourself, my dear girl."

My mother passed away at a young age, but her legacy lives on in my sister and me. She taught us good manners, personal responsibility, compassion for our fellow man and charity.

In the tradition of our Jewish faith, she kept charity boxes which were prominently displayed in our dining room. I can still see the small, blue box inscribed "Keren Chakajemeth," which was a Hebrew organization whose purpose was to buy land in Palestine, and another box inscribed "Mischmeret Holim," a Jewish hospital on Kijowska Street. Every Friday when Rachel and I got our allowances, we would push a few coins through the small opening on top of each box, and then shake them to hear how much was inside.

Mom was also a dedicated contributor to a charity called "Colony Toz." "Towarzystwo Obrony Zdrovia," in Polish, meaning "Society for Protection of Health." It was a summer camp at which underprivileged Jewish children spent two weeks in the countryside in a place called Pospieszki, far from the hot city.

Mom would say to us in the quietest voice "You are lucky, my child. You must share with the children who live in damp basement apartments and who go to bed hungry. They especially need to feel the sun on their faces and play on the open, green grass and know what it's like to have

enough food to eat.

I would listen, and give her a few extra coins.

One summer when my family and I were vacationing in Pospieszki, I heard this song being sung by a group of youngsters on their way to Colony Toz...

"KOLONIE TOZ SONG"

in Yiddish/English

Un vu biste gevezun, un vu biste gevezun
Techterul majn getraje, techterul majn getraje
In Kolonie Toz ojf dem grinem gros
Mame, es is gevezun a mehaje

Un vos hoste gegesun, un vos hoste gegesun
Techterul majn getraje, techterul majn getraje
Kakao broit mit putter, a frisztik a gutter
Mame, es is gevezum a mehaje

Where have you been, where have you been
My dear daughter, so good and nice?
At summer camp Toz
Full of flowers and green grass
Mommy, they sent me to a real paradise.

What have you eaten, what have you eaten
My dear daughter, so good and nice?
A full glass of cocoa, with bread and butter
For a good breakfast, who needs anything better?
Mommy, they sent me to a real paradise.

My mother was born and raised in Vilna in an upper-middle class family. Her father, Nahum Lipkowicz, was a tall, distinguished gentleman with a white beard and an ever-present, elegant walking cane. Her mother, Lea Lipkowicz, was a handsome lady with prematurely white-grey hair, a porcelain complexion, and a gentle smile. The two were a great looking pair. Although they passed away before we, their grandchildren, were born, they had a tremendous presence in our home. Their memories were kept very much alive with lots of photographs and stories told over and over again.

Grandfather Nahum and Grandma Lea had six children, including my mother: two sons and four daughters.

Grandpa was an emancipated individual who instilled in his children the quest for higher education and the love of fine art, theater, and music. He used to say "A man who can't enjoy a good play or a fine picture is half-blind and hard of hearing. I pity him." He was a strict disciplinarian who never raised his voice, but ruled with an iron fist. Many times Grandma Lea served as buffer between Grandfather Nahum and any of the children who had the temerity to misbehave. A graceful lady, Grandma Lea ran her house with efficiency and love. "Children must be seen, not heard," was indeed her motto, but there was deep caring and respect.

Marsha, the first-born, was a rebel who didn't like to study and who, being very pretty, married at fifteen. A short time after her marriage, she and her husband emigrated to America. Grandfather was very disappointed and so the mention of Marsha's name was forbidden in his presence. She was the "black sheep" of the family. And although she and my grandmother often wrote one another, Grandma had to read Marsha's letters in secrecy and after she passed away the letters stopped coming and the contact was lost.

Then came Joseph, the eldest son, who tried to heal the wound by being good. He graduated from the university with a degree in journalism, married a very elegant girl, Viera, settled down in Kovno, and became the edi-

tor of a daily Jewish newspaper. Joseph and Viera had no children but Viera was an intellectual and kept busy entertaining the local literary lions who enjoyed gathering in her salon to discuss universal issues.

The third born was Solomon, who became a dentist. But rather than open an office, after graduating from the university, Solomon began his own enterprise selling dental office equipment and products, backed by Grandfather Nahum. As it happened, Solomon's wife was very jealous of his close ties to his family, particularly his sisters, so we rarely saw her and hence I have almost no memory of her. But Mother and Solomon kept in close contact, especially since she followed in his footsteps to become a dentist herself.

She always took me along when she went to purchase supplies from him for her practice. He was invariably delighted to see us and always kept a sweet treat just for me. "You are ruining her teeth." Mother would reprimand him. "You of all people should know better." But he would just give me a wink, reach in his pocket, and out would come another piece of chocolate or a candy. I loved my "Dziadzia Solomon" as I used to call him and will always remember our visits.

The fourth child to come was Esther, a radiant, happy-go-lucky girl who was swept off her feet by a young businessman, Abrasha Levin. Abrasha was from a good family, and a nice and decent guy, so Grandfather Nahum gave him permission to court Esther. It wasn't long before Abrasha asked for Esther's hand in marriage and although Grandfather's consent was given somewhat reluctantly, he did give them a traditional big wedding. A son, Osia, was born, and then a daughter, Lila, but Grandfather Nahum and Grandma Lea would not live to see it.

Next came Sonia, a tall, pretty girl with thick, auburn hair and a porcelain complexion like her mother. She was a friendly and popular girl who had many admirers. Sonia attended University to become a registered nurse and midwife, and there she met a young revolutionary leader with whom she fell madly in love. Sonia became active in the organization, attending meetings and often neglecting her studies.

Grandfather was not aware of the romance.

Then, early one morning, Sonia left the house on her way to school and there behind a tree, her boyfriend was hiding. He was agitated. "I need your help," he said. "I have been given a secret and important mission to transport confiscated jewelry from Vilna to Berlin, sell it, and bring back the money. And I must go today." He went on to explain that the funds were badly needed to support their cause, and he needed Sonia to pose as his wife in order to avoid spies Naive girl that she was, and so much in love, Sonia said yes without thinking. They decided to leave that evening right after their classes. Sonia ran to my mother, swore her to secrecy, told her about the adventure, and gave her an address in Berlin. "I have to do it. It's very important," cried Sonia, and her poor sister Guta didn't have the heart to refuse.

The evening came and the family gathered at the big dining room table for supper and to share the events of the day. But, of course, Sonia was missing, and Grandfather began to get impatient. "Where is Sonia? Why is she so late?" he asked.

"She's spending the night with her friend Ola, to study for tomorrow's exam," whispered my mother, her knees shaking wildly under the table."

She did not ask my permission," thundered Grandfather. "Did she ask yours, Cea?" he petitioned Grandma.

"No," she said, looking straight at my mother.

They ate their food in silence. After dinner, my frightened mother was called to Grandfather's office. It did not take him long to find out the truth. And just as quickly, he got into a horse-driven carriage and rode to the railway station where he boarded a train for Berlin. He found the two love birds at an organization meeting. Without a word, he grabbed Sonia's arm and dragged her back to the train.

No one knows what they discussed on the ride home, but she never again spoke of her boyfriend, nor did she speak to him. Likewise, he was strictly forbidden to call on her. Grandfather was heard muttering under his breath, "Free love, over my dead body."

When Grandma Cea saw Sonia's swollen red eyes, she made a strong cup of tea sweetened with her favorite cherry preserves, and put her to bed. No questions asked.

Sonia went on to have many beaus, but never got married. She finished school and became involved in her profession. Her sisters worried about her. "She will be an old maid. We have got to do something," they whispered. They introduced her to many anxious and willing candidates but she couldn't forget her first true love.

Then, in her late thirties, Sonia went on a blind date and met Josef Perski. He was tall, blond, blue-eyed, and well-off from buying and selling forests, which was a common real estate venture in our city. The sparks ignited and after a short courtship, Josef and Sonia were married. Their wedding took place at our house, and my cousin Cila and I were flower girls. There was nothing but happiness in the air.

Last to be born to Nahum and Cea was my mom, Guta, who was the apple of Grandfather's eye. She was a serious student, interested in the world around her, so Grandfather Nahum was elated when Guta asked permission to attend the university and study dentistry. Uncle Solomon was to be the chaperon, as there was so much going on at the university and these were turbulent times.

Guta was not allowed out alone, but fate had something planned for her. She soon met another student, a friend of Solomon's, who studied pharmacology. His name was David Mazur. A romance between them began to blossom. As instructed by Solomon, my father went to my grandfather for permission to court my mom.

"He is a poor boy," lamented Grandfather "He will not be able to support her in style."

He is a good boy, and studious. He has a future," intervened Grandma Cea. To everyone's delight, my father became friends with his future father-in-law. Despite different backgrounds, they found common ground on the subject of politics.

Sadly, neither of my grandparent's lived to attend my parents wed-

ding, or see their children born. But I was named Lily after Grandma Lea, whom I came to know so very well by listening to the family stories.

Whenever I think of my mother, I immediately see her attending patients in her office. I cannot remember her otherwise. Over time, she established a fine reputation and her clientele grew.

On the front door to her office was a sign which read:

Lekarz-Dentista Lipkowicz Mazur
Sztuczne Zeby na Zlocie i Kauczuku

It means:

Lipkowicz Mazur DDS
Gold and Porcelain Dentures Made

I would come home from school in the afternoon and the front of our property was littered with horse-driven carriages attended by drivers waiting for the wealthy Polish landowners that were Mama's patients. The waiting room was always packed with well-dressed people who often traveled long distances to see her. They had such confidence in her abilities that they didn't seem to mind.

They said things like, "She has such a light touch. One, two, three and the whole tooth is out." Tall, husky men would bend to kiss her hand before coming into her office. They brought gifts of flower bouquets, buckets of fresh strawberries, radishes, scallions, and ripe, red tomatoes.

Yet, those who were not well-to-do, the impoverished from Novogrodcka and Kijowska Street, they too were welcome. If you had a toothache, even in the middle of the night, you had only to ring the office bell. Regardless of your status, the door would be opened and my mother, the beloved dentist, would come in her white coat, ready to help. She never presented a bill. It was pay as you can, and if you could not, that was fine too, with no questions asked.

I never knew the specific details of my Mother's professional generosity. "Good deeds are done, not talked about" was her policy. During

the Nazi era, even in death, my mother was able to look after me — I met many of her former patients who told me about her good heart and compassion, and who tried to return my mother's kindness by helping her children. Every cold potato or slice of old, hard bread given furtively made it possible for us to survive.

In the spring of 1939 a tragedy began for my family. Mom, who never spent a day in bed, suddenly became very ill. Pale and worried, my father took her from one doctor to another, seeking help and unwilling to accept the prognosis.

Finally, a professor at the university hospital and a renowned specialist performed exploratory surgery on my poor mom. Afterward, he called my father to his private office and said, "Young man, your wife has only a few short months to live. There is nothing I or anyone can do for her. What she has has spread all over her body. You must be strong for her, and your children."

And so began the end of my mother's life, with visits to the hospital, cobalt treatments, and painkillers. My Aunt Sonia, by then a registered nurse, converted Mom's waiting room into a giant, sunny hospital room with lots of plants and flowers. A large bed stood in the center, and there Mother lay, her skin more pale than the white pillowcase, but always with a smile, lest she should sadden the children.

After the treatments, she recovered rather nicely, and insisted upon returning to her practice. The specialist told Father to let her do as she pleased. "She has fooled us all, and is living on borrowed time," he said. The entire house came to life with the office bell ringing and the waiting room once again filled with patients. But after a short time, she relapsed. And this time, her illness was worse.

Unwilling to entrust Mother to strangers, Aunt Sonia took a leave of absence from her work in order to personally care for her beloved sister. Again the waiting room was converted. Mom stayed in bed, gently sedated. We were given permission to visit her when she was awake. Our dear, sweet, loyal, protective dog, Rex, took a permanent post at the foot of the

bed, where he gazed lovingly at Mom's ashen face. The front doorbell had to be disconnected, and everything possible was done to give my mother comfort and strength to fight for her life.

Early in the morning on Thursday the 24th of May, 1939, Guta Lipkowicz Mazur, DDS, passed away. We were devastated, especially my father, whom I saw cry for the first and only time in his adult life. I could not understand why the sun was still shining, lilacs in full bloom, the birds singing, and my mother was gone.

I shall always honor and try to uphold the legacy she left behind.

There is one sad, ironic consolation to my mother's death. That is that she did not have to endure the suffering of the Holocaust, nor witness her loved ones being slaughtered. All the dear people of whom I write, were eradicated from the face of the earth during the darkest days in Jewish history, in human history — The Holocaust.

Of my mother's family, Rachel and I are all who survive. Time passes but we always remember those who were lost. We will never forget them, nor stop saying their names and telling their stories.

АРХИВНАЯ СПРАВКА.

В документальных материалах Центрального государственного архива Литовской ССР имеются сведения о том, что ЛИПКОВИЧ-МАЗУР Гута /Гита/, дочь Нохима, уроженка города Вильнюса, в 1913 году окончила Медицинский факультет Императорского Варшавского университета и 26 октября 1913 года ей было присвоено звание зубного врача.

24 мая 1939 года ЛИПКОВИЧ-МАЗУР Гута умерла.

ДИРЕКТОР ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО
АРХИВА ЛИТОВСКОЙ ССР

/В. ДАУНЕНЕ/.

№ 2/0I062

6 сентября 1967 года
Город Вильнюс.

Настоящий документ легализован
в Консульском Управлении Министерства
Иностранных Дел СССР
„01" декабря 1967 г.
Начальник
Консульского Управления
МИД СССР
№ 512/6961.

Министерство иностранных дел СССР • 8 •

ARCHIVAL AFFIDAVIT

The Central Federal Archives of the Lithuanian Republic have documents stating that Guta Lipkowicz-Mazur, daughter of Nahum Lipkowicz, was born in Vilna and on October 26, 1913, graduated from the Medical Emperial University in Warsaw, with the degree of DDS - Doctor of Dental Surgery.

On 24 May 1939 - Guta Lipkowicz-Mazur, DDS, passed away.



My Parents
Guta Lipkowicz Mazur, DDS and David Mazur

Sadly, this is the only picture of my mother to survive the Holocaust

VI.

A TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER
An Old-Fashioned Pharmacist From Vilna
Who Perished In the Holocaust

I write as a daughter who wants to tell you about the fate of her beloved father during the Holocaust. My aim is to paint a picture in vivid colors illustrating the life, the dreams, the atrocities, and the joys experienced by a young Jewish professional during the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's in Vilna.

Whenever I remember my father, as I so often do, the image which first comes to mind is this...

He is dressed in the white linen coat old-fashioned pharmacists always wore. He and others are being taken by SS guards from the Vilna ghetto pharmacy onto an open truck standing in the center yard of the Jewish hospital. The guards are hounding their prey like animals, shouting, "Machen sie schnell, Machen sie schnell."

Late in the summer of 1943, a very short time before the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto, the Gestapo were demanding more and more Jews be sent away, never to be seen again.

I was in the hospital with a crippling infection, having stepped on a nail. A nurse who knew our family came running into the ward crying, "They're taking away the people in the pharmacy!" She ran to help me as I desperately crawled toward the open window. I saw my father and screamed, "Papa, Papa." Hearing me, he slowly lifted his hand and waved.

I see the truck move slowly through the narrow streets of the ghetto bouncing up and down on the old, worn cobblestones, closer and closer to the gate. They were deporting my father to a slave labor camp somewhere in Estonia and he was completely and utterly helpless.

In another memory of my father, a brighter memory, the new school year is about to begin. I am six years old. My busy dad takes a whole day off to enroll me as a first grade student. Afterward, we walk leisurely, hand in hand, to the CBK library on Zawalna Street. We go in. I am given a brand new membership card and borrow my first book. I am happy, and so proud. My dad has just opened a new and exciting world for me. Life is good.

David Mazur was a self-made man born in Sokolka to very religious but poor parents. He dreamed of a career in medicine. While attending the "heder" (grade school) he caught the rabbi's eye. The rabbi liked this bright, studious boy and suggested to his parents, Eber-Leib and Rachel Mazur, that he be sent to Vilna, the mecca of Jewish education, to study in "yeshiva," (religious high school), which is exactly what they did.

When my father came to Vilna, the winds of freedom, equality, and fraternity were blowing from the east. The Russian Revolution was in full bloom and the young Jewish students were intoxicated with new ideas and a new lifestyle.

To the dismay of his family, my father wanted to become a teacher. After earning his diploma, he decided to further his education and enrolled at the Warsaw University to study pharmacology.

Life wasn't easy. David Mazur was on his own, but scraping by from penny to penny. Poor or not, luck was in his favor when he met fellow-stu-

dent Guta Cipkowicz, a beautiful young girl who was studying to become a dentist.

The couple fell in love and after graduation the sun began to shine over my father. He found a position in a government pharmacy, which was a tremendous accomplishment. After my mother graduated and opened her office, she and he were married and started a family. Two little girls were born to the Mazur household, I then my sister Rachel four years later. Our home was filled with song and laughter, a nanny, a dog, and many, many other friends and family.

Then hatred began to spread across Europe from the west. The Nazi era came upon us and Polish anti-Semitism began to show itself without remorse and grew from day to day.

In 1935, my father and his two Jewish colleagues were ordered to get Masters degrees if they wanted to continue working at the government pharmacy. They studied, passed the test, and then were promptly let go — dismissed by the Polish, anti-Semitic director.

What to do now? There was no place for a Jewish pharmacist to work. My poor father didn't give up. He decided to buy his own pharmacy. During this time in Poland, a Jew had not the right own a pharmacy. My father had to pay off a Polish pharmacist. Funny, I can still remember his name: Wiszniewski. Mr. Wiszniewski obtained an official permit and sold it to my father. Finally, in 1938, in the town of Soly, near Oszmiany, my father had a pharmacy he could call his own.

On September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland, and Soly and its vicinity were annexed to the Soviet Union. A few months later my father was labeled by the Communists as "an enemy of the people." He was bourgeois now. They wouldn't issue a passport to him, and there was talk of his being deported to Siberia. Finally they threw him out and sent him to manage a pharmacy in a village called Ostrowiec.

In 1941, the Germans made their way into Ostrowiec . My father was by this time the most prominent Jew in the village. We made our home in the quarters adjacent to the pharmacy. The local doctor, a Polish man,

lived next door and was a friend of my father. In fact, prior to the German invasion, the rich Polish landowners had been persecuted by the Russians and my father allowed them to gather in the pharmacy's back room. On this day, the maid of the Polish doctor came running over to tell him that a "pogrom" (Russian meaning "killing") by the Polish peasants against the Jews was planned for that night.

Standing in the pharmacy at that moment was a wealthy Polish landowner whom my father knew well from his presence in the back room. This man offered to take us in for the duration of the Nazi occupation. He said he would send a horse and wagon, and we were to pack up our belongings and move in with him and his family. They had a huge house on an enormous parcel of land. We were very grateful.

It would take several trips back and forth to move all of our things, which had to be done by nightfall when the pogrom began. We packed furiously. My father took Rachel on the first trip. I stayed behind and continued packing.

But it was a set-up. A horde of peasants pulled my father and sister from the wagon. They threw my father against a tree and one of them shot him. By the grace of God, the bullet only grazed his forehead. They made off with the entire wagon full of our things, all of our valuables: jewelry, silver, paintings, furniture, bedding, and most heartbreaking of all, our only photographs of my mother.

Father wrapped his head with a handkerchief and he and my sister began the long walk back to the pharmacy. By the time they returned I was desperately worried. I knew something had gone wrong. My father went into the pharmacy to clean his wound, and then we took refuge in the home of the village rabbi. Throughout the night we heard the screams, cries, and prayers of the poor victims of the pogrom.

Rachel and I were distraught about the pictures of our mother. We decided to go to the landowner's house and plead for them. We knew they were of value only to us, and hoped the landowner would take pity. His wife answered the door. She and her children were there alone. Our fig-

urines and dishes were piled on tables, with a stack of our picture frames in view. We begged to be given just the pictures from inside the frames, but the frames were empty and the Polish landowner's wife pretended to know nothing about them.

Rachel whispered, "We had better go home, Lily. They'll kill us here."

The following morning, my father dressed us as peasants, including babushkas, put us on a wagon full of hay, and sent us to our Aunt Sonia and Uncle Joseph in Vilna. A few days later, he joined us.

Vilna was in the hands of the Nazis now, and the persecution of the Jews going on in earnest. They issued edict after edict. From a proud, intelligent human being, my father became a sub-human, a hunted animal with no right to live. We were taken to the Vilna ghetto where conditions were very bad. My father was made to work as an orderly in the Spanish Field Hospital outside the ghetto.

This stern paterfamilias, who had such softness for his beautiful wife and two daughters, this man who had loved life, enjoyed the theater and concerts, who always liked to study, to read scientific books and magazines, to teach his daughters good manners, charity, and compassion towards those who had less... he became a shadow of the man we knew. He was always cold and hungry. His spirit was broken.

After a time, he was offered a position as a pharmacist in the ghetto pharmacy and although his spirit did improve, he was overburdened with worry about protecting and providing for his children.

After he was taken by the SS from the ghetto pharmacy and deported to Estonia, we didn't hear from him at all, and I saw him only once again. One day when my sister and I were interned at Dünawerke Slave Labor Camp near Riga, Latvia, a girl told us that a transport of Jews had been brought from Estonia to Kaiserwald Concentration Camp which was not far from where we were. She said a David Mazur was there pleading for information about his two daughters.

They used to send us to the dentist at Kaiserwald who would perform an extreaction for a toothache. Early the next morning, I obtained per-

mission to see the dentist, and got on a truck for Kaiserwald.

I searched for my father from the moment we entered, straining to see inside every building, and found him in a barracks where the men from Estonia had been put. I disappeared, flattening myself along the walls, risking my life. But when I stepped inside and saw him standing there, I knew I would gladly lay down my life just to see him again.

He was dressed in the uniform striped jacket and pants, and was nearly unrecognizable, shrunken, emaciated. But his big black eyes were so longingly familiar, buried beneath his unshaven face.

We hugged and kissed, afraid to be caught by the SS guards. He told me how happy he was to find me alive and asked about my sister. And then he said, "Take good care of yourself and Rachel." He said, "We will survive, and when this is over we shall meet at the pharmacy in Soly. Please, Lily, remember who you are. No matter what happens, keep your head high and conduct yourself in accordance with our good family name."

Those were the last of his words I would ever hear.

I ran back, tears bursting from the deepest part of my soul, running down my cheeks, practically blinding me. His words rang in my ears, "We will meet in Soly." I was determined to return the next day. I did, but he was gone.

After our liberation, Rachel and I wrote letter after letter, always searching, asking, listening to every rumor, but my beloved father, David Mazur, an old-fashioned pharmacist, was gone forever.

АРХИВНАЯ СПРАВКА

В документальных материалах Центрального государственного архива Литовской ССР имеются сведения о том, что МАЗУР Давид работал в должности фармацевта аптеки Виленской больничной кассы с 10 августа 1922 года по 31 декабря 1935 года. В списке фармацевтов Ошмянского уезда от 3 января 1938 года значится помощник провизора МАЗУР Давид 1890 года рождения. В графах того же списка "Год и место получения диплома", "Местожительство" соответственно указано: "Университет в Варшаве 1932 год", "Солы".

ДИРЕКТОР ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО АРХИВА ЛИТОВСКОЙ ССР (В.ДАУНЕНЕ)

№ 2/01062
6 сентября 1967 года
город Вильнюс

Настоящий документ легализован в Консульском Управлении Министерства Иностранных Дел СССР
"21" декабря 1967 г.
Начальник Консульского Управления МИД СССР
512/6960.

ARCHIVAL AFFIDAVIT

The Central Federal Archives of the Lithuanian Republic has documents stating that DAVID MAZUR, listed in the Oszmiany Pharmaceutical Registry in 1938, was born in 1890, and got his diploma from the University of Warsaw, Poland. In 1932, he finished an additional pharmaceutical course at the above mentioned university from August 10, 1922 till December 31, 1935, was employed as a pharmacist at the Medical Center (Kasa Chorych) Pharmacy in Vilna, and bought his own pharmacy in a town called Soly in 1938.



My father. as a young boy.



My father, as a young pharmacist



Vilna, Poland, 1930
Clockwise from left: My cousin, Hackel, emigrating to Buenos Aires, Argentina, saying goodbye to my father and me, age 6.

VII.

GIMNAZJUM ON ARCHANGIELSKA 11 STREET

I was a shy and timid little girl, spoiled and sheltered, living in a veritable cocoon created by my two loving parents. I joyfully shared this cocoon with my adorable sister Rachel, our devoted nanny, Vikcia, and Rex, our faithful companion and dog.

I was also a sickly child, prone to all kinds of children's maladies. And so it was no surprise that my parents did not want to send me to kindergarten. Instead, they decided I would start my formal education at the ripe old age of six. After many consultations and discussions, I was enrolled at Gimnazjum C. Epsztejna i J. Szpajzera (Gymnasium C. Epsteina and J. Speizera) at Archangielska 11 Street, and I would begin in the fall.

Over the summer, I had little time to contemplate the beginning of school until the actual day came. Then I was seized with trepidation. I dressed in my new, brown uniform with gold trim, brand new black shoes with white socks, and, carrying my lunch, bid my family goodbye.

I held tightly to my father's hand as he walked me to school for the first time. My heart banged against my chest. I was so fearful of what lay ahead. Father tried to cheer me up, but I just couldn't hear him.

When we arrived, the first thing I noticed was a huge, beautiful garden by the side of the building. It was fenced, and full of green trees and colorful flowers arranged in neat little beds surrounding long, white tables and benches. "Look, my dear," Father said, trying to put a smile on my face. "In spring, when the weather is warm, this garden serves as a classroom." I liked the idea.

He opened the door, and there it was. We found ourselves inside the gymnasium, headed toward the admissions office. My fear began to vanish almost immediately. I became calm and serene. A voice inside me kept saying, "This is home. You will be happy here. The best is yet to come." And, indeed, I enjoyed those years of learning with total abandon, in the school with the beautiful garden and huge yard.

Gymnasium at Archangielska 11 Street was a private school for Jewish children, and a very modern and progressive institution. It was founded, owned, and administrated by two partners, Chaim Epstein, a mathematics teacher from Galicia, Poland and J. Speizer, a distinguished and quiet gentleman.

If you began in the first grade, you spent twelve years there. In order to graduate, you had to pass two very difficult examinations, one oral, the other written, or you got no diploma. Simple as that. All our subjects were taught in Polish. We learned Hebrew, Latin, German and later English, as well as taking religious instruction twice a week and mandatory gymnastics for exercise.

The best teachers were recruited to the faculty. They were dedicated professionals, in love with their work, and diligent in bringing out the best in their students. We feared them, respected them, and looked up to them. They had an immense influence on our lives. They taught us how to think, how to listen, and to have a curious mind and be unafraid to ask questions. Each class was assigned to a spacious room filled with tables and

benches. The teachers rotated among classrooms, rather than the students running around.

Each year a primary teacher was assigned to the overall well-being of an individual class. If we had a problem, at school or at home, you would request an interview, and that teacher would sit you down in his or her office, ask all the right questions and listen with great interest, and you knew that the burden would be lifted from your shoulders, and help was on the way.

We had well-equipped physics, chemistry and biology laboratories with microscopes, slide projectors, screens, everything you might need at your fingertips for a multitude of experiments.

We also had a set of rooms we referred to as our zoo, which housed mice, rabbits, snakes, worms, and insects. We students had to clean the cages, feed them, and give the animals water. Even during vacations we took turns caring for them.

Our library was full of a magnitude of books. Our gym was always busy with students exercising and training. Our auditorium had a real stage where amateur groups rehearsed and performed plays and musicals.

Dances were organized, and our class president was always planning new trips to different places. There was a very active "student self-help group" in charge of giving financial and tutorial aid to those who needed it.

Each class was required to publish a monthly paper which fell under the responsibility of its editorial board, and was a grand opportunity to polish your journalistic skills. The best articles from class papers were reprinted in the official school paper, "The Students' Front." It was an honor to have your writing published there.

In winter, the school yard became a skating rink and we couldn't wait for our twenty-minute recess to skate there. Even before the bell rang, we had on our skates, sitting anxiously on the benches. The second the bell finally rang, we ran hurriedly down the stairs, wanting to lose not a

minute of precious time.

"Slow down, slow down," warned whichever worried teacher was in charge.

But we were gone, skating in circles on the white, frozen ice and having a magnificent time.

We had so many activities — debate clubs, current events discussions, sport events, poetry readings, choir practice — our days were happy, joyful, exhilarating.

This was once a magic place. It was a great temple where we worshiped at the throne of knowledge. But now, all is gone.

Gone is the deep, resonant voice of our Latin teacher, Professor Adler, and his persistent lecturing, "Quid agis, prudente agas et respice finem" (Whatever you do, do it well, and complete it)."

Vanished is lovable Professor Promocnik, our Hebrew teacher, the object of so many of our childish pranks. "Pay attention, please!" he would say, "Hebrew is not a dead language, listen to this poem by Chaim Bialik..."

Our beloved Polish language teacher, Professor Morgenstern, will never again announce with passion and pride, "Congratulations, class. You are now ready for "Pan Tadeush" by Adam Mickiewicz (one of the most famous Polish poets). For tomorrow's assignment you will learn the first two stanzas, by heart. Everyone will be asked to recite. Now let us begin..."

The directors, teachers, and the majority of the students were obliterated, perished during the Holocaust. Our school building was demolished by bombs dropped on our city. Our beautiful garden, destroyed.

All that is left today is an old, proud oak tree still standing tall and majestic in the middle of the school yard, a solitary, silent witness of our school days past.

But on a warm, summer afternoon when the sun is shining brightly and nature is in its full glory, come rest in its cool shade and it will tell you, in the rustling of its green leaves on a gentle breeze, story after story about

the happy times when students played "Hide and Seek" beneath its ample branches, when there was laughing, and singing, and dancing.

The tree will tell you about a boy and a girl holding hands and talking about their futures... about somebody crying, afraid to go home with poor grades... about ice skating in winter, making circles round and around its thick trunk.

But you might also hear this oak tree, with its powerful branches, sobbing bitterly. In the shiver of the wind, he may ask, "What happened?" "Where did they go?" "Where are Basia, Ania, Cilka Wielka?" "Where are Jakub and Aleck, Osia and Dziunek?" He may tell you, "I wait, but they never come."

We know, all too well, what happened, why those dear children won't ever come back. But why tell the oak tree the bitter truth?

Why break its heart?



Winter. 1938
A group of students in front of the entrance to
Gymnastum at Archangielska 11 Street.

PRYWATNE
GIMNAZJUM KOEDUKACYJNE
C. EPSZTEJNA i I. SZPAJZERA
z pełnemi prawami Gimnaz. Państwowego
W WILNIE

PROTOKÓŁ EGZAMINU WSTĘPNEGO

Maurycówna Lea

zdaje egzamin ~~celujący~~ / uzupełniający do klasy I g

PRZEDMIOT	Wynik egzaminu piśmiennego	Wynik egzaminu ustnego	Wynik ostateczny	Podpis egzaminatora
Religja				
Język polski	dobr.	dobr.	dobr.	W. Szczepański
„ laciński				
„ niemiecki				
„ francuski				
„				
Historja	2 stopn.			
Geografja	dobry		dobry	
Biologja				
Matematyka	+ dost	dob	dob	St. Kortyński
Fizyka				
Chemja				
Rysunek				

Uchwała Rady Pedagogicznej przyjęta do kl. pierwszej.

Dnia 24. VI. 1936 r.

C. Epsztejn
Dyrektor

My report card from Gimnazjum C. Epsztejna i J. Szpajzera. 24 June 1936.

PRYWATNE
GIMNAZJUM KOEDUKACYJNE
C. Epsztejna i I. Szpajzera
W WILNIE

Kl. 9
Mazurówna.

Egzamin z języka polskiego.

Dyktat.

Czy można wyczerpać morze?

Żył w dawnych czasach pewien mędrzec imieniem Ksant. Ale mimo, że był mędrcem, powinęła mu się raz noga. Oto gdy jednego wieczora trochę za dużo wypił przyjaciele jego zmówili się pocichu, by sobie z niego zażartować. Wciągnęli go przez nich w pułapkę, że pijanemu zatoczył się z nimi, że wyczerpie całe morze. Gdy powoli wytrzeźwiał, bardzo się zmartwił, bo za późno się zorjentował, że wpadł w pułapkę. Z krzywdnego położenia wybawił Ksanta dopiero jego sługa, który mu poradził, jak ma postąpić. Mianowicie, gdy nazajutrz z rana dookoła zatoki morskiej zebrały się tłumy ciekawych, chcących wiedzieć powodzi Ksanta, który zamiast lekkomyślnie począł się dokonania rzeczy niemożliwej, Ksant tak przemówił: „Zobowiązałem się wyczerpać morze i chcę tego dokonać. Ale zaznaczam, że mam wyczerpać samo morze, bez rzek, które do niego wpadają. Dlatego niech wpierw moi przeciwnicy wstrzymają rzeki, które wpadają do morza i skierują je z powrotem w góry ku źródłom, by zostało tylko samo morze."

Dobrze.

My schoolwork: An essay for the Polish language exam.

PRYWATNE
GIMNAZJUM KOEDUKACYJNE
C. Epsztejna i I. Szpajzera
W WILNIE

Wilenkina 7

Egzaminacyjne egzaminacyjne z matematyki

Zadanie I

Ktoś zmieszał 14 kg kawy po $16\frac{1}{2}$ zł za kilogram z 15 kg kawy po $18\frac{1}{3}$ zł za kg. Otrzymaną mieszankę sprzedał z zyskiem $11\frac{1}{9}$ zł na całym transakcji.

1) Po czemu sprzedawał kilogram mieszanki?
2) Ile wynosi $12\frac{1}{2}$% ceny sprzedaży?

Zadanie II

Obliczyć pole trapezu, którego podstawy wynoszą: 12,4 cm i 8,14 cm, a wysokość — 10,6 cm

Rozwiązanie I

Obliczam ile kosztuje 14 kg kawy po $16\frac{1}{2}$ zł za kg

$16\frac{1}{2}$ zł $\cdot$ 14 $= \frac{33}{2} \cdot \frac{14^7}{1} = \frac{231}{1} = 231$ zł

$14 \cdot 16\frac{1}{2}$ zł.

Obliczam ile kosztuje 15 kg kawy po $18\frac{1}{3}$ zł za kg

$18\frac{1}{3}$ zł $\cdot$ 15 $= \frac{55}{3} \cdot \frac{15^5}{1} = \frac{275}{1} = 275$ zł

$15 \cdot 18\frac{1}{3}$ zł.

Obliczam ile kosztuje mieszanka.

231 zł
+ 273 "
504 zł

Obliczam ~~ile kosztuje 1 kg mieszanki~~ po czemu sprzedawał mieszankę otrzymał z zysk...

+ 504 zł + $18\frac{2}{9}$ zł 522 $\frac{2}{9}$ zł

Obliczam ile było kg mieszanki

+ 14 kg
15 "
29 kg

Obliczam po czemu sprzedawał 1 kg mieszanki

522 $\frac{2}{9}$ zł : 29 = 522 zł 60 gr : 29 = ~~18 zł 2 gr~~ 18 zł 12 gr

29
232
:
60
58
2

Obliczam ile wynosi $12\frac{1}{2}$% ceny sprzedaży

(18 zł 12 gr : 100 = 18,12 zł)

$18\frac{2}{9}$: 100 = $\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{8} \cdot 522\frac{2}{9} =$ ~~$\frac{1}{8} \cdot \frac{4700}{9} = \frac{4700}{72}$~~ $= 65\frac{5}{9}$ zł

VIII.

MEMORIES, MEMORIES
Part One

They say, "Time heals all wounds," "Let bygones be bygones." They say,"Let go of the past, and look to the future." "Forgive and forget." I try. Believe me, I do. But how can you forgive? How can you ever forget?

When I was a little girl, Vilna, Poland was known the world over as "The Jerusalem of Lithuania," and I was privileged to live there, particularly in the affluent manner in which we lived, and privileged to attend an exclusive, private school where we were taught to use our minds and open our hearts to those who were less privileged.

When the Nazis came, that all came to an end. I was an outcast, a hunted animal, with no right to exist. I was Jewish, that was my crime.

An avalanche of dark clouds hit us with no mercy, and with such force that we couldn't comprehend what was being done to our lives, to our friends, to everyone around us.

After the death of my mother in 1939, my sister Rachel and I were devastated, overtaken with pain. Mother's sister, our dear Aunt Sonia, became our second mother. And although Sonia's own loss was enormous, she put it aside and tried to help ease our pain, as well as help my father

handle a difficult situation.

My mother had been a dentist. It was decided that father must liquidate her office, give up our apartment, and make a new home for the three of us in Soly, where his pharmacy was located. Rachel and I would live with Aunt Sonia and Uncle Joseph in Vilna during the school year and spend summer and winter vacations in Soly with father.

Uncle Joseph and Aunt Sonia adored my poor mother and were willing to do anything for her children. We stayed for the school year and, unsurprisingly, our grades declined. Despite the encouragement of our teachers, we simply could not improve them. We were so deeply hurt by the absence of our mother, our grades no longer seemed important.

When summer came, Aunt Sonia took Rachel and me, our nanny, Vikcia, and our dog, Rex, by train. Sonia was to stay with us for a whole month, and Uncle Joseph would join us on the weekends, always with an armful of gifts for "his girls."

Just before we left, we went to visit my mother's grave at the Jewish Cemetery at Zarzecze. According to Jewish custom, a headstone would be placed there after a year. We didn't know at the time, but Sonia would end up having to make the somber arrangements in our absence. She lovingly chose a headstone depicting the trunk of a broken tree.

When we arrived in Soly we thought our plans for the future were settled, but there is an old saying: "Man proposes but God disposes." The Yiddish translation is even better: "Man thinks but God laughs."

On September 1st, 1939, the German war machine invaded Poland and all our plans fell completely apart. Vilna became part of the Republic of Lithuania and Soly became part of the Western Republic of Belarus. A tightly guarded border, an "Iron Curtain," as per Winston Churchill, separated us from our family, our school, classmates, friends, and the grave of our mother.

We had to attend new schools, learn new languages, make new friends and wait a long time for letters from the other side.

This went on for eight months. Then the Russian authorities decided

to relocate my father from his own pharmacy to a new pharmacy located in the village of Ostrowiec. They considered him "bourgeous," and therefore refused him a Soviet passport. Because of this, we lived under constant threat of deportation to Siberia.

Ten months later, in June of 1941, a new cloud appeared on our horizon. German tanks rolled into our village, entering the marketplace in Ostrowiec early in the afternoon.

From the very first moment of the occupation, it was clear we were in big trouble. Our lives were enveloped in danger, our futures dark. We were Jews, and we were being persecuted.

Within a day or two we lost our nanny. Her brother, whom we knew very well, came to take her back to her village of Czarny Bor (the "Black Forest") where my mother hired her as a young peasant girl.

"My little lost sheep, my little dear girls, what will become of you now?" She cried and sobbed, but she could not stay with us. Jews were forbidden to employ Christians. She begged us to take care of ourselves, and promised to come see us, but it never occurred.

Something strange began to happen to our beloved Rex. He was a mongrel dog, mixed breed, sturdy, just shy of medium size. He looked like a miniature Akita, dark brown with a curled tail. Rex had always been given the run of the house and yard, and he never travelled very far from home. But it was known that he was our dog, and he may have been attacked. Just after the German invasion, Rex became semi-paralyzed with his head to one side. He stopped eating completely, and could hardly drink water.

My father came to the sad conclusion that even Rex was not safe from persecution. He had him taken out and shot. He said, "It is better this way. He can rest in peace. He was our faithful guardian." We were inconsolable. Little by little we were losing everything dear to us.

The situation in Ostrowiec worsened. Soon after the occupation we had our first personal encounter with persecution, when father was shot and all our valuables were taken. He promptly decided it was too dan-

gerous for us to remain in Ostrowiec. We had to go back to Vilna.

The next morning my father disguised my sister and me as Polish peasants. He wrote Aunt Sonia's address on a piece of paper and told us to memorize it, then throw it away. He put us into a horse driven wagon full of hay, driven by a sturdily built peasant to whom my father had given a great deal of money. The driver told us to be very quiet and sit deep within the hay. "From now on, you are Anya and Vladya, my two daughters," he told us, "We are on our way to Ostra Brama (a famous Cathedral) to pray."

We were quiet as mice the entire trip even though we wanted to leap off the wagon from the overwhelming aroma of hay. Late in the afternoon the wagon stopped at the outskirts of Vilna. The driver had promised father to take us near Aunt Sonia's house, but changed his mind. He made us get out in an unknown part of the city, and galloped away.

We stood alone, not daring to ask for directions. I said to myself, "We have to move forward before we arouse suspicion from the passersby." We walked, our heads high, conversing in Polish and pretending to know where we were. To our great relief the streets became more and more familiar, and we became less frightened.

It was dark by the time we rang Aunt Sonia's door bell. It took what seemed like an eternity before the door opened slowly and Uncle Joseph stood in front of us.

"Sonia, Sonia, the girls are here! Our girls are here," he cried joyfully. There was hugging and kissing, all of us talking at the same time. My dear aunt almost fainted when we told her about our long walk through the city streets, pretending to be Polish Christians without being stopped and questioned by the Gestapo guards who were roaming around us.

"Everything will be all right as soon as Papa comes to join us," Sonia assured us. "I have to get in touch with Esther and the children and tell them you are here, and safe."

Rachel asked, "How is Uncle Abrasha," and the room fell silent. Aunt Sonia and Uncle Joseph looked at each other and apparently decided to

tell us the truth. "We don't know where he is," said Uncle Joseph. "He was taken away, walking to his factory one morning during 'Chapuny'."

This word comes from the Yiddish "chapen" which means "to catch". Young Jewish men were taken from the streets, from their homes, their beds, and put into military trucks and driven away, never to be seen again.

"We are very worried about him, but have no information," sadly explained our uncle. "We live now in constant fear. I was afraid to open the door for you. Every day there is a new edict: we have to walk in the gutter, wear yellow stars on our clothing. All the Jewish businesses are being confiscated; there are no more Jewish doctors, lawyers, teachers or other professionals. We have a curfew; no right to own a radio, watch, or jewelry."

"What a glum future," I thought as I lay in a warm bed that night, lovingly tucked in by my aunt. "I hope Papa will come soon. He will know what to do," were my last thoughts before falling asleep.

A few days later the door bell rang and there he was. We were together again. But my father did not know what to do. There was nothing anyone could do.

The situation deteriorated. Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse something harder to bear came. One day, I was caught in the street and taken by German soldiers to clean a Gestapo office. Fortunately, I was not harmed and when I was finished cleaning they let me go. Uncle Joseph witnessed the entire incident, and waited until I was released. He forbade me to tell father, Sonia, or Rachel.

Following the incident of my short detention, Uncle Joseph, who didn't look Jewish, was the only one who dared to step outside. My father definitely looked Jewish, and spent his days in a secret place in the attic built by my uncle.

Anxiety and constant fear took a toll on my poor father and he became ill. Eventually his condition demanded that he be put him in the Jewish Hospital. We couldn't visit him. Somehow my cousin Osia, son of my mother's sister Esther, found a way to see him and send messages to us

about his improved state of health.

Then on June 6th, 1941, the mother of all edicts became reality. It read: "All Jewish inhabitants of the city of Vilna will abandon their homes and take only those belongings they can carry themselves, and march to the designated areas in the Jewish section."

Sonia's beloved husband, my Uncle Joseph Perski, called her aside and said he refused to be sent into the Ghetto. As a forest product merchant, he had many friends and acquaintances among the Polish land owners and peasants. He wanted Sonia and himself to take off their yellow Stars of David, and escape into the countryside where they would secure a safe refuge and survive as Aryans. While he conceded it was a dangerous undertaking, he was adamant about not being herded into the Ghetto.

Aunt Sonia told Uncle Joseph that she loved him greatly. She kissed him and hugged him, and then in the quietest voice explained that she had made a promise to her sister on her deathbed that she would take care of Guta's two little girls, and this is what she felt she had to do.

And so began the great exodus of the Jewish population through the streets of Vilna, lined with our Polish neighbors who showed nothing short of enjoyment at the spectacle. We walked slowly down the middle of the street carrying our possessions, with our heads and our spirits down.

"What is going on?" we wondered. "We were born here, our parents and grandparents were born here. We worked here, went to school here, built our businesses here. We shared so much with our Christian neighbors, now listen to them..."

"Look, look, this one has two coats! She's wearing one over the other. Give it here, Jew!" they taunted. "Hey, look at that one dragging heavy valises. Give some to me." "Give me this pretty dress, Jew. It's too big for you and you won't be needing it anyway." And so on, and so on.

I can't help but to ask, where were the good Christian people, my neighbors? Where were the children with whom I played softball, and so many other games? Where was the compassion, decency and understanding?

This was the day the master plan to get rid of the Jews of Vilna began

in earnest. Thousands of us perished in that one day. Some were taken to the Lukiszki Prison, others to the "first" ghetto, located on the Struszuna Jatkowa Rudnicka and other small streets in the Jewish section. Still another group was told they were being taken to the "second" ghetto. But there was no second ghetto. They were taken to the Ponary Forest and massacred.

My Aunt Esther was originally taken to prison with her son and daughter, Osia and Lila, and Osia's new bride, Marysia, where they were told to give the guard their watches and jewelry. Osia's only possession was an antique Omega pocket watch given to him by his father, my Uncle Abrasha. Osia couldn't bear to let them have the watch. Instead, he placed it on the ground and crushed it beneath his foot, then threw away the pieces. Had he been caught, he would have been shot.

Osia then took off his wedding band and gave to Marysia for safekeeping. Aunt Esther was trying to take hers off when Osia sternly admonished her not to, but to hide it someplace on her person. She put it in her mouth. Although we never spoke of it after, I imagine the rings probably later bought some small bit of sustenance or favor. By pure chance they were ordered to the first ghetto, where we were also directed.

By another small miracle, the Jewish hospital was situated within the parimeters of the ghetto. As soon as Aunt Sonia, Rachel, and I stepped through the gates, we ran to find Father.

Uncle Joseph had gone into hiding in the middle of the night before, pleading with Aunt Sonia to come with him. It was a hard choice to make but she refused.

We found father lying in a hospital bed, pale and worried. A few minutes later Osia showed up at the door. "Thank God I found you," he said "Mama, Marysia and Lila are all right. We found a place in an apartment on Rudnicka Street, but there we are three or four families in one room. We need to find another place for you." He didn't mention Uncle Joseph, having said goodbye to him himself two days before.

Aunt Sonia, her heart broken into pieces, took us out and after an

extensive search finally found a half-empty room in one of the old dilapidated apartment houses at Strazuna Street No. 2, where we stayed till the end.

Conditions in the ghetto were terrible — every room was shared by several families, there was not enough running water to keep yourself clean, the rations were so meager we were hungry everyday.

Our long days of misery began, with no hope for a better future. One day, as I stood in the ghetto courtyard, cold, hungry and afraid, a German soldier came to take women and girls for work outside the ghetto walls. We were put in a line and marched through the ghetto gates like cattle on the cobblestones, in an unknown direction. We were made to wear a yellow Star of David on both the front and the back of our clothing, which had the word "Jude" (Jew) printed on it.

I walked with my head down, but suddenly the street became familiar. To my disbelief, I found myself standing in front of my school. I wanted to run to my classroom and sit in my seat. Maybe if my teacher came and started a lesson... maybe that would make the nightmare go away. Instead, we were taken inside, down a flight of stairs to a damp, dark cellar I never knew existed. We were told to clean and sort awful-smelling potatoes.

We had at my beloved school a Polish janitor by the name of Vincente, who had two plump daughters, Kasia and Marisia. The girls used to help us with our heavy boots and galoshes on cold winter days. They shared our good lunches, prepared with love by our mothers. They knew our grades before even our parents, and shared most of our secrets. They were, we thought, our friends.

But on this day, who do you think stood at the entrance to the cellar? Vincente and his two daughters. Marisia said to Kasia, in a stage-whisper for everyone's benefit, "Look, here's little Lily, alive. I thought they were all killed in the Ponary Forest."

How can you forgive? How can you forget?

IX.

THE PARTISAN HYMN AND ME

Never Say (Partisan Hymn)

Words: **Hirsh Glik** - Music by: **Dmitri Pokrass**

Never say this is the final road for you,
Though leadened skies may cover over days of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near,
Our step beats out the message – we are here!

From lands so green with palms to lands all white with snow,
We shall be coming with our anguish and our woe,
And where a spurt of our blood fell on the earth,
There our courage and our spirit have rebirth.

The early morning sun will brighten our day,
And yesterday with our foe will fade away.
But if the sun delays and in the east remains –
This song as password generations must maintain.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead,
It's not a little tune that birds sing overhead,
This song a people sang amid collapsing walls,
With grenades in hands they heeded to the call.

Therefore never say the road now ends for you,
Though leadened skies may cover over days of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near –
Our step beats out the message – we are here!

Early one morning in the summer of 1943, just before dawn, a line of young girls and women marched slowly out of the Vilna Ghetto, on their way to the Porubanek Airport, where they worked until late in the evening.

I was one of them.

Tired and hungry, we marched with our heads down, half asleep, along a country road, beside railroad tracks. We often saw whole transports of supply trains passing by, loaded to capacity with Russian prisoners of war.

Their faces were pale and unshaven, their uniforms tattered. They saw the yellow stars of David on our clothes, and immediately knew who we were.

They would always wave to us, and often we would hear things like, "Hey girls, look at me! I am one of you! I am a Jewish boy! Is this Vilna? I have an uncle here. I am starving, do you have something to eat?"

We were strictly forbidden even to look in their direction, forget about talking or waving back. We were helpless and heartbroken, and our future looked grim.

Made to march all the way to the airport, we were given a short reprieve in which to rest before the work began. We always saved some raw potatoes from the night before, lit small fires, peeled a potato or two, and cooked it in a tin can filled with water. Salt was a precious commodity but the "potato soup" tasted good even without it.

Knowing hungry people don't work as well, our German guards "allowed" us our meager breakfast as they themselves sat down to devour the most appetizing sandwiches, hot coffee, biscuits, and even chocolate. They laughed at our hunger, and our saltless potato soup.

On this particular morning, as I knelt on the ground, cooking my potatoes, one of the girls came over and said in a quiet voice, "I have something special for you." I wish I could remember her name. I think it was Hannah. She said, "I heard you have a good singing voice. You see this piece of paper? My brother gave it to me. He told me to share it with my friends. This is a brand new song, recently written by a tortured young man." She leaned in with her piece of paper, and began to sing in a whisper.

The words were magic for me. They were so true, so full of hope and new courage. "Oh my God, maybe everything is not lost," said my trembling

soul. I was compelled to learn it immediately.

Hannah lent it to me and the whole day I dreamt about returning to my room in the Ghetto and making a copy for myself. As soon as I got home I wrote it down word for word, singing the melody over and over like a mantra.

The next morning, I gave the paper back. Hannah and I marched side-by-side, quietly singing, savoring every word of the lyric. We had no idea the Partisans had adopted it, and made it their hymn.

Then she shared a big secret with me. Her older brother was one of the many young boys and girls who were escaping from the wretched conditions of the Vilna Ghetto, through the city sewers, in order to join the Partisans at the Rudnicka Forest and the swamps of Lake Naroch, to fight the Nazi war machine.

The hymn became very popular and we sang it whenever we could, always in a low voice, afraid to be heard by our guards. I found solace and courage while singing "Never Say," and was grateful to the talented song writer, Hirsh Glik, for writing the lyrics, and to my new friend, Hannah, for sharing it with me when I needed it most.

Today, at the end of the yearly commemoration ceremony held at Temple Emanuel in New York, the Cantor, dignitaries, survivors and the entire congregation sing "The Partisan Hymn."

I will always remember the first time I heard it, and the important role it played during my days of persecution.

זאָג ניט קיין מאָל!

ווערטער: הירש גליק - מוזיק: דמיטרי פאקראס

זאָג ניט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,
כאָטש הימלען בלייענע פֿאַרשטעלן בלויע טעג.
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה,
עס וועט אַ פויק טאָן אונדזער טראָט - מיר זיינען דאָ!

פון גרינעם פֿאַלמענלאַנד ביז ווייסן לאַנד פון שניי,
מיר קומען אָן מיט אונדזער פּיין, מיט אונדזער ווייַ,
אָן ווי געפֿאַלן ס'איז אַ שפּריץ פון אונדזער בלוט,
שפּראָצן וועט דאָרט אונדזער גבורה, אונדזער מוט.

עס וועט די מאָרגנזון באַגילדן אונדז דעם היינט,
אָן דער נעכטן וועט פֿאַרשווינדן מיטן פיינד.
נאָר אויב פֿאַרזאַמען וועט די זון אין דעם קאַיאָר -
ווי אַ פֿאַראַל זאָל גיין דאָס ליד פון דור צו דור.

דאָס ליד געשריבן איז מיט בלוט און ניט מיט כּליי,
ס'איז ניט קיין לידל פון אַ פויגל אויף דער פריי,
דאָס האָט אַ פֿאָלק צווישן פֿאַלנדיקע וועלט
דאָס ליד געזונגען מיט נאַגאַנעס אין די הענט.

טאָ זאָג ניט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,
כאָטש הימלען בלייענע פֿאַרשטעלן בלויע טעג.
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה -
עס וועט אַ פויק טאָן אונדזער טראָט - מיר זיינען דאָ!

X.

MEMORIES. MEMORIES
Part Two

It was a cold, dark morning in December, in the dead of winter. I was walking on the hard cobblestones in a slow-moving line of young women and girls, from the gates of the Vilna Ghetto toward the Porubanek Airport. It had been our daily routine for a long time.

Our German guard, whose name I can still recall, Kraus, was urging us to move faster, but we were cold, hungry and desperate, and losing our hope. Our yellow stars weighed heavily upon us. We were nothing, and we just didn't care.

Finally, we arrived at the airport. Some days we unloaded freight cars full of coal, potatoes, or wood, at the adjacent railroad station. On this day, they sent us to shovel snow from the airport runway. Word went around that they were expecting VIPs. The shovels were heavy, it started to snow, and the more we cleared the more snow covered the airstrip.

Then, a miracle happened. A German soldier came and requested four girls to do work inside the soldiers' barracks. I was one of the ones

chosen. "Thank you, God," I prayed, "Thank you for taking me out of the cold and wind." We were taken inside a huge building. Each of us was given a mop, bucket of water, and bar of brown soap. We were told to wash the floor of a tremendously vast room.

I didn't know what to do. I really did not know how to begin. Just a couple of months earlier, I was a schoolgirl attending classes. I had never scrubbed a floor in my life, let alone with a bar of soap. Was I supposed put the soap in the bucket of water, or apply it directly to the floor? Or was I supposed to suds the mop like a washcloth? I just stood there, petrified of making a mistake. My eyes filled with tears.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a high-ranking German officer appeared, flanked by two younger soldiers. Speaking directly to me, he asked in a very stern voice, "What is going on? What are you doing here?"

I lifted my head slowly to see three tall, slim apparitions dressed in gray uniforms with wide leather belts, each with a hand gun at his side. I started to sob helplessly, and confessed that I didn't know how to wash the floor.

Although my German was then clear and perfect, today I have a complete mental block and can't utter a word.

The officer told the soldiers to get someone else for the floors, and take me to his quarters. When he arrived, he sat me in a chair, ordered hot soup and sandwiches brought to me, and began to ask a great many questions.

I graciously ate the hot food and conversed with him. I told him about my father, my aunt, and my little sister, living with me in the Ghetto. I told him my favorite subjects in school were history and chemistry, that I hated math, especially geometry, but loved poetry and could recite Goethe's "Erlkönig."

He said he had always been told Jews had long, black beards and crooked noses, and that they were dirty and smelled bad. Before the war, he had been the Director of the Munich Opera. He said he had never met a Jewish girl like me.

Once I finished the food, he ordered the soldiers to bring more sand-

wiches for me to take home. The soldiers looked at me in bewilderment. The officer handed me a book of poems and told me to stay for the day in his quarters, and then he left.

There I sat in this warm room, doing what I most enjoyed, reading. When it got dark, a soldier came to collect me, and I was returned to the group. I was afraid to tell anyone of my day in paradise. As we walked back to the gates of the Ghetto, I prayed the guards would not find the food, which I hid in my blouse. I desperately needed to feed my hungry family.

Indeed, God answered my prayers, and the guards were lenient that evening. I ran through the small streets of the Ghetto, up the steps to our room. My father, Aunt Sonia and Rachel were there waiting. Triumphantly, I laid my treasures on the bed, as we didn't have a table, and I asked them to eat.

I told them all about my good day, watching as they satisfied their hunger for the first time in so long. My father put a trembling hand on my head. He said, "My child, your mother was looking after you from above today, and she always will."

Yes, these are my memories.

I was there.

XI.

AND WE SAID GOODBYE FOREVER

Part One

Rumors were flying through the narrow streets of the Ghetto that the end was near. The Gestapo were demanding more and more people from our Ghetto Commander Jacob Gens, a smart and kind Lithuanian Jew who previously had been an officer in the Lithuanian Army.

Even people who had work-cards were being taken during the Gestapo's increased "actions" to round up our people. They were taken to Ponary, the nearby forest, massacred, and thrown into mass graves or the "lucky" were sent to labor camps.

Young people were organizing with the partisans, but you had to have guns to be able to fight. Parents tried to save their children any way they could. The Jewish resistance issued leaflets telling us to be strong, and to fight, resist, defend ourselves with anything we could find, and go to our deaths with dignity and honor.

You could smell the doom in the air. Isolation, loneliness, horror and despair were in the eyes of the people. Jewish life had no value. I was severely at risk because I was in the hospital, bedridden, unable to move.

It all came about on a hot, August afternoon, while I was working barefoot at the Porubanek Airport, because by this time I had no shoes. I

stepped on an enormous, rusty nail that punctured my big toe. I didn't feel much pain, and there wasn't much blood. Still, I was afraid to ask for help from our German guard, Kraus, so a girl with whom I worked, washed it, then tore off a piece of my slip, and bandaged it.

By the time we made the interminable walk back to the gates of the Ghetto, the bandage was filthy, I was burning with fever, and a thin, red line appeared on the inside of my leg, from the foot to the groin, where a large, hard bulge had formed.

My friends virtually carried me to my room.

My father, David Mazur, a pharmacist, and my Aunt Sonia Cipkowicz-Perski, a midwife and a registered nurse, immediately realized my condition was life-threatening, and carried me to the hospital.

My father and aunt were employees of the Jewish hospital. Thanks to their intervention, I was operated on that evening, and Doctor Peisachowicz from Kowno saved my life, for the time being.

My body was weak and undernourished and could not produce enough antibodies to fight infection, so my wound didn't heal and was constantly covered with pus. Despite the steady care from my father, aunt, and little sister, I remained bedridden and in continuous pain.

Then one day I heard a commotion in the hospital's courtyard, outside my window. The Gestapo men were running, cursing, and hoarding able-bodied men into trucks, to be taken to a labor camp in Estonia.

A nurse came running into my room, and practically dragged me to the window. There in the courtyard, wearing his white lab coat, my father was being taken out of the pharmacy.

I screamed "Papa, Papa," and he lifted his arm, and waved. His lips silently mouthed the words "Good-bye." I will never forget that moment. I replay it over and over in my mind. When my aunt and my sister came to see me, we cried bitterly and inconsolably.

A few weeks later, again, my aunt came running. This time she told me to dress quickly and be very quiet. She was told that in order to save lives in the Ghetto, Commander Gens had to sacrifice the sick patients in

the hospital, to satisfy the Nazi demand, and fulfill the "quota," the edict that more Jews to be deported.

There is something in the survival instinct, and the human spirit, that can take over your body and give you super-human strength. I got up, dressed, and walked with the help of my aunt through the mute, dark streets of the Ghetto, silently praying to my mother for help.

A few days later we were awakened in the middle of the night, by the father of another family who shared our room. He told us to dress quickly, take our meager belongings, what little food we might have, and follow him into a concealed room we called "Malina." Between my aunt, my sister and me, we had one head of green cabbage.

The man moved a heavy dresser, and opened a small door to a room that was already filled with others. It was true, the end was coming. The Ghetto was being liquidated. We hoped against hope that the murderers wouldn't find us, but it was just wishful thinking.

On a beautiful September day in 1943, we were awakened by Lithuanian and Ukrainian soldiers who stormed into the room, screaming obscenities. They demanded our so-called jewelry. There was very little left, mostly watches. Our valuables had been demanded when we were first sent to the ghetto and any valuables we might have been able to hide were long since sold for necessities... food, toilet paper, medicine.

They pushed us into the street. I can still hear them yelling, "chassy, chassy" (watches, watches). Others were found hiding, and they too were pushed into the street. We were ordered to form a line, and led out of the gates of the Ghetto to the Rosa Cemetery. Children were crying, their parents desperate and helpless to save them.

We were a humanity reduced to nothing, and the air was thick with grief and pain. We couldn't believe something so cruel could happen to innocent people. My aunt, sister and I clung to one another.

Passing through the gate, I turned back and said goodbye forever to the cobblestones and the narrow streets and the dilapidated buildings of the Vilna Ghetto.

A Manifesto of the Jewish Resistance in Vilna



Offer armed resistance! Jews, defend yourselves with arms!

The German and Lithuanian executioners are at the gates of the ghetto. They have come to murder us! Soon they will lead you forth in groups through the ghetto door.

In the same way they carried away hundreds of us on the day of Yom Kippur. In the same way those with white, yellow and pink *Schein** were deported during the night. In this way our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and sons were taken away.

Tens of thousands of us were dispatched. But we shall not go! We will not offer our heads to the butcher like a sheep.

Jews defend yourselves with arms!

Do not believe the false promises of the assassins or believe the words of the traitors.

Anyone who passes through the ghetto gate will go to Ponar!

Jews, we have nothing to lose. Death will overtake us in any event. And who can still believe in survival when the murderer exterminates us with so much determination? The hand of the executioner will reach each man and woman. Flight and acts of cowardice will not save our lives. Active resistance alone can save our lives and our honor.

Brothers! It is better to die in battle in the ghetto than to be carried away to Ponar like sheep. And know this: Within the walls of the ghetto there are organized Jewish forces who will resist with weapons.

Support the revolt!

Do not take refuge or hide in the bunkers, for then you will fall into the hands of the murderer like rats.

Jewish people, go out into the squares.

Anyone who has no weapons should take an ax, and he who has no ax should take a crowbar or a bludgeon!

For our ancestors!

For our murdered children!

Avenge Ponar!

Attack the murderers!

In every street, in every courtyard, in every house within and without the ghetto, attack these dogs!

Jews, we have nothing to lose! We shall save our lives only if we exterminate our assassins.

Long live liberty! Long live armed resistance! Death to the assassins!

The Commander of the F.P.A.
Vilna, the Ghetto,
September 1, 1943

*** Safe conducts passes. To deceive and bewilder the Jews, the Germans constantly changed the colors of the passes which were to have safeguarded them against deportation, always further limiting the number of persons entitled to them**

XII.

AND WE SAID GOODBYE FOREVER
Part Two

The events of September 23rd, 1943, are inscribed upon my mind, heart and soul, forever and ever. Even nature felt sorry for us that day. Thick, dark clouds covered the sky. We were led from the gates of the Vilna Ghetto for the last time, leaving behind our beloved city and saying goodbye forever to our childhood.

The women and children were immediately separated from the men. We were organized into lines, and because Jews were not allowed to walk on the sidewalks, marched on the cobblestones in the gutter.

I walked beside my Aunt Sonia and my sister, Rachel. It was the last time the three of us would ever again be together. My Aunt Sonia, who had long since become our second mother since we lost our own to illness, gave her life for Rachel and me. She cared for us throughout our time in the Ghetto, and she was a tower of strength, and a safe haven. She shared her meager bread rations with us, and sang lullabies when we lay in bed hungry, unable to sleep.

She could have gone into hiding with my uncle, her beloved husband, but instead vowed to stay and protect her sister's orphaned children. It cost her her life.

We marched in the slow moving line of condemned women and children. Aunt Sonia in the middle, holding one of Rachel's hands, and one of mine, tightly. Silent tears fell from our faces as we continued on the seemingly endless march until finally we arrived at the Rosa Cemetery on the outskirts of Vilna.

Nearing the gates with our heads held low and fearing the worst, we immediately saw the dead bodies of three young people, two boys and a girl. They were hanging from scaffolds. They were freedom-fighters who had defiantly challenged their oppressors. Now their naked bodies swayed in the autumn wind, warning us what would happen if we offered resistance.

I don't know how to describe the sound and the smell of death that reigned around us. If you but timidly raised your head, you could almost touch, and feel its black cape, see its piercing eyes. The line came to a stop. By this time, most of the women and men were walking aimlessly in a daze with desolate looks on their faces as if they had already lost their minds, and were already gone. There were small children crying, looking for their parents. The SS soldiers carried long carbine rifles, and were trying to keep everyone quiet, obedient and in line.

Word then began to spread through the crowd like a cold wind... "Selection." To the right, you live. To the left, you die. Young, able-bodied people, to the right. To the left, the elderly, the weak, and the children.

My Aunt Sonia was in her early forties but looked emaciated and much older. Sonia wasn't worried about herself, though. She was afraid for my little sister who was still a child. Sonia took off her shoes and exchanged them with Rachel's. When Rachel stood in Aunt Sonia's high heels, she looked taller and older.

We were marched forward, then quickly came to a stop before pandemonium broke out around us. There were so many male SS guards and

huge, barking dogs. They were pushing us, separating us to the right and the left. Rachel and I were pushed to the right by a young, tall soldier.

We were separated from our aunt, and as soon as we realized what happened, we rushed back and begged to be taken to her, on the other side. The soldier shouted "Die verfluchten Juden" ("The damned Jews"), and pushed us back.

Frightened, helpless and crying bitterly, we were consoled by other young girls who were also separated from their loved ones. At that moment, I looked up and wondered, where is God?

Countless hours later we were loaded into cattle trains, packed so tightly with people, one had only room enough to stand. There was no food, and no water. A large vat of disinfectant had been placed in the middle, which was our bathroom. So strong was the stench, so palpable the despair, that it didn't matter anymore what would happen to us.

We said goodbye forever to my mother's sister, our dearest Aunt Sonia Lipkowicz-Perski, who was murdered by the Nazis. She was our second mother, an extraordinary human being, a martyr, and a true heroine.

XIII.

KAISERWALD CONCENTRATION CAMP

After the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto, and the selection at the Rosa Cemetery, Rachel and I found ourselves on a transport train on our way to the big unknown. It was a cattle train filled with frightened, hungry, thirsty people, Jews, rolling along the pastoral Polish countryside.

We could not see the green meadows, the colorful wildflowers, or the black and white cows grazing placidly in the fields. We were packed inside the train like cattle ourselves, with barely a place to sit. We didn't know if it was day or night, we were nearly paralyzed from the shock, hunger and thirst, and half asleep from the motion of the train.

After a long period of travel, we came to a sudden stop. The heavy doors opened to the bellowing of Nazi guards yelling, "Raus, raus. Machen sie schnell" ("Out, out. Hurry up"). We were herded into an impromptu railroad station.

It was a cold autumn night, but strong reflector lights turned night into day. Dressed in their black uniforms with Swastika arm bands, and

black hats with skull and cross bones, the SS men had us surrounded. Each one had a gun and a wild, barking German Shepherd on a leash. We were astounded, intimidated and traumatized by the bright lights and the shouting, the SS guards and their dogs, and the steamy hiss of the train. It was so completely surreal, one couldn't grasp the reality.

Oh, the Nazis planned it so well. We couldn't think clearly. We never had a chance to fight back, to resist, or defend ourselves. We stood helplessly on the platform. Men and women were separated, families broken up. Fathers stood with sons, mothers with daughters. Our group, young women and girls, was taken over by female SS guards.

This was the first time we had ever seen them. They were mostly blonde, strong, well developed, and wore tight fitting uniforms with tall, black riding boots, and Swastika arm bands. Each one carried a horse whip. They had a peculiar bovine expression, with no pity in their eyes. And they barked their orders in high, strident voices.

"Line up, line up," they yelled, cracking their whips right and left, especially at the better-looking girls. Each of us was counted, and given a numbered metal dog tag. We were instructed to wear them around our necks.

"Disrobe," they shouted. "Take off your shoes and all of your clothes." "Pile them on the ground, and then get back into line," they ordered. We hadn't known where we were until a whisper began to circulate. A hushed, echoing, "Kaiserwald Concentration Camp," travelled on the air. We knew what this meant. While still in the Vilna Ghetto, we had heard all kinds of rumors, tales about gas chambers, smoke-belching crematoria, massacres.

We prepared ourselves for the worst. Mothers tried to comfort frightened daughters, friends and family hugged and kissed, saying silent goodbyes. We were afraid even to whimper, fearful to cry.

Completely naked, we were led into a room that looked like a bathhouse, with showers. Three people each shared a single shower head. We expected killer gas to come out hissing. I asked God to let me die before

Rachel, finding the thought of seeing her fall first, unbearable.

We were so alone, helpless, and forgotten. After what felt like a lifetime, a trickle of water began to fall on us, its steam becoming stronger and stronger. It was water. Water of life, pouring over us! Not gas. We were spared. "It's a miracle, a miracle," people said as we washed, and drank, crying, and laughing at the same time.

We had a temporary reprieve, because the Nazis needed slave labor for their war efforts. We were examined by cruel doctors, looking for "hidden" gold and silver. We were given uniforms, a pair of pants with white stripes on the sides, and a jacket with a white circle on the back, but no undergarments. Previously we had been made to throw our shoes in a pile, and we were now told to search and retrieve them.

Our next destination was a long barracks with bunk beds and we received on the way, rations of a piece of old, hard, black bread and soup from a barrel-like container filled with black water and a few green turnip leaves. After the meal, and tired to the bone, we dragged ourselves to the barracks and promptly fell asleep.

The SS women marched in at daybreak, shouting, "Appel, appel," ("Appeal, appeal") which fully translated means "roll call." "Schnell, Schnell," they barked. We were made to answer to the numbers on our dog tags, and over and over again we were counted.

We were people with no names, not even surnames.

We were the property of Kaiserwald Concentration Camp.

XIV.

DÜNAWERKE SLAVE LABOR CAMP

The day began like any other in the Kaiserwald Concentration Camp. The female SS guard, "Stubenalteste" ("Barrack Eldest), in charge of our barracks, entered before dawn, whip in hand.

"Appel, Appel, machen sie schnell," she ordered. We quickly lined up, and the counting began.

There was no escape. Too often we had seen the black, charred bodies of those who threw themselves on the high, electric fences. They simply couldn't take it anymore.

A couple of SS men appeared out of nowhere, spoke to our guard, then inspected us one by one. Rachel and I were now with my Aunt Esther Levin, and our cousins, Lila and Marysia, with whom we had been reunited after they too were sent to Kaiserwald. The five of us stuck together, trying not to be separated.

We were ordered to step to the front and, with other girls and young women, marched toward a long line of military trucks. As we got closer

we saw some were full of men. They loaded us on, and off we went.

This was our last day at Kaiserwald.

After a short ride, we stopped in front of a massive gate flanked by guards. The gate opened slowly and we drove inside the Dünawerke Slave Labor Camp, located on a peninsula near Riga, Latvia, surrounded by the waters of the Red Danube River and a large, deep forest full of tall trees.

Dünawerke was run by the Nazi construction program in forced labor camps, "TODT," whose business was first to finish the West Wall, then other military building projects. It was named after Dr. Fritz Todt, an engineer who had been the National Socialist Inspector General for the street system, who directed the building of the Autobahn. In 1940, Dr. Todt became the Minister for Armament and Munitions.

Middle-aged Germans, unfit to serve in the army, were now our guards. They dressed in olive-green uniforms with swastika arm bands. We were completely in their hands, dependent upon their moods and whims, their slaves with no say, there to work for the glory of the "Fatherland."

Driving into Dünawerke, you saw a guardhouse, administration offices, then the private quarters of the camp Commander, a very tall SS man dressed in black uniform with red swastika and high boots. He too had his own fierce German shepherd.

Here, again, there was no escape.

We were unloaded from the trucks, marched into a large building, and assigned to dormitory rooms on the first floor, off a long corridor. Ours was Dormitory 4. It contained bunk beds and tables with benches. After the filth and misery in the Vilna Ghetto, and at Kaiserwald, Dünawerke looked like heaven. We even had showers with running water.

Again, we received uniforms — grey pants with stripes on the sides and grey jackets with marks on the back, but a least they were clean. The men and women were separated by a heavy door, constantly attended by guards.

We were assigned to work on construction sites. The guards woke us early in the morning and kept us busy until late at night. The days were long, and we were always exhausted and hungry.

We met a curious combination of laborers. There were young men from the Netherlands who were prisoners of war. They were very friendly toward us, and sometimes shared their food. There were Latvian day workers who had special passes to come and go. They paid no attention to us, the Jewish slaves from all over Europe.

The girls in my dormitory were all pretty young. On Sunday afternoons when everyone was given free time, we tried to bring joy to our lives. Determined to ease our plight, my good-hearted Aunt Esther persuaded my cousin, Lila, to organize some entertainment.

Lila was a beautiful girl with enormous black eyes and a doll-like complexion. She was not only artistic but also possessed an exquisite singing voice. We sat on the floor, reciting poems and singing old ballads. So broken were we, so needing to sing. Many would join in, tears falling from their eyes.

Through the window we could see the river and tall trees. But they were just for looking. Every day, before dawn, we returned to work.

Lying in our bunks at night, Rachel and I formed a very strong friendship with two sisters who slept near us, Tosia and Eva. They were from Lodz, Poland. They had escaped to Vilna after the German invasion, and were taken to the Ghetto, Kaiserwald, and Dünawerke, just as we were.

Eva had a remarkable talent. She wrote beautiful poems on scraps of paper with an old pencil. When any of us found a piece of paper we saved it for Eva. Evenings, she would sit in a quiet corner, writing furiously, filling her scraps of paper with poems about our life in prison, about our dreams, sorrows and misery.

Eva was shy, timid, reluctant to show her work, but because I was her friend, she showed it to me. I would read her poems, run to Lila, and the following Sunday they were on the program. Lila recited Eva's poems,

and soon we knew them by heart.

Tosia and Eva perished at the hands of the Germans. I wrote Eva's poems from memory after the liberation, and I will always wonder how many more poems, pearls of poetry, could have been composed and read by now?

Life went on. On the surface, everything was under tight control, but beneath, things were not so much in order. Fraternization between German soldiers, especially SS guards, and Jewish girls was strictly forbidden but human nature plays different notes.

In our room was a gorgeous Jewish girl from Berlin named Cizel. She had an exquisite figure, with very long legs. It was said she was a ballerina or a cabaret dancer before the war. Our "Oberscharfürer" ("squad leader"), the SS officer in charge of the Jewish prisoners, was a tall, middle-aged man, quite good-looking. He took one look at this stunning young girl and decided she was for him.

He gave her a room of her own, dressed her in elegant riding habit with high boots, and didn't let her go to work. They used to spend whole days together. She had such a good influence on him that he mellowed, wasn't so strict, and made our lives much more bearable.

We adored her and felt grateful. They looked so good when they passed us by, and we were happy for them. I don't know if she survived, but I hope she did.

Then there was a certain Mrs. Schwartz in Dormitory 3. She was a middle-aged, Jewish-German lady, not the least bit good-looking but full of feminine charm, and she spoke perfect German.

Every evening after curfew, when we weren't allowed out of our room, Mrs. Schwartz would open the door slightly and begin to converse with our guard, a young soldier. We had no idea what they discussed, but evening after evening the conversations became longer and longer. They got to be such good friends, he began to bring her sandwiches, hot soup, or something else from his own rations. She generously shared with other inmates. This went on for a long time.

One morning, some trucks pulled up to our building. Several women were chosen and put aboard them, told they were going to work in a nearby forest. Mrs. Schwartz was among them, and her young friend, one of the guards.

When they reached their destination the prisoners were marched out. As they walked down a ravine, the SS officer in charge gave an order to shoot. They were gunned down.

The young guard watched as Mrs. Schwartz fell to the ground, mortally wounded. He became so distraught he took his own service revolver and shot himself in the head. There they lay side-by-side on the green grass, united in death.

There was also a woman among us who claimed to be clairvoyant, her only possession a deck of Tarot cards. For a piece of bread or a cold potato, she would sit down and ask you a few questions, lay out her cards and tell you your future.

Our life was so hard and full of sorrow that we were always very curious to know what would happen, what to expect, how it would end. Needless to say, the clairvoyant always had clients. Myself, I never had the willpower to save something from my rations in order to find out what was waiting for me.

One Sunday afternoon we were sitting around. She came to our room and made an announcement, "This morning I got some information about the Master of Our Destiny. I put my Tarot cards on the table, and listen to what I saw..." We understood immediately about whom she was speaking. She did not need to say his name. There was silence, and she said in a clear voice, "He is a homosexual, but is trying to cover it up. His end is very near, and it will not be a good one."

The clairvoyant made these predictions in the summer of 1944, just as the tables were starting to turn on Adolph Hitler.

XV.

STUTTHOF CONCENTRATION CAMP
STEINDORF SLAVE LABOR CAMP

The German Fox was in retreat and the Russian Bear was moving steadily west in the late spring of 1944. News for the Germans worsened each day. They became concerned about what to do with the thousands upon thousands of inmates from concentration and slave labor camps. Headquarters in Berlin issued an order to move them west, closer to Germany.

Dünawerke was liquidated immediately.

We were loaded onto military trucks and taken to a port on the Baltic Sea where a ship waited. Our sea voyage on the stormy Baltic lasted three long days, and on the fourth we anchored at Danzig. From there we were transported on one of several primitive barges travelling the deep canals surrounding Stutthof Concentration Camp, situated on an isolated island.

How can I describe it to you?

Stutthof Concentration Camp was a purgatory on earth, with tall,

electric fences, narrow barracks, SS men and SS women in their distinct uniforms, wild, barking dogs and a strange smell in the air. "Look at the black smoke," people whispered. It flowed from the belching chimneys of the crematorium.

They assigned us to narrow, triple-decker bunks and gave us uniforms, striped jacket and pants. One size fits all. The living conditions were perfectly wretched — we didn't have enough water to drink, no bed covers to protect us from the cold, no showers at all.

Our meager diet consisted of 50 to 70 calories per day — a slice of old, hard, dark bread made from potato peels and black rye meal which gave us scorching heartburn, and lukewarm, black "soup" with half-cooked turnips, dispensed from a large, wooden vat in the center of the yard.

We knew they were putting something in it to stop our menstruation and keep our minds "fuzzy," beyond what the shock and starvation had already done, but so great was our hunger that once the rations were gone, hungry girls would race to lick the walls of the vat just for a bit more to fill their stomachs.

We were filthy, freezing, and always so incredibly, painfully hungry. My legs were full of open wounds and deep lesions that hurt, night and day. Every morning just before dawn, we were made to line up, "Stand at Appeal," and be counted and recounted.

In line one morning, we were inspected by SS men selecting the young, able-bodied for transfer elsewhere. One of them asked Rachel her age. She straightened herself to look taller and courageously answered in a loud, firm voice "Herr Oberscharfürer, I am 18 years old." In reality, she was only 14 at the time, and looked much younger, but they allowed her to remain by my side.

Neither my aunt nor my cousins passed inspection. We were separated, once again feeling awfully alone. When the two sisters from Lodz were chosen, we held tightly together.

Stutthof, filled with Jews from many European countries and laden with misery and despair, experienced a typhoid epidemic shortly after we

left. It ran rampant through the masses of filthy, hungry, freezing inmates. Without proper medical care, they died like flies. There was no hospital, no medicine.

My aunt and cousins were stricken. Cila and Marysia later recovered, and my dear, sweet Aunt Esther died in their arms.

Is it fair to ask, where was God?

We were taken from the Stutthof Concentration Camp to Steindorf Slave Labor Camp and immediately knew we were in trouble — no barracks, no bunks, just barns filled with straw. There were no tables, not even a bench to rest your tired bones. We were made to perform hard labor digging ditches and cutting trees, all on a starvation diet, in the cold, without a single garment of warm clothing.

It was late in the fall of 1944 and bitterly cold. We walked in slow-moving lines to and from work, passing mud-covered fields with half-frozen turnips that the peasants fed their cattle. So immense was the hunger that from time to time a courageous inmate would leave the line, and attempt to fetch a turnip. If caught, she was shot immediately.

The long days passed so slowly that the new year came and went without our awareness. We lived in a vacuum, forgotten, isolated. The so-called "good people" stood by silently, letting our enemy exterminate us. Our future looked bleak, and as our bodies became weaker, our spirits sunk lower.

Upon returning from work every day I would go to the small infirmary where the nurse in charge washed the open sores on my frostbitten legs with warm water and changed my filthy bandages. I looked forward to the warmth of the tiny room, and temporary relief from the physical pain I endured.

Entering the infirmary, one's nostrils were overtaken by a strong, putrid smell. It came from a row of bunks where young girls lay in pain, flat on their stomachs, unable to move, their naked behinds covered with open wounds full of green pus.

Our frustrated SS guards were always looking to inflict punishment

and their favorite method was by flogging. With great relish, they would administer 25 lashes with a thick, rubber stick on the bare bottom of an innocent victim. Their cries sounded in the air and put fear in our somber hearts.

Afterward, the poor girls were dragged to the infirmary where they suffered slow deaths due to filth and malnutrition, their deep wounds unable to heal, no drugs given for pain.

One significant factor contributed to Rachel's and my getting out of there alive. It was the presence and compassion of another inmate. What happened was this...

We were unloaded at Steindorf and assigned to sleep in one of the barns. Rachel and I lay beside a woman and a young girl my age. I started to converse with the girl in a low voice, and felt the woman staring at me the whole time. I would find out the woman was the girl's aunt. The girl's name was Rose. They were the last two surviving members of what once was a large Jewish family in Vilna.

"Are you from Vilna?" the woman asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"Did you live on Pilsudckiégo Street?"

"Yes."

"I know who you are," she went on. "You're the daughter of my dentist. She was an angel. It was a tragedy when she passed away, so young. We all went to her funeral. It was huge, with so many people... so many school children. I will never forget her. She was extremely good to us when we lived on Kijowska Street. I think she must have been a saint, and God, in his mercy, took her away just in time, before our troubles began. She died like a lady, in her own bed. Isn't that something?"

I tossed and turned the whole night dreaming about my mother, seeing her smile as she stood in her office, tending to her patients, dressed in her long, white doctor's coat.

Early in the morning, SS guards ordered us to line up for work assignments. Rose, Rachel and I were assigned to cut trees in the forest. Rose's

aunt, on the other hand, was one of the lucky ones sent to work in the kitchen. They peeled potatoes and performed other manual duties, but the camp's kitchen was warm and they had access to food.

From that day forward, when Rachel and I laid ourselves down at night, we inevitably found a well-hidden, life-sustaining morsel — a cabbage leaf wrapped around a piece of dark bread, or a turnip, or potato. Slowly we savored the goodies, chewing with gusto, relishing every crumb before falling asleep.

The extra food kept us going, gave us strength to survive. We thanked this good woman, angel of mercy that she was, who risked severe punishment and possibly death if she were caught. Quietly, she replied "I am only repaying my debt to your mother, who helped me when I needed it."

As the autumn days passed, the SS guards became more and more impatient and frustrated. The news from the front was not to their liking.

Although none of us possessed a calendar, a few of the religious women somehow knew when it was the eve of our holiest day, Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement observed by fasting. An air of excitement could be felt as we walked slowly to work in the forest. They said, "Tonight we will all gather together, and light a candle, and pray, to prepare ourselves for tomorrow's big fast." "Big fast?" whispered one young, hungry girl. "We are starving every day!"

News of the Holy Day travelled in a whisper, spreading quickly from one to another. It was something to look forward to, to break the monotony in our hard days of slavery and something to hold onto, one of the few things left that couldn't be taken away — we could still believe in our God, a bittersweet reminder of our different-ness, and why we were being persecuted.

Two courageous women timidly approached one of the SS guards. "Tomorrow is our biggest holiday. Could we possibly stop a little earlier?" they asked.

"Stop earlier, Verfluchte Juden?" he roared in wild, loud, mocking laughter. "You have to work and produce for our great Fatherland!"

Our SS guards had a great deal of fun and merriment, working us longer and harder than usual. They could have shown us a bit of kindness, but instead chose otherwise. They were incapable of compassion and goodwill. And we struggled to maintain ours.

Data: 19 r. dnia



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Pani
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Państwowe Muzeum Stutthof w Sztutowie stwierdza, że w materiałach dokumentalnych tutejszego Archiwum są następujące dane o niżej wymieniony więźniu b. obozu koncentracyjnego Stutthof:

MAZUR Lili ur.1924r. w Wilnie, imiona rodziców Dawid i Guta z d. Lipkowitsch, aresztowana dnia 6.9.1941r. w Wilnie, dostarczona została do KL Stutthof w dniu 19.07.1944r. przez Sipo Kowno. W obozie oznaczona numerem 48 011. Brak danych, w częściowo zachowanych materiałach dokumentalnych, dotyczących końcowego pobytu w w/w obozie.

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The Federal Museum of Stutthof in Sztutow documents in this archive the following facts about Concentration Camp Stutthof: LILY MAZUR born in 1924 in Vilna, parents names David and Guta Lipkowicz was imprisoned on June 9, 1941 in Vilna, was delivered to the Concentration Camp Stutthof on July, 19, 1944 through the Ghetto Kovno. Her number in this camp was 48011. We don't have documents stating how long and until when she was interned here because not all the documents were preserved.

Data: 19 r. dnia



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MAZUR **Rachela** ur.1926r. w Wilnie, imiona rodziców Dawid i Guta z d. Lipkowitsch, aresztowana dnia 6.9.1941r. w Wilnie, dostarczona została do KL Stutthof w dniu 19.07.1944r. przez Sipo Kowno. W obozie oznaczona numerem 48 010. Brak danych, w częściowo zachowanych materiałach dokumentalnych, dotyczących końcowego pobytu w w/w obozie.

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MUZEUM STUTTHOF * W SZTUTOWIE *

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The Federal Museum of Stutthof in Sztutow documents in this archive the following facts about Concentration Camp Stutthof: RACHELA MAZUR. born in 1926 in Vilna, parents names David and Guta Lipkowicz was imprisoned on June 9. 1941 in Vilna, was delivered to the Concentration Camp Stutthof on July. 19. 1944 through the Ghetto Kovno. Her number in this camp was 48010. We don't have documents stating how long and until when she was imprisoned here because not all the pertinent documents were properly preserved.

XVI.

THE LONG MARCH OF THE LIVING DEAD

The winter of 1944 came upon us with a fury. The days grew shorter, the sun didn't want to show her face, the cold was unbearable, and we were still in Steindorf Slave Labor Camp.

Early one morning, as we lined up for "Appeal," a long line of military trucks entered the gates. "March on, get in the trucks," barked one of the SS guards. A rumor started circulating among the inmates that the camp was being closed. We did as we were told, and the trucks rolled out.

A short drive took us back to Concentration Camp Stutthof, and there the trucks pulled in. Just weeks earlier we had heard that a typhoid epidemic had overtaken the camp. A potent smell of disinfectant lingered in the air. We prepared ourselves for the worst.

They put us in a barrack. My sister Rachel and I had become close to four other girls, the poet, Eva and her sister Tosia, and two other girls whose names I, sorrowfully, can no longer recall. We were six friends who, having lost our true loved ones, had made a little family of our own, and

were now trying to stick together.

Rachel and I were gravely concerned about our Aunt Esther and cousins Lila and Marysia. Apprehensive about our own safety if we were caught, we decided to try to find them anyway, setting out from one barrack to another. What we saw was heart wrenching. Half-dead skeletons lay on narrow bunks, moaning from pain and hunger.

After a long search we found Lila and Marysia, pale and weak, lying on the floor of their barrack. They began sobbing, and told of the passing of our dear Aunt Esther. We were devastated, full of grief and sorrow, and yet before we could even begin to mourn we had to run back to our group. We arrived just seconds before the SS guards ordered us to line up, and marched us out of Concentration Camp Stutthof.

The long march of the "Living Dead" had begun. From mid-January, 1945 through the entire month of February, and into mid-March, a long line of half-dead, half-frozen and starving young women and girls, without the benefit of warm clothes or proper shoes, walked on the muddy roads covered with ice and snow, across the countryside in East Prussia, heading west.

The SS guards, with their big rifles and barking dogs, made escape impossible. A few escape attempts were made by girls who managed to slip into the woods, but each time, the escapee was revealed to the Gestapo by one of the many anti-semitic Polish peasants. There was simply no mercy for us.

Our SS guards were in a very bad state of mind, and chaos was ever present. In order to survive, one had to keep up in line. Those who slowed, or trailed behind, were shot dead, their corpses left on the ground.

At night, we were stopped and allowed to rest, on farms and in villages, inside barns filled with straw. They simply didn't know what to do with us. We moved in one direction and saw other prisoners marching past us, travelling in the opposite direction.

Where were we going? Nowhere.

Late one afternoon, shortly before sunset, we came upon a large farm

where we were stopped and allowed to sit, tired and exhausted, in the mud on the naked ground. Just as suddenly, an order was given, "Up, up. Line up for Appeal." We were standing in line, waiting, when one of the SS guards went berserk. He took his rifle and began shooting indiscriminately.

The six of us stood side-by-side, I on one end, with my sister on my right and a middle-aged, stranger on my left. With the shooting, panic broke out. People were running and screaming, trying to hide behind trees and bushes. We six became separated. The ground was full of dead bodies, covered with blood.

It took what seemed like forever for the six of us to find one another again. My sister thought I had been shot, and it turned out to be the poor woman who had been standing next to me. We cried, hugging each other tightly.

God does, indeed, work in mysterious ways. That bullet could just as easily have flown a few inches to the right, and it would have been my dead body lying bloodied in the mud.

The next morning the long march began again. We walked and walked, day after day, with no end in sight.

Then, a tragedy befell us six. Our dear friend, a school girl from Poland,and gentle soul from a very fine family, succumbed. She became weaker and weaker as the march progressed. We struggled to hold her up, walking with her in between us, staying in the front of the line, but it was to no avail.

One of the SS guards began to observe, with great interest, our efforts to sustain her. For two days, we kept her moving. On the third day, as I was holding her on one side and our other friend was holding her other side, this guard stopped the line and came over and ordered her to walk by the nearby field. When she did, forlorn and frightened, he aimed his gun at her and spat, "Halt." A shot rang out in the air, and she fell to the white snow without a sound.

The executioner walked toward us. He yelled, "Go take her coat. She

doesn't need it anymore." Our friend was the only individual in the entire line who had a coat. It was an old, worn, short winter coat lined with rabbit fur. Freezing as we were, nobody moved. We refused to have any part in this heartless act. "Murderer, murderer," cried our hearts. "Move on, move on. No standing around," came an order.

We prayed silently, and were marched away, leaving behind our young friend whose life had come to such a bitter end. Heads lowered and hearts weeping, we got back into line and on went "The Long March of the Living Dead."

XVII.

MY DAY OF TRIUMPH

Like the events of September 23, 1943, when we were taken into slavery from the Vilna Ghetto, the events of March 11, 1945, are also inscribed upon my heart and soul forever and ever. It happened a long time ago, but I remember every moment as if it were yesterday, for it was on that day that my sister Rachel and I were liberated by the Russian Army, in a small village called Krumau in East Prussia.

Each passing year, I celebrate this day as My Day of Triumph because, despite all the cruel treatment and sub-human conditions, despite the cold, hunger, suffering and humiliation, despite the loss of our dearest family members, we are still here. We survived.

We had made it through, and we were going to have a chance to build a new life, to dream our dreams, and to speak for those who would never again speak for themselves. We had lived to tell our story and theirs.

The morning of March 10, 1945, found us walking, as we had been for months, prisoners of the Nazis, in what came to be known as "The March

of The Living Dead." We marched without stopping to rest, most of us barefoot, sleeping while standing up, struggling to remain close to the front of the line to avoid being shot or beaten. Many of us were infected with typhoid, and burning with fever.

On this occasion, we walked the whole night, and just before dawn the SS guards barked "Halt!" stopping us in front of a large, round barn. They opened the door to let us in and to our amazement, we found other people inside, speaking different languages. Quietly, we sat down on the bare floor, too tired to think, talk, or even worry.

A kind soul gave us a piece of hard, dark bread. It tasted so good. After a while I began to become stiff. Rising to stretch my legs, I moved slowly toward the wall. I looked out through a small opening to find one of the guards piling tree branches around the barn. "They will burn us alive," said my brain, but I was in limbo. I didn't have strength enough to care. All I could think was, "Just let me rest, please. I can't walk anymore." As I sat there leaning against the wall, half asleep, something started to happen . . .

Suddenly there was a commotion outside. We heard shots, yelling, dogs barking, heavy boots, feet running, horses galloping, and then it went silent. We heard only our own heavy breathing.

Someone inside the barn cried out, "The SS guards are gone, they're running. Let's go, we are free." The heavy door was pushed open, and prisoners began to venture out. Russian tanks filled with young soldiers were coming toward us and, indeed, the Nazis had run, no time to finish us off.

I felt very sick. My fever was so high, I couldn't move. Rachel and another girl helped me out. The air was cold and crisp. The sun was shining. Our liberators gleefully called out to us as they approached.

"We are free," I whispered, and then fainted.

The dawn of My Day of Triumph had arrived.

XVIII.

IN SICKNESS AND IN DEATH...

On a crisp, March day in 1945, we stood in shock and wonder, outside a huge barn in a village called Krumau. The barn was to have been our crematorium, to be set ablaze by the Nazis who held us prisoner. Instead, we looked across the surrounding fields covered with half-brown melting snow, and there lay the dead bodies of our former SS guards.

Clad in their black, shining boots and uniforms with red swastika arm bands, the black hats with white Nazi insignia, the masters of our lives had been shot by triumphant Russian soldiers. They were dead and we, their victims, were alive.

"Can you believe it?" sang my joyous heart, "We are free, we are free!"

"Be careful," said my brain. "They will wake up, they will come back." "Don't just stand there, run, move. Go to Vilna. Go to Soly to meet Papa, as you told him you would do."

But I couldn't. I faced a grave problem. As I stood there, infected with typhoid, shivering from high fever and cold, I couldn't take so much

as one step. I had no shoes.

During the long march, I had struggled every day, stopping hurriedly to scrub the snow off the soles of my only pair of old, green canvas shoes with thick, wooden soles. The snow stuck to them, making it impossible for me to walk, and then finally, they fell apart completely.

Rachel found a piece of cardboard on which I could stand. She put it down on the muddy snow and there I stood, barefoot, my frostbitten, black toes sticking out.

The huge barn was emptying as a steady stream of survivors moved slowly toward the center of the village. We could still hear artillery exchange between the victorious Russians and the defeated Germans. Suddenly, we heard loud cheering erupt and a column of Russian tanks started to move in our direction.

As the tanks came nearer, a young Russian soldier from the first tank jumped out and ran toward one of the dead SS guards. He pulled off the Nazi's black, polished boots, then took off his own Russian shoes. The soldier looked at me, tossed his shoes in my direction, then jumped back inside his tank and the column moved out again.

The whole thing took but a few minutes, yet this small gesture saved my life. With Rachel's help, I got the shoes on and we walked toward the center of the village, joining the others. The soldier not only gave me the great gift of freedom to move about, but had the sensitivity to know I could not wear the boots of a Nazi. He returned to me the first small bit of dignity I was to regain, when he extended his own pair of shoes to me.

Soon, the village too began to empty. Its former inhabitants, primarily Nazi sympathizers, flew the coop, leaving uncooked food on the stove. The typhoid epidemic was in full bloom and many of us were already sick. We, the hungry, cold and weak, were all moving in one direction, toward a dairy. It stood with its doors open. You could smell it from afar.

The dairy's owner was a known Nazi, and he had run away. We entered a hall full of all kinds of machines and contraptions. The big metal vats were still full of milk, sweet cream and buttermilk.

There were no cups or glasses, you just put your mouth under the faucets and opened them. The milk began to flow, and the ravenous people were soon choking on the rich nourishment their shrunken stomachs could not absorb. They drank and immediately vomited. Long lines formed in front of the vats, but soon after the floor was covered with skeletons, their bellies extended, lying in their own feces and vomit.

Many of those who made it through the "March of the Living Dead" lost their lives right there on the hard, filthy floor of the dairy. We heard moans, cries and prayers, "Water, water, I am so thirsty." Nobody heard, and nobody cared.

Witnessing this horror, Rachel and I didn't dare drink the milk. Hungry and tired, we sat down in a far corner near the back entrance and fell asleep. When we awoke, it was dark outside.

A young woman with a Red Cross arm band moved gently between the sick and the dead. She was giving small sips of water to those who could not move. Rachel motioned to her, and when she came over to our delight, we recognized her as the Jewish-Hungarian doctor who had been in charge of the small infirmary at Steindorf Slave Labor Camp.

She knew me from my daily visits to her to have the wounds on my legs cleaned and bandaged, and she was glad to see we were still alive. She told us to stay inside until morning, that it was dangerous now in the village. With the Germans having fled, hordes of drunken Russian soldiers were roaming the streets looking for girls. "We are organizing a field hospital and in the morning I will come to take you there," the doctor told us, and then she left. We didn't dare sleep, listening instead to every noise and step.

She came as promised, early the next morning, and led us toward a horse-driven wagon waiting in front of the door, with many other sick girls inside. On the way to the Russian field hospital, the doctor told us with tears in her eyes that on the morning of the closing of Steindorf Slave Labor Camp, the SS Oberschafürer called her to his office and ordered her to give lethal injections to all the young girls lying in the infirmary.

She couldn't do it. She simply didn't have the heart. She filled the syringes with plain water, injected them, and joined the transport taking us back to Stuthoff Concentration Camp. She said, "I hope they survived and, one day, I will see them alive and well."

Upon arrival at the Russian field hospital, we were carried to a separate typhoid ward by orderlies with makeshift stretchers. We were on safe ground now, out of purgatory and away from its perils.

We never saw our "Angel of Mercy," the Hungarian doctor again and didn't have the chance to thank her, so I would like to say to her, now... Doctor, wherever you are, thank you.

On March 13, 1945, Rachel and I, our heads shaved, were lying side by side on hospital beds in the typhoid ward of the Russian field hospital somewhere in East Prussia. Rachel was on my right, and on my left was a young girl named Lea, from a port town in Latvia called Lebava.

There were twenty-five or thirty beds, all of them occupied by very sick girls, and attended by just one elderly Russian nurse. Fever made us all very thirsty and we were constantly begging for a sip of water. "I have only two hands," she used to answer.

One day, she noticed my black, frostbitten toes. She called the head doctor and a bedside conference took place. A group of Russian doctors stood around me, examining me, poking around. A decision had to be made. My fever was so high, I didn't know what was going on. My poor little sister was feeling a bit better than I and when she heard them discussing whether or not to perform amputations, she started to cry and begged them, "Please, don't do it, please. She is my only sister. Please don't cut her toes."

The elderly nurse was trying to calm her when Rachel heard the doctor announce, "Don't bother. Look at her. The poor soul won't make it, anyway." My toes were saved.

Lying there, half the time unconscious and the rest of the time delirious, I kept talking to my long departed mother, telling her about a beau-

tiful banquet table covered with a white lace tablecloth and fancy embroidered napkins. There were brilliant chandeliers, and silver plates laden with exotic dishes and delicious, imported fruits. Everyone was drinking cool water from crystal wine glasses, and I kept repeating the words, "Big, black grapes and pink, fuzzy peaches."

Rachel had no idea what I was talking about, but when I recovered, she repeated the words to me and asked me if I remembered their meaning. For a moment I didn't know, and just stared at her blankly, and then it came back to me.

At the beginning of our summer vacation in June of 1941, in Ostrowiec, I was lying in a hammock between two tall, birch trees on the edge of the forest, reading "Peter the Great" by Aleksei Tolstoy.

Aleksei Tolstoy was a distant relative of the famous Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy. Leo had thirteen children, none of whom were writers. Aleksei wrote many historical novels. One was "Peter the Great," about the Tsar of Russia, after whom the city of Saint Petersburg is named.

I was in the middle of reading about a banquet given by the Tsar in his magnificent winter palace in St. Petersburg when my nanny came running. Her face was drained of color. She yelled, "The Germans are coming. Come inside, right now."

It was one of those moments when your heart dives for the pit of your stomach, and events begin to unfold in slow motion. I tossed down the book. It missed the hammock, and fell to the grass. I ran home.

Those were the last words I read as a free person.

Even today, my favorite fruits are fuzzy peaches and big, black grapes. When I pass by a fruit store, I cannot resist buying a bunch, and eating them slowly, enjoying their sweet taste. They are, for me, the taste of freedom.

Rachel was well on her way to recovery, and the head doctor told her she would soon be discharged. Not wanting to be separated, she asked to be given work so she could wait for me. He assigned her light work in the hospital kitchen.

A significant contribution to our survival was that Rachel and I were able to stay together, leaning on each other, finding strength in one another. I was the older sister, given the responsibility of taking care of my younger sibling. I worried about her well-being, what she would do if I weren't there, who would stand between her and the cruel SS guards. Now our roles had reversed. She took over, and took care of me. My mind was in a haze. Rachel fed me, put cold compresses on my burning head, stood by me.

As I was lying there, fighting for my life, girls were dying around me. Every morning there was an empty bed or two. Cea, the young girl on my left, was getting worse. Rachel felt sorry, tried to do little things for her, but her prognosis was very poor. One night, as I lay unconscious, Cea woke me up. "My end is near. Please find my brother and tell him about me," she whispered. Through a haze I became aware of a young girl's emaciated face changing into a mask of death. The next morning the bed on my left was empty. Rachel stood there crying bitterly.

By May 9, 1945, everybody in the hospital was rejoicing. The war was over. The Allies had won. The doctors and nurses were singing, dancing and laughing. I had begun to feel a little better. Rachel came up from the kitchen to feed me, but I had no appetite. She sat on my bed and we heard somebody shouting "We are going home." I looked into my sister's eyes and asked, "What do we do now? Where do we go?"

Days became weeks, weeks became months, and still we lingered in the hospital. Then one day came the announcement that the hospital was being closed. We were told we were well enough to travel, we were going to Zoppot. The hospital was buzzing with happiness, excitement in the air. "The Russians are good to us," it was said. "They are sending us to a resort by the sea. Now we will get well."

Zoppot was a famous resort in Poland, near Gdansk, where people from all over came for therapeutic care, the pure sea air performing miracles. It was an ideal place for us to gain strength and weight, and get ourselves together.

The Russian military confiscated a large building there and converted it into a convalescent home. When we arrived, the wife of the rich Polish owner greeted us with a false smile on her face. Pretending to feel sorry for us, she wished us all a speedy recovery. We ignored her completely and went out to our assigned rooms. We could smell the falsehood and knew she was not our friend.

Rachel and I shared a small room. It was a luxury we hadn't had in a long time, to have privacy, but I was not doing too well. My body was not mending and my broken spirit didn't heal. I had no will to live and spent my days in bed, staring at the ceiling. I was sad and listless, with no appetite.

What an irony that after starving for such a long time, I could not enjoy the food I now had. The head nurse, who conversed with me in Russian, tried to cheer me up, but to no avail. She spoke with Rachel and forbade her to feed me in bed. "She has to be forced to get up, get dressed and come down to the dining room for her meals," was her stern order. The next day, Rachel helped me to dress and slowly walked me downstairs to the dining room. A large table stood in the center with long benches occupied by noisy girls chatting, having their breakfast. Nobody paid attention when I took my place. I could not swallow a bite. My throat was closed, my mouth dry. I had no desire to eat or drink.

Rachel was talking to me in a quiet voice when I noticed a black upright piano standing in a far corner. An invisible force pulled me toward it. As if in a trance, I stood up by myself and walked in its direction. When I reached the upright, I sat on the small bench in front of it, and lifted the lid covering the keys. Timidly, lovingly, my fingers started to touch the black and white keys and I heard music coming from under them. I was playing a rondo by Mozart, softly, from memory.

Everything around me became unreal. I was once more a pupil taking a lesson from my music teacher. As the music became louder, the whole room became silent. The girls were looking in amazement at this skeleton with the shaved head making the piano come alive. They surrounded me.

"I can't believe my ears," they exclaimed. "She still remembers Mozart!" They showered me with requests and I played and played. I felt a strong flow of energy from the black and white keys penetrating my weak body, cleansing it of all the long suffering and humiliation.

I was on my way to recovery. From then on we gathered at the piano every night. I played and the girls sang their hearts out and we gained strength together.

One day at the end of summer, two girls, young and curious, decided to explore our strange, new surroundings. As much as we were used to it, there was no guard at the entrance door, and the doctors and nurses knew that our weak, wobbly legs wouldn't take us far.

Indeed, we were happy to stay inside all day, happy to have a roof over our heads, grateful for the food and medicine offered to us. The convalescent home shielded us from the hostile and unfamiliar world outside. We reveled in having the nurses, with their friendly faces, on our side.

We were safe. Finally. The evil forces couldn't reach us or harm us anymore and we began to feel like we could count on the horror being over. Still, many a night we were awakened by the loud screams and bitter cries of someone having a nightmare. Nightmares were a constant companion for a long time. The nurses would interrupt their own rest and come running to their patients. "Poor, poor girls..." they would say soothingly, and gently wipe our frightened faces with a warm cloth.

On this day our two courageous companions opened the door and went out to the street to look around. With delight, they noticed a fence in the back of the building. Opening a small white gate, they stepped into an orchard laden with red and white currants.

They just stood there, never daring to touch the berries. After so many years in captivity they were traumatized, insecure, regimented, used to being told what to do and where to go. They were afraid to taste the berries, confronting their first dilemma as free people. The bushes were saying "Come and fill your mouth with our sweet taste," but they didn't dare.

Finally, they decided to run to the head nurse and tell her about their

discovery, let her see what they found. When the head nurse told them she knew about the garden and was happy to see them coming out of their self-imposed prison, they were enthralled.

"By all means, tell everyone," said the nurse. "Cover your heads and don't sit in the sun too long. And don't eat too much. Be careful," she implored. "Chew slowly, your stomachs are shrunken. Every day you can have more and more. The vitamin C will help your scurvy."

The convalescent home emptied. The good-natured nurses looked on as we helped each other out to the orchard with its magnificent white and red currants.

It was the beginning of many, many walks to the orchard and long hours spent sitting in the sun, breathing the strong, fresh sea air. It quickly became an important part of our daily lives. Sunny afternoons were spent on the green grass, warming ourselves like lazy, slow moving lizards. Or sometimes we would sit under a bush and fill our thirsty mouths with the sweet fruit.

Our physical healing was now well underway, but we still had a ways to go. Lying in bed at night, we could hear the waves of the nearby Baltic Sea beating against the embankment but we had not yet the strength to walk far enough to see it with our own eyes. It was just too long a walk.

Then, sure enough, one day, the Russian doctors pronounced us cured and ready to move on. Ready to go home.

"Where?" was the big question.

And, "How?"

XIX.

KIBBUTZ IJHUD

The convalescent home in Zoppot was closing its doors, and we were on our own. A handful of military trucks lined up on the street in front of the open front door. No need to load luggage, we had only the clothes on our backs.

Small portions of black bread with margarine and military flasks full of cold water were distributed, and right after breakfast we were loaded onto the trucks.

My sister worked in the kitchen and was lucky enough to get a gift from the cook of a whole bag of dried bread, a treasure. We said as long as we had bread and water, we would never be in trouble, our bellies would always be full. It was our security blanket.

Our doctors said goodbye and wished us good luck. Our eyes were full of tears and our hearts were sad, and full of fear. We didn't know where they were going to take us.

After a long, bumpy ride, we stopped in front of a strange looking building. Once inside, we saw that it was a provisional Russian institu-

tion with small cubicles that served as offices. Its name was Peresilny Punkt (Internal Affairs Bureau). They questioned us there to confirm where we were from, and where we belonged. They provided proper documents, then sent people to their birthplaces.

We were, after all, displaced persons. The Russians, mostly military personnel, were very friendly. They had a great deal of pity in their eyes when they looked at us, skeletons with shaved heads.

Rachel and I, as well as another young woman, Liza Zelmanowicz, were treated like "their own," because we were from Vilna, which was now a part of the Soviet Lithuanian Republic, and we spoke Russian. They gave us special documents and all kinds of permits, and then took us to a nearby railroad station to take a train, home.

Liza was the oldest, and assumed the role of mother, telling Rachel and me to follow her steps because she had a plan for how to survive in this new, strange world. It was a blessing for both of us. We had no money, no proper clothes, no shelter, no family.

It was late in the evening when a military train arrived, huffing and puffing into the station. There was a fair amount of pushing and shoving, and we found ourselves inside a train full of young Russian soldiers. They were singing, playing guitar, dancing in the aisles, and drinking vodka.

Liza smelled trouble, and danger. She signaled us to follow her and we spent the rest of the night outside the train, between the wagons, clinging to each other. The dark skies shielded us from sight. It was a trip to remember.

By the time the train stopped, we were bone tired, hungry and thirsty. We jumped down and started looking around. We were at the railway station in Lodz, Poland. It was busy with both soldiers and civilians.

To our joy, we heard a young voice speaking Yiddish. Liza went right up to a group of young people and began asking them questions. I felt very weak, and was sitting on the sidewalk practically asleep when somebody said to me, "I know you. Lily. We were together in Steindorf Slave

Labor Camp, remember? It's me, Rose. My aunt worked in the kitchen and brought you food. She was a patient of your mother, who had been so good to her."

I recognized her immediately, and we started to hug and kiss each other. "Another survivor from Vilna," I cried. "What a pleasant surprise. Rachel, Rachel, come here, I called. It was another miracle, and each one was more healing than the last.

Rose took us by the hand and led us through the unknown streets of Lodz to an apartment where my cousin Marysia was staying. The apartment belonged to her brother, an attorney who had survived the Nazi era on special Aryan papers. He didn't look Jewish, and was married to a Polish physician.

When Marysia opened the front door and saw Rachel and me, she couldn't believe her eyes. We hugged so tightly. We took hot baths, then she fed us, and we were talking, crying and laughing between bites of glorious food. Rose invited Liza to spend the night at her house. And then we fell asleep. It was so good to lie in a big, clean bed covered with fresh linen and a belly full of good food.

While we slept, Marysia discussed, with her brother and sister-in-law, all of our fates. Ultimately, they decided our future was in Israel, and that the first step would be to join a kibbutz.

After a huge breakfast early the next morning, Liza met us in front of Marysia's house, and off we went to Kibbutz Ihud at Zachodnia 20 Street. Inside a tall building, a young girl took us to the office of the kibbutz leader, Josek Wasercier. He took one look at me and became nervous, upset.

Josek took Liza and Rachel into an adjoining room and explained that they wanted to accept young survivors of the Holocaust into the kibbutz, to give them food and shelter, to teach them the skills they need for emigration to Israel. But they have to be able to work and earn a living, and be in relatively good health.

I still looked more like a candidate for a sick bed, if not a casket. He

was deeply sorry, but they couldn't accept me. Rachel was in tears. Liza tried to calm her down. They came back and used the excuse that the Kibbutz was full. As we said goodbye, Josek asked, "By the way, where are you from?"

"We are from Vilna" I said, proudly. "We're going back there."

"Just a minute. My girlfriend, Tosia, and her sister and parents escaped to Vilna when the Nazis occupied Codz."

"Eva!" Rachel chimed in, excitedly.

I said, "We were with two sisters from Codz, Tosia and Eva. Eva wrote beautiful poems. They were our very good friends. The last time we saw them was on March 11th, in Krumau, the day we were liberated."

Josek would not let us leave after that. He asked a thousand questions and called in his father who was also a member of the kibbutz. Many stories later, Josek said, "I am so sorry. I will take a chance on you. Try to gain strength, but take your time. Stay in bed and rest as long as you need, and when you're ready, I will give you chores to do. I have books, if you like to read."

"Thank you," I said, grateful for all of it.

"You are now one of us, a new member," he told us. And then to me, he said, "When you feel like it, I would be grateful to hear more about my dear Tosia, and sweet Eva, the poet.

And so opened a new world for the three musketeers, Liza, Lily and Rachel. We began again at Kibbutz Ihud at Zachodnia 20 Street.



Kibbutz Ihud in Codz. Poland

XX

WE ARE ON OUR WAY...

From day one, I felt secure in Kibbutz Ihud, for the first time in years. I had a bed, and a place to eat and be educated, but it was only temporary. We had set our sights on Israel. These were just our first steps.

We got hold of a map, and marked our destination with bright, blue crayon, counted all the countries we had to cross in order to get there, and began to replace our nightmares with dreams of building a new homeland in the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We were young, idealistic, and full of determination to leave the horror of our past behind, and find a brighter future. A great deal of healing had to be done, of the body and the soul, but we were sustained by thoughts of the Promised Cand full of milk and honey, waiting for us with open arms.

Cife in the kibbutz was busy with chores to be done. Some members had jobs outside. We had classes to attend, discussions in which to participate, debates to win or lose. In the evening, we sang new songs, accom-

panied by a self-taught accordionist named Sonia, and we danced the Hora.

The hostile and indifferent world outside may not have cared much about us, but we didn't have time to feel sorry for ourselves. We had each other, fifty youngsters in all, who shared the same views and ideas. We were not alone anymore. We had friends who shared our days.

Our highest goals were to be ready, prepared, worthy to be called a member of the kibbutz, a true life "Haluc" ("pioneer"), and to move on. We waited impatiently for instructions. Then, one day, it happened.

"We begin travelling tomorrow," was the announcement.

The next morning, full of anticipation, we left the building at Zachodnia 20 Street and traveled to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. From there we went on to Munich, Germany, to a place named Skola Kadorna, where there were thousands of other refugees from all over Europe.

There were so many different languages, so many different faces, clothing, but we all had this much in common: we were homeless, stateless, and a burden to the society around us.

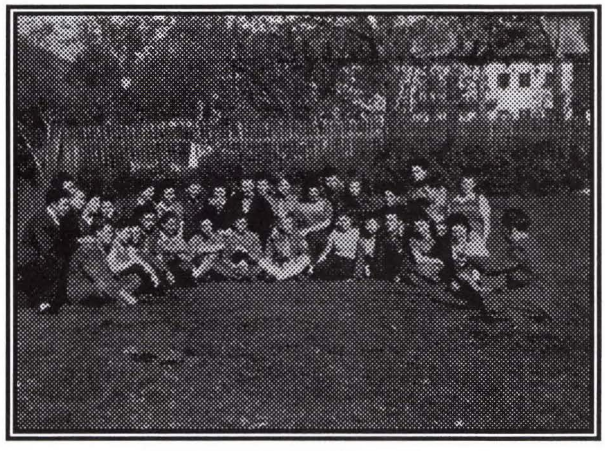
We fifty from Kibbutz Ihud were lucky. Our organization sent us to an agricultural school on a farm in Fürstbach near Moosen, a small town near a railway station.

It was in Munich that our dear mother hen, Liza, met a young man and decided to make a new life with him there, rather than follow the Kibbutz to Israel. They were two lonely people who married shortly thereafter, establishing their home together in the city. Rachel and I were frequent visitors to their apartment, and our friendship remained.

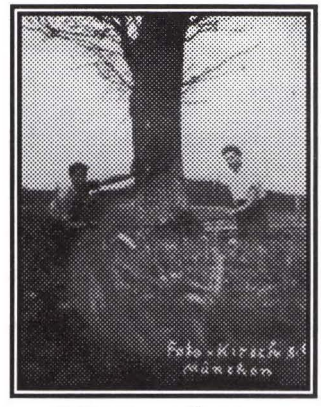
The agricultural school in Fürstbach was on a large farm surrounded by a deep forest. It had been confiscated by the American authorities from a rich, influential Nazi who escaped, leaving everything intact. It was put to good use in the summer of 1946.

We were eager students. Our mornings were taken up with horses to attend, cows to milk, chickens to feed, and barns to clean. There was work

Summer 1946, Fürstbach near Moosen Railroad Station Erding



Kibbutz Ihud at the farmhouse



Working at the farm

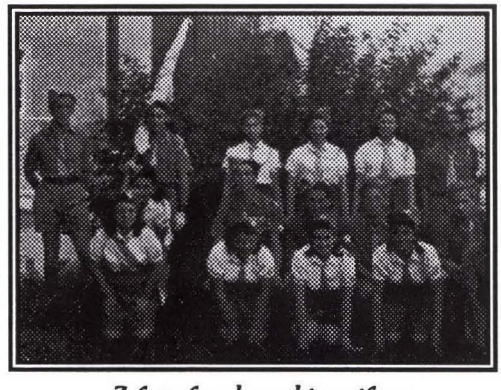


The Kibbutz around the small model of the farmhouse





Working in the fields



A few of us dressed in uniform

in the fields, and we climbed trees to collect apples in the orchard, tended a big vegetable garden, and fished in the crystal clear lake nearby. Afternoons, we attended classes and participated in all kinds of cultural activities. Curious and alert, we absorbed this new knowledge like thirsty sponges.

We slept in two big dormitories, one for the boys and one for the girls.

They were clean, immaculate, with fresh, white linens, changed every week. Very strict, self-imposed rules of social behavior were observed religiously. There was never any trouble, because we were friends, grateful for the good will shown to us. From today's perspective, it was quite an achievement.

Our German neighbors were none too happy with our presence. They snickered, "De Jüden was machen sie hier?" ("What are the Jews doing here?"). We knew they still hated us and we were prepared to defend ourselves. Each night, two students stood guard throughout the night, armed with a weapon and accompanied by our one German friend, the sheep dog. They walked around the fenced property making sure those inside were safe.

The dog loved to hunt for rabbits and would bring them into the kitchen and lay them on the floor beside the stove. Soon after, a delicious aroma wafted from the kitchen's open windows. There were plenty of volunteers who became consummate cooks, and a variety of tasty dishes served. The sheep dog was our guard and our good luck charm, and the best morsels were saved for him.

We were always hungry, and very sleepy by dinnertime, but we gathered around the long kitchen table and feasted until late at night, always waking early in the morning, happy and ready to resume our duties.

The fresh air, good food, and friendly atmosphere performed miracles. We felt stronger, more self-confident, our pale faces became brown, and we gained weight.

Summer ended, and early in the fall, we were told it was time to move on and make room for new students. Our group was going to a Displaced

Persons Camp in Ceipheim.

We knew this meant we were getting closer to our destination, but life in Ceipheim was difficult. It was quite an adjustment. Once again, we were amongst strangers in a camp full of buildings, and deprived of a precious commodity, privacy.

We clung to each other, resented the dullness of camp life, and missed our work-filled days on the farm. We hated the label "Refugees," and were full of yearning for a place to call home.

The state of our health worsened, as old wounds reopened.

As fall became winter, we began lose our hope for a brighter future. Our days were sad and gray. Then one evening, days before the year came to an end, Josek made an announcement after dinner. "Good news!" he exclaimed. "Get ready to travel. We're being taken to Italy."

Happy and excited, we burst into a song. Sonia brought her accordion to life and, again, we danced the Hora!

We were on our way...

XXI.

CROSSING THE ALPS ON A COLD WINTER NIGHT

Because we had graduated from the School of Agriculture in Fürstbach and survived the long, dull waiting period in Displaced Persons Camp Leipheim, the people in charge of our "Aliya" (return) to Israel intended to get us there no matter what, but there were plenty of obstacles.

One obstacle in particular was the British Occupation Authority in Palestine. It was an irony of ironies that the British had fought so valiantly to free us, but wouldn't allow us to enter what was then their territory. Few permits or visas were issued to refugees, and none to us, the members of Kibbutz Ihud.

But the young, courageous members of "Briha" (the Israeli Defense Force), did not give up. Rather, they found a way, and we will always be grateful to them for their generosity and ingenuity.

Instructions were given that we would pose as Greek peasants travelling to Italy to work in the vineyards. We were forbidden to speak and

sing as we normally would. The girls wore babushkas, and colorful clothes were distributed to all.

We were driven by our facilitators in covered trucks, accompanied by guards on motorcycles, through the German countryside toward Austria, and our destination, the Italian border.

Our hearts stood still several times when we were stopped by police or when border guards checked our documents, but they waved us on.

On New Year's Eve, December 31, 1946, the caravan of trucks stopped at the foot of the snow-filled, majestic Alps. We had to climb to the other side in order to enter Italy, and much to our surprise, we were not the only ones.

Other groups of refugees had also decided to cross the Alps on this night, thinking that the border guards and villagers would be taken up with the holiday, and less likely to pay attention to a group of strangers making their way in the snow.

It was quite an undertaking, but on this brisk December night with the light snow falling gently, we began our climb. Our guides used a memorized, secret trail through the snow covered mountains. They were treacherous, with hard, slippery ice just under the snow. We encouraged each other up and onward after each one of our many falls. Church bells rang, echoing through the trees.

From deep within the woods we saw villages full of white, Alpine cottages with their familiar red roofs, saw colorful lights illuminating churches, and listened to the villagers' merriment, singing, and laughter. "Thank God," we thought to ourselves, silently following our guides.

I had a problem, though. As soon as we stepped our of the trucks and began our climb, my frostbitten legs, especially my toes, got so stiff from the cold that I could hardly walk.

Beside me was my then boyfriend, Jacob, who saw my predicament and realized the danger involved if I could not keep up. He called on another member of our group and together they practically dragged me along. Frustrated and angry at myself, I struggled to keep moving, and we man-

aged to stay with our group.

We climbed higher and higher through the ice and snow, and every little thing we carried became heavier and heavier. We were instructed by our guides to throw nothing away, not even the smallest item. The trail was intended to be used time and again, and had to remain secret. The falling snow would cover our tracks, and if we left no other traces, by morning no one would suspect a thing.

I had no idea my future husband, Edward Margules, was also crossing the Alps that same memorable night. He was carrying a large bag full of homemade cookies, which were rapidly becoming too heavy to carry, so Ed decided to share them with his fellow climbers. Somebody gave me a handful, which I ate with zest, never suspecting that he and I would meet and share a life together.

I don't know how we did it, but at dawn's light we entered a border village in northern Italy, accomplishing our mission to bring us safely across the Alps on a cold winter night, nearer to our final destination, Israel.

XXII.

ISAAC MAZUR
My Uncle From Buenos Aires

Rachel and I began searching as soon as we could after our liberation, for our father, aunts, uncles, and cousins, anyone we knew before the war.

We found ourselves alone in a strange, new world in which everyone we had known was gone. We had no means of support. Our entire world had fallen apart. We wrote letters, sent notices, listened to any rumor, but we couldn't find a soul.

While interned at the Displaced Persons Camp in Grugliasco, Italy, near the city of Torino, we were told that an Information Center for Survivors had been established in Milan. We heard there were cases of people finding each other, families being reunited.

I decided to go there to post notices. Telling Rachel my plan, I remembered that our father used to receive letters from his younger brother in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was always so happy to read them. But I couldn't remember if the letters were from I. or J. Mazur.

I composed our notices before we left, and one of them read "Lila and Rachel, 2 daughters of David Mazur, are searching for their Uncle, "I." or "J." Mazur, from Buenos Aires, Argentina. We are now in the Grugliasco Displaced Persons Camp near Torino, Italy."

With permission from our Kibbutz leader, Rachel and I traveled to Milan and soon found the information center. With trembling hands, we posted our notices on a huge wall, filled to capacity. After that, we tried not to think about it. We didn't want to be disappointed. But life had something different in mind for us.

And that's where my husband comes in...

From time to time, in order to entertain the inmates of our Displaced Persons Camp, the authorities would pile us into open trucks and take us to a local movie house. They usually showed old Italian movies, but on this particular day they were showing an old Russian movie.

I was sitting with my sister and a group of friends. Rachel and I were the only two who spoke Russian, and being the elder I was the acting translator of the movie, and was doing so in a low voice. Sitting behind us was a group of boys from another kibbutz, Kibbutz Betar. One of them was my future husband Edward "Eddie" Margules.

Eddie was an ardent Zionist who planned to emigrate to Israel after having escaped from Nazi-occupied Poland to Soviet Russia, being inducted into the army, and fighting on the Finnish-Russian Front.

Needless to say, he spoke perfect Russian.

So there I was quietly translating the movie for my friends with Eddie sitting behind us, and Eddie's wondering "Who is this Russian-speaking girl?". The movie ended and the lights came up, we smiled courteously at various people sitting sat near us, as one normally does, and left.

In the meantime, Eddie had decided to find a way to be introduced to me. A couple of days later he showed up at my kibbutz and one of our boys made the introduction. We hit it off right away, and he began courting me.

Eddie knew of my interest in classical music, and used to take me to



1947
Lily, Rachel, Edward and friends.
Displaced persons camp Grugliasco,
near Torino Italy



Lily



1947
Rachel and friends attending a class at
Displaced Persons Camp Adriatica
near Milan, Italy



Rachel

La Scala, the famous opera house in Milan. It was a real treat for me, and I enjoyed every minute. On our way to the opera one day, I confided to him that I had posted notices at the information center, but had not yet heard from any of my family. Eddie insisted we stop by, and it became our custom to go look for answers to my notices whenever we went to a performance.

Time passed and then one day we were told to get ready — we were being taken to the port city of Genoa on the Mediterranean Sea, where we would board a ship bound for Palestine.

When I told Eddie, he asked me to marry him, move to his kibbutz, and wait for his emigration quota to be granted. And that's what I did.

February 13th, 1947 was a cold winter day. I walked with my future husband, my sister, and many of our friends, through the streets of Torino toward a spectacular, ancient synagogue. Rachel and I wore beautiful, new, dark blue dresses with white collars, gifts from Eddie, custom made by an Italian dressmaker.

We were married, along with several other young couples, by an old Italian rabbi who had all of three hairs in his beard. I was told he survived the Nazi occupation in a Jesuit monastery. He gave us brass wedding bands to exchange, and blessed us.

I want to tell you that this was the happiest day of my life. Indeed, the joy of finding someone to share one's life with and stepping into the future with that someone is tremendous. But one is supposed to make that step in the presence of one's whole family, and the void created by their absence on this day was colossal.

A party was thrown in the dining room of our kibbutz, in honor of Eddie and me. It was attended by nearly 400 people — UNRA (United Nations Refugee Agency) officials and kibbutz administrators and many, many young people.

I received a few small gifts, the funniest of which was a rubber plant. I may not have had much in the way of worldly possessions, but I did have a rubber plant!

Sometime later a telegram came, asking us to come to an office in the center of Milan. Eddie, Rachel, and I dressed in our best and went to Milan accompanied by a friend who spoke fluent Italian.

We were directed to a very fancy office where we were given a telegram from my father's brother, Isaac, in Buenos Aires. The telegram read: "I am very happy, after a long search, to find you alive. Our financial help will be given immediately by my business partner, Mr. G."

Mr. G. was the owner of this fine office in which we were standing. He was an elegantly dressed individual who was also kind and caring. He told us about helping our uncle in his search for our family in Europe.

We were astonished. We asked if he'd answer the telegram for us, which he did. He offered us money, which of course we couldn't accept, being proud and not prone to accept charity.

He was very sympathetic to our cause, and we must have made a good impression because shortly thereafter we were getting letters and telegrams from Uncle Isaac, one after another.

Uncle Isaac decided to bring us to Buenos Aires.

It was not an easy task. The government of Argentina, under the leadership of Juan Peron, made a paradise for the Nazis, but would not permit Jewish survivors to emigrate. Uncle Isaac was determined. He put a blank check in front of an attorney specializing in emigration matters, bought 3 passages on a ship, and sent us $100 for the visas.

It happened so fast, we didn't know what hit us. I wrote a long letter gently explaining our plans for Israel, but Uncle Isaac wouldn't let go. He wrote, "After everything you've been through, you aren't properly healed, or prepared for the harsh life you will find there. I say, mi casa es tu casa, my home is your home. Come improve your health, get your education, and then continue with your plans."

Our friends at the Kibbutz insisted we listen to him. They said things like "What a fine gentleman," "What generosity," and "What a noble gesture." "Listen to him, and do what he says," was the consensus.

It was a bittersweet irony that we were not going to Israel after all.

When Rachel and I joined Kibutz Ihud, the first step on our journey to what was then Palestine was the idea of an Independent State of Israel, an idea which became well-planted in our consciousness.

We felt so strongly that we Jews must have a permanent home, a government with an active president, an army, and all the social structures of a sovereign country. Moreover, we felt if ever there was a time, that time was now.

It was a dream. It was an enormous dream, one in which we knew we were dependent upon the good will of so many other nations in order for it to become a reality. And yet, it did. On May 14, 1948 the dream came true.

It was a joyful and memorable day.

We were interned at Displaced Persons Camp Adriatica near Milan, Italy, glued to the radio. When the announcement came, the entire camp ran outside, cheering. The white and blue Israeli flag was posted in the center and we all sang and danced around it.

We witnessed history in the making and for a change its pages were full of good news.

And then it was time for Rachel, Eddie, and me to say goodbye to Kibbutz Ihud. A bon voyage party was given in our honor and after a sad farewell, we traveled to Genoa, a port city by the Mediterranean Sea. There we boarded the ship, "Argentina." We were on our way to Buenos Aires.

What an adventure. After life in the camp, the beautiful and luxurious ship was like a setting from a fairy tale. Sitting in the elegant dining room, at a table with a white, starched table cloth, being served delicious food by a waiter, listening to live music, we could not absorb it easily, but savored it slowly.

It was unfortunate, but Rachel and I both suffered severe motion sickness. We spent the better part of our trip lying in our cabins in discomfort. But Eddie enjoyed himself to the fullest, making friends, playing games. He felt so sorry for us. We traveled for 21 days, and on June 22nd,

1948, arrived at the port of Buenos Aires.

To our surprise, we were met by twenty people, family and friends, many carrying flowers, headed by our dear benefactor, Uncle Isaac Mazur. He stood in front of everybody, tall, ample, proud, with his arms open wide and a big smile on his face. I was happy the three of us were properly dressed in nice clothes.

Eddie had on a new suit, and Rachel and I wore identical dark, blue dresses which Eddie had had made for us by an expert dressmaker. He had also bought us small, elegant hats, new shoes, and gloves to match. I saw that our uncle was impressed by our appearance, not ashamed of his nieces and nephew. We may have been refugees from Europe, but we came from a good background and were finding our proper place in the world, thanks to Uncle Isaac.

His was a fascinating story. Isaac Mazur, born Iczke, a young, poor boy from Sokolka, Poland, became Don Isaac Mazur, a wealthy, highly respected businessman and philanthropist in Buenos Aires.

Sokolka was a small village with no future for a young, Jewish boy. There wasn't much to do, so Iczke decided to try his luck in nearby Bialystok. He was ambitious, hardworking, lonely, and determined to find his pot of gold.

Shortly after his arrival in Bialystock, he met a young girl named Fanny. They fell in love, soon married, and then had their first child, a son, my cousin, Marcus.

Young Iczke had often heard tales about America, where the streets were said to be paved with gold, and began to make plans to emigrate. Unfortunately, there were limited quotas, and the gates to the "Golden Land" were hard to open.

He then chose Argentina as his destination. Leaving his young wife with her parents, he promised to bring her and their son in one year, and embarked on his journey.

Aunt Fanny used to tell us wonderful stories about their life in Bialystok... how they met, how she had to persuade her father to give his

permission for her to marry Iczke, but the most poignant was her story about her arrival in Buenos Aires with Marcus.

For an entire year, Iczke and Fanny exchanged letters. He wrote about how much he missed them, how well he was doing and how he was saving money. When finally the proper papers came and she got her visa, Fanny's parents called in a special dressmaker to make new, fancy dresses for her. She bought herself a new hat and Marcus got a new, velvet suit with a white collar.

On the ship, Fanny wore only her old dresses, saving the most elegant, the pearl grey with the matching hat, for the moment when she would step off the ship and into the arms of her beloved, Iczke. The day of their arrival came and Fanny, dressed in all her finery, proud and happy with the baby in her arms, was met by Iczke, who looked like a burly laborer she could hardly recognize.

He was waiting for her in a horse-driven wagon filled with bags of merchandise he had to deliver on their way home. Crestfallen and bitterly disappointed, Fanny rode beside him with tears in her eyes and her nose high in the air.

"Is this what I left my parents for, my friends, my home?" she sobbed. Iczke hung his head in shame and silence.

Life was difficult for the young couple. Iczke continued to work hard, looking for every opportunity to prosper and support his wife and son in proper style. He was self-taught, intelligent, and had a way with people. He was always respectful, and had a superb sense of humor and a heart of gold.

A daughter, Rachel, was born, and the sun began to shine on the Mazurs of Buenos Aires. Uncle Isaac claimed it was her birth that changed his luck, and made the doors to success open for him. His business grew, and he employed more and more people. He was a good, compassionate boss, a devoted husband, and a concerned and generous father. Nothing was too good for his family or friends. They could count on his help and advice when they needed it.

They moved to a beautiful home surrounded by luxury and Uncle Isaac became an active member of the Bialystok Landsmen Society and many other philanthropic organizations, like the Jewish Commercial Co-operative. He gained the respect of the Jewish Community, and it was known that he enjoyed sharing his good fortune with those in need.

Uncle Isaac loved to read. His study was littered with books, magazines, and all kinds of daily papers. He was interested in world affairs, politics, and classical music, especially opera. He had a subscription to the Theatro Colon, a famous opera house in Buenos Aires, where he would listen to his favorite opera diva, Lily Pons.

I can see him even now, a picture of pleasure and contentment after a festive dinner, resting on the sofa on a Saturday afternoon with his ear glued to the small transistor radio. He loved to listen to the arias of Enrique Caruso or his beloved Lily Pons.

By the time we arrived from Europe, in 1948, life was good for Uncle Isaac. He was our guardian angel, trying to help us any way he could, trying to smooth out any wrinkles in our way to a new life. He was proud when Eddie went to work two days after our arrival, and gave back the money he sent us for the visas. He was equally proud when Rachel enrolled in school to become a dental mechanic, and found herself a job in order to be independent and support herself. He was proud to see me striving to be a good housewife, learning to cook, asking Aunt Fanny so many questions about it.

I will never forget his big, wide smile when he discovered that I, too, had a love of classical music. We were soulmates in music, sharing so many opera performances together.

His arms always open, Uncle Isaac made us feel like real members of his family. With Eddie, hardworking and ambitious, he always offered encouragement to climb and go forward. When our sons were born, Uncle Isaac became their "Zejde Iczke," ("Grandpa Iczke") treating them just like his own grandchildren.

His home, always full of friends, was our oasis. At his table, laden

with delicious home cooked food, we shared songs and laughter every holiday. He created a safe harbor for us, and his love, caring and understanding helped heal the deep wounds inflicted upon us during our long years of persecution.

His wisdom, goodness, sense of humor, the twinkle in his eyes -- these things have permanent, sacred places in our hearts and souls.

He may not be with us anymore, but his blessed memory lives on as legend in our family. We remember him, talk about him, and will never forget him.

To our dear Uncle Isaac Mazur, a giant of a man, who took three scared young human beings and brought them back to life... thank you.



1948

Isaac Mazur

At our arrival in Buenos Aires

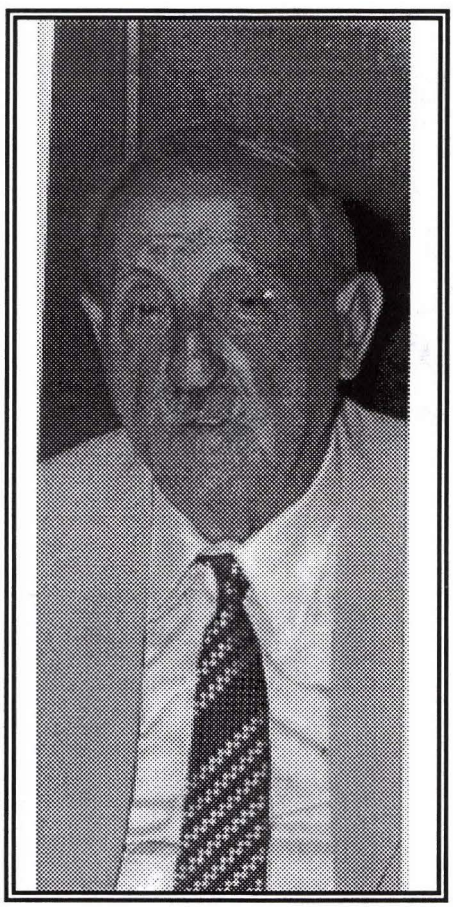


Buenos Aires, 1950

The wedding of my sister, Rachel Mazur, to Solomon Sznajderhaus.

Standing: Isaac Balaban, his wife Rachel, Lily, Eddie (holding our son, David, 9 mos.), David Pepa, Marcus Mazur

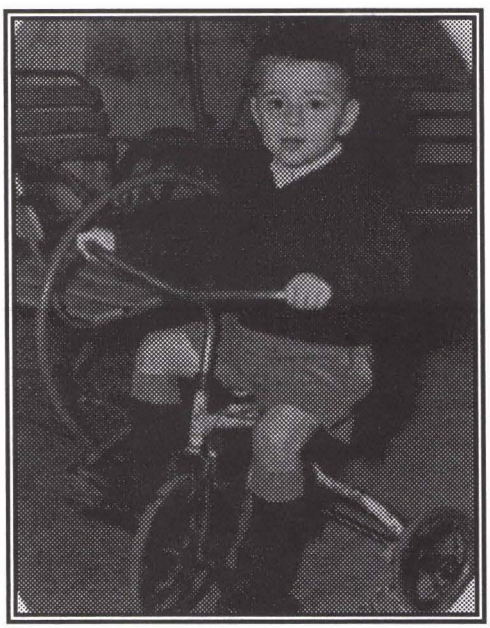
Seated: Isaac Mazur, the bride, Rachel, the groom, Solomom, and Aunt Fanny



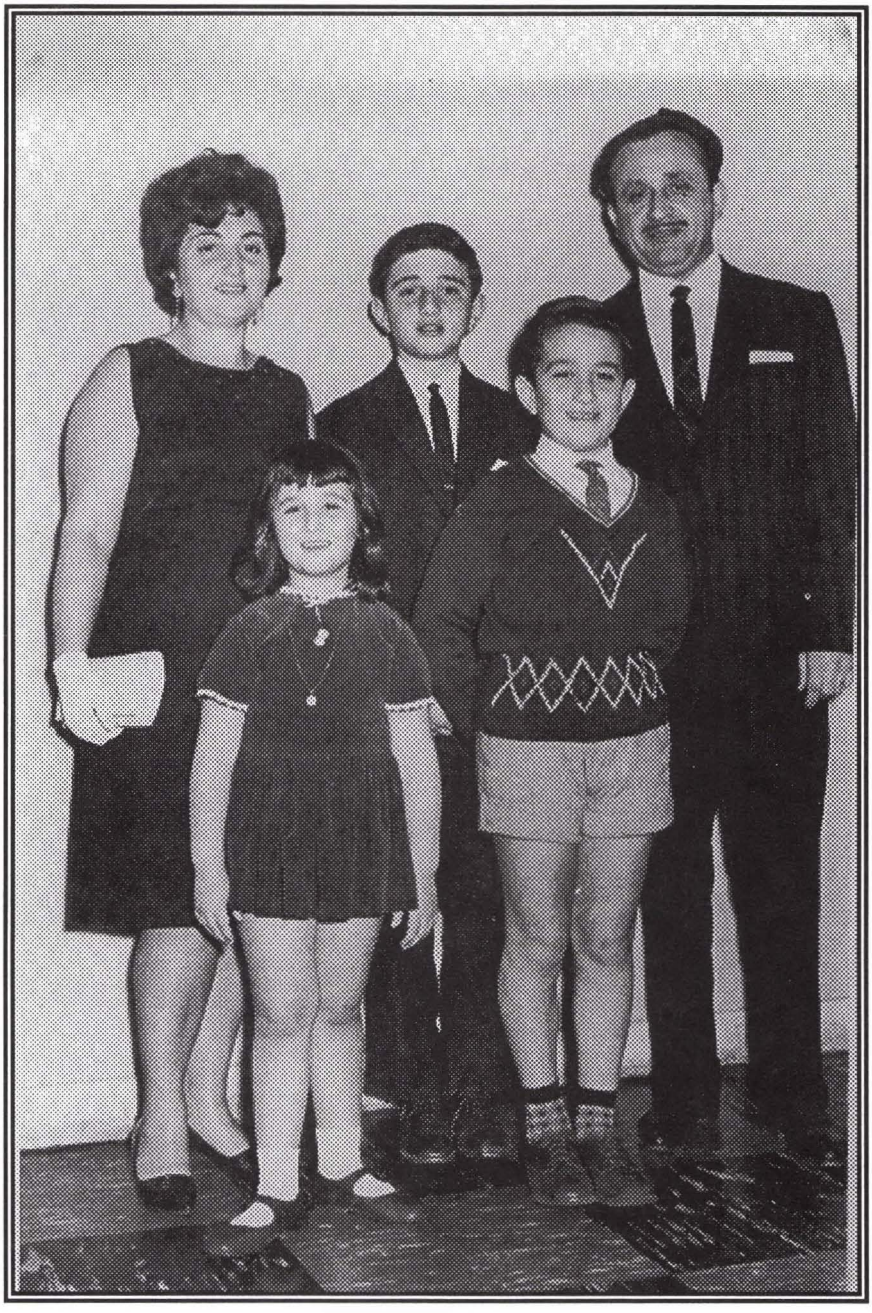
Isaac Mazur in 1956,
when we left
to emigrate to the United States



Our son, David, Age 5
Buenos Aires, Argentina



Our son, Michael, Age 3
Buenos Aires, Argentina



Buenos Aires, 1964
The Sznajderhaus Family
Rachel, Solomon, Pablo, David and Graciela

XXIII.

AND THE WORLD STOOD SILENT

Written in 1988

Fifty years ago, on November 16, 1938, on "Kristallnacht," ("The Night of the Broken Glass"), Nazi "brownshirts" went on an orgy of destruction, signalling the beginning of the end of German and Austrian Jewry, and the world stood silent.

Forty-five years ago, on April 19, 1943, a group of young Jewish boys and girls rose in defiance against the mighty Nazi force, resisted and fought in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and the world stood silent.

Forty-five years ago, in September, 1943, during the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah, Nazi murderers liquidated the Vilna Ghetto, and the world stood silent.

Forty-three years ago, on May 9, 1945, the Nazi war machine was defeated. There was celebration and rejoicing, but we, the survivors, found ourselves alone, sick, orphaned, with no place to go, and the world stood silent.

Then, forty years ago, on May 8, 1948, a miracle happened. Like a

phoenix rising from the ashes of the Holocaust, a new nation was born, an independent Israel.

This was a new page in the history of the Jewish people, written with blood, sweat, and tears.

In the course of these forty years, five wars have been fought, beginning the day after the Declaration of Independence, when her hostile Arab neighbors attacked the new country.

Even today, they don't yet recognize Israel's right to exist.

The riots and stone-throwing in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, during this time when Israelis are celebrating a milestone in history, are once more a sign of the constant effort of our enemies to dampen our spirits, to hurt our tourism, to give us heartache and trouble.

But today we say to the silent world, "We are here to stay."

We cherish our Medinat Yisrael, we support and guard her.

Am Yisrael Chai.

XXIV.

SPEAKING WITH AN ACCENT

When I was growing up in my native town of Vilna, Vilna was part of Poland, but Russian was the language we spoke at home. It was the language my parents grew up with, studied in, and was, for all intent and purpose, their native language. But Vilna officially belonged to Poland. It had since 1920, and the official language was Polish.

For centuries, Poland had been the center of a tug-of-war between Germany in the west, and Russia in the east. Poland was conceded, annexed, and divided many times between the two powers, who both left a strong influence on its language, customs, and culture.

Vilna, which was situated in northeastern Poland, had its own boundary wars with Lithuania, its northeastern neighbor. They were always trying to call Vilna their capital, and in fact today Vilna is called Vilnius, and indeed is the capital of Lithuania.

It would seem to make sense then that one day my father decided it was time to start speaking Polish. After all, I would be starting school,

as would Rachel, soon thereafter, and school was taught in Polish.

And so it follows that my first accent was Russian, when speaking Polish.

My education went on to include not only the Polish language, but also Polish literature, and music.

Then, in 1939, when Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany, we were on summer vacation in Soly, a little town near Vilna, where my father owned a pharmacy. Poland was partitioned, and Soly was annexed to Belarus. Its official languages then became Belarussian and Russian, and school was thereafter taught in those two languages.

Our classmates said "You speak well, but with a Polish accent."

Then the Germans came. We escaped back to Vilna, only to be herded like animals into the Vilna Ghetto, where we began to speak Yiddish. There I was told, "You speak beautiful Yiddish, but you have a Russian accent."

After our long and difficult odyssey through Concentration and Slave Labor camps, during the Nazi era, Rachel and I were liberated by the Russians. We were taken to a Russian field hospital. The doctors and nurses there were so happy we spoke their language, but thought we had a strange accent!

When we were in a Kibbutz in Codz, Poland, all the youngsters there were Polish, but our comrades used to laugh at what they called our "funny, singing 'Vilna' accent!"

After Germany, we were in a Displaced Persons Camp in Italy for an entire year. We learned to speak Italian, quite well, but, of course, spoke with an accent.

When we emigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina, my husband, sister, and I heard Spanish spoken for the first time. We thought we would never be able to learn to speak this language. But within three months of living there, I found my way around pretty well with my Polish-Spanish dictionary. In Argentina, I was asked, "Are you from Italy?" "You speak with an Italian accent," they would say.

Then my husband, two little boys, and I came to New York, and English had to be learned and spoken. Out came the Spanish-English dictionary, and I struggled through my first book, "Gone With The Wind." My sons, on the other hand, learned English in a few months.

After all these years and a great deal of effort, my American friends say,"Your English is quite good, very literate, but what is your accent?"

It is the end result of a lot of change, brought about, at first, by destruction, followed by adventure, and finally, topped with joy.

For a long time in this country, I was traumatized, intimidated, afraid to express my opinion in English, with my colorful accent. Even when I heard something said in perfect English, with a clipped accent, that was clearly not correct, right, or true, I could not speak up.

Then, Dr. Henry Kissinger became the popular Secretary of State during the Nixon Administration. The first time I heard him speak, I felt liberated. I realized that it is what you say, how intelligently you present your ideas, that matters, not your accent.

It was then that I took a deep breath, opened my mouth, and began to express my opinions.

I haven't stopped since.

XXV.

DEDICATION OF THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

When Steven Spielberg accepted his Oscars in 1994 for "Schindler's List," he asked that teachers tell future generations about the Holocaust, and never forget its six million victims.

One of the best places for that is the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C..

I attended its dedication on Thursday, April 22nd, 1993.

In the early dawn of this important day, I flew with my friend, Harriet Solz, one of the real "Schindler's List" survivors, from New York's Kennedy Airport to Washington. We landed at Dulles Airport at 9 a.m.

Harriet and I took a taxi, and as we approached 100 Raul Wallenberg Plaza, we couldn't get through all the people pouring in on foot.

The skies were filled with heavy, grey clouds, and a cold wind blew in from the Potomac River. A steamy rain was falling, as if nature itself was crying with us for what we'd been through and the lives that were lost.

The muddy grass was covered with hundreds and hundreds of wet chairs. There were colored signs for different sections and as we passed through a security check, a shudder ran through my body. For a moment, I had the eerie feeling I was back in a concentration camp. "Stop," I said to myself, and held Harriet's hand, tightly. She was shaking.

We found our seats and sat down with so many others in the grey haze of the inclement weather. There was an air of tremendous dignity, friendship, and cooperation. Strangers shared plastic coverings and umbrellas. There was a sea of people, gathered here with purpose, determined to absorb every moment of this historic day.

The ceremonies began. We were surrounded by television cameras, focused on the podium and scanning the faces of those in attendance, quiet and sad.

Ted Koppel was the Master of Ceremonies, and introduced the visiting heads of European States and invited dignitaries — President and Mrs. Herzog of the State of Israel, Vice President and Mrs. Gore, Harry Meyerhoff, Eli Wiesel, Ben Mead, and others. Behind them, the colorful Flags of Partisans and Freedom Fighters flew briskly in the wind. The military band played "Hail to the Chief," and President and Mrs. Clinton made their entrance.

On either side of the Presidential Seal, just below the podium, the most important phrase, summarizing the meaning of this solemn event, was written in big letters. It said, "For the Dead and the Living We Must Bear Witness."

It was a very moving ceremony, with a musical interlude, the Presentation of Colors, the singing of the National Anthem, Invocation, insightful and touching speeches, a reading of the late Edward Murrow's broadcast from Concentration Camp Buchenwald, the lighting of the eternal flame, a benediction given by a rabbi, and the powerful voice of Jesse Norman, diva of the Metropolitan Opera, singing "America, the Beautiful."

It was something so special and unique.

Outside, the voices of protesters, with their ugly slurs, were poignant. We ignored them.

I could not stop crying on the inside as I sat there. Silently, I spoke to my loved ones who perished at the hands of the Nazis, telling each and every one by name that this shrine was for them, erected in the mall in the Capitol of the United States of America, in their blessed memory.

The museum, filled with photographs, documents, artifacts, exhibits, and oral history given by survivors, stood solemn and proud to bear witness, forever and ever.

This is the place for people of good will to come, to serve, to learn, and to help build a better understanding, a better world for the whole of mankind.



Dedication of The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
April 22, 1993



Me, at the 15th Street entrance to the Holocaust Museum

XXVI.

POEMS
Written During The Holocaust

During our incarceration in Dünawerke Slave Labor Camp my sister and I shared a bunk with another pair of sisters, Tosia and Eva. We had similar backgrounds and a lot in common. Eve was a poet, and during the bleak days of 1943-44 she was the pride and joy of our Room #4.

It was our solemn duty to find scraps of paper for her to write on. We learned her poems by heart and repeated them over and over, finding inspiration and courage in every rhyme.

As our circumstances worsened, our bond grew stronger.

We were last together on the March of the Living Dead, and became separated during the commotion of our liberation on March 11, 1945, never to see each other again.

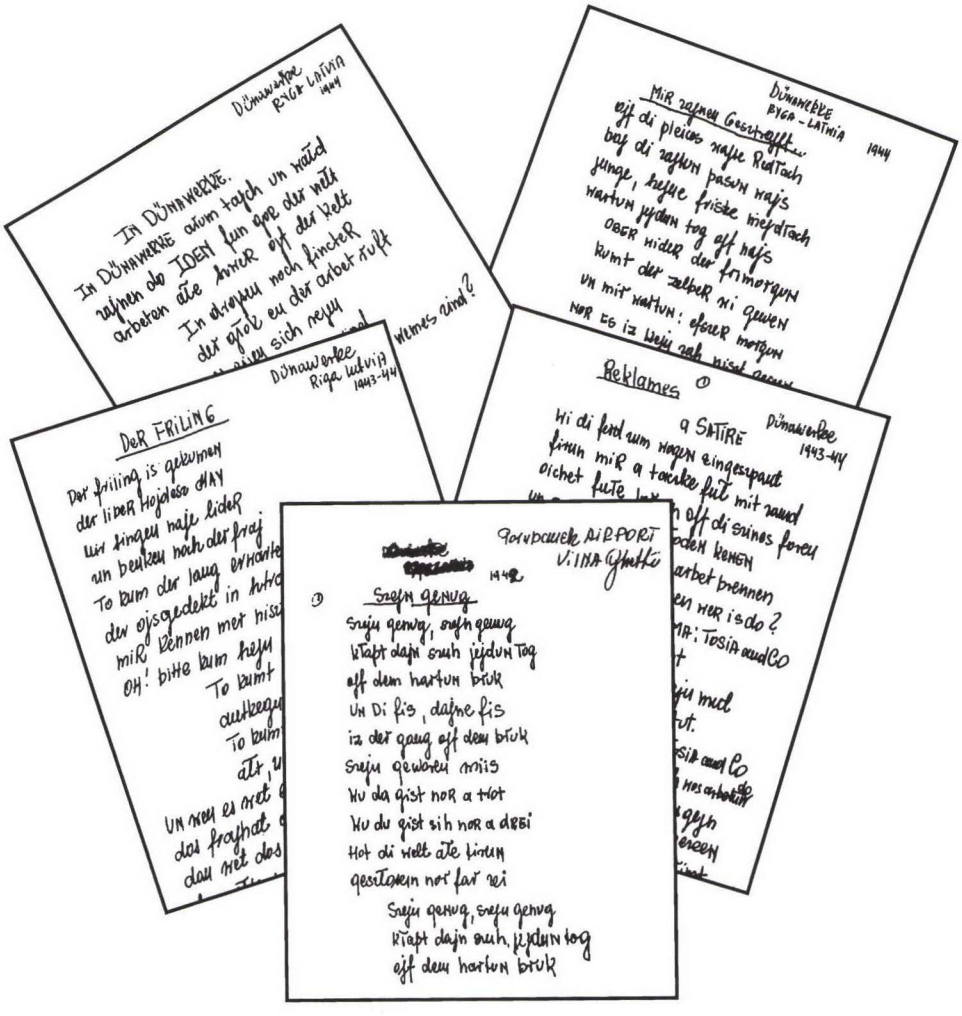
One day in 1946 while walking on the street in Leipheim Displaced Persons Camp in Germany, I met a girl whom I knew from Dünawerke. She was also an inmate of Room No. 4. We hugged and kissed and the first thing I asked, full of hope, was if she knew the whereabouts of our

poet and her sister. With tears in her eyes she told me that after the liberation they became very sick and succumbed to typhoid.

I began to cry, and ran to our dormitory where I took out a pen and paper and wrote down her poems while they were still fresh in my mind.

I present them to you as a homage to the blessed memory of two lovely young girls, our friends Tosia and Eve.

Photocopied from the originals, which I saved.



It's Enough, Long Enough

It's enough, long enough to bang your shoes everyday
on this hard, stone-covered way
And your feet are getting tired, your poor sore feet
marching along in the heat
They cannot take one step,
They cannot run away
because all the doors around them
are locked for today.

And your old, worn shoes march to work every day
While your feet dream of places far, far away.

But those feet have chains, prison fences keep them there.
They must march, and suffer, and live in constant fear.

Move on, my feet, so weak and in pain,
You have no right to rest when others must gain
Don't think about the future, don't think about the past,
Today you must run, and run you must, fast.

Soon we'll be happy and free, the day will come, still...
when we walk slowly, at last, and have our own will!

One of many poems written in the Vilna Ghetto. I used to repeat it over and over while marching to the Porubanek Airport for a long day of hard work.

"The Spring"

The spring just came upon us,
the glorious month of May.
We try to sing new songs now
and yearn for freedom's day.
Oh! come, we are waiting for you
full of sunshine, dressed in white.
Please hurry up, we need you.
Make haste and come up straight.
We will all come out together
to greet you and say, "Hello."
To bless the warm weather,
united we will go!
And when the bell of freedom
finally tolls for you,
old folks will be young again,
everything will be new.
I don't know what will become of us,
the slaves who are now so few,
if we will know how to start
to live on our own and not work so hard,
We will all come out together
to greet you and say, "Hello."
To bless the warm weather,
united we will go!
If we ever learn to wake up without the wake-up bell;
to laugh, and sing and not be counted
while standing long hours at "Appel,"
not to eat cold, hard potatoes,
not to suffer from cold and heat;
not to wear canvas, wooden shoes
on our half-frozen feet.
We will all come out together
to greet you and say, "Hello."
To bless the warm weather,
united we will go!

A Poem written by Eva, melody by Lily

IN DÜNAWERKE

In Dünawerke, surrounded by river and trees,
you will find Jews from all over the world
working very hard in the bitter cold

Outside is still, very dark:
the work bell loudly tolls;
the columns move quickly;
strong winds blow;
Jews persecuted for somebody else's sins.

The long day finally over,
the sun lost its power.
They go back slowly,
their feet so tired
Asking only the question: Why were they hired?

Please, Jews, don't lose faith;
very soon this will come to an end.
We will again be free and happy
working in Israel in our own land.

Cyrics by Eva
(Translated from Yiddish by Lily)
Melody - Popular Russian Song

WE ARE STRIPED...

On our backs, two big, white rings.
On our sides, two long, white stripes.
Pretty young girls, and so very sad,
waiting for good news about our plights

But every early morning comes
the same and goes away.
Now we wait - maybe tomorrow
will be a better day.

We dig deeper and deeper ditches
and the days drift slow and long.
We, the slaves, work and keep working,
but you will never hear a song.

Still, in our dark and hard life,
we did find one dear and good friend.
The golden sun shines bright,
sending warmth and light with no end.

Thank you, our only dear friend,
we say you are so good to us.
But why do we have to be striped this way
and why does nobody care about us?

TODAY WE ADVERTISE...

A Sattre

We are a newly formed firm called Tosia and Co.
They say we are young and pretty,
but we don't feel so.

No need for horses, no need for mules
just hire us, we can use heavy tools.
We load and unload freight wagons of wood
and sacks of potatoes, all for your good.

We push with great gusto lorries of sand,
but don't think for a moment this is our end.
You will be satisfied, everything is free,
you don't even have to pay us a fee.

Forget the small firm of Tosia and Co.,
and look at the beauties that work down below.
Even if you visit the whole world around,
better qualified workers cannot be found.

Our big firm is well known, and famous, too.
Our director is Cypka, she works for two,
We work faster, and better, and know only one word.
We never sit down, we just do "Accord."

You don't need special talent to push lorries of sand.
We do something different, we pass bricks hand to hand.
Standing long hours in very long lines.
Side by side, side by side, time after time.
I am sure that our old firm is the very best,
Just ask our Mrs. Schwartz, she will tell you the rest.

XXVII

SWEET REVENGE

One of the reasons I forced myself to take pen to paper and document what happened to me during the Holocaust is that following the presentations I often give to high school and junior high school students, I offer a "Question and Answer" period which never seems to be long enough to answer all the students many questions.

There are always many poignant and interesting questions, which I try to answer carefully and truthfully. The questions reflect the extent to which my young students paid attention, and cared about what they have heard. And as a result, I develop a rapport with them.

But most of the time the bell rings, calling the period to an abrupt end, and the children run from the auditorium to their next class with their curiosity unsatisfied and their questions left hanging in the air, unanswered...

"Mrs. Margules, after everything you and your sister went through, do you believe in God?"

"Do you hate the Germans?"

"Why didn't you escape?"

"Did you meet Hitler?"

"How come you survived and so many others didn't?"

"Do you seek revenge for what was done to you and your family and friends?"

I am compelled to offer the following answers...

When I was a little girl I had a very vivid imagination and I saw the Almighty God as a very old man with a long, white beard, who was dressed in a flowing robe and sandals. He sat high up in the blue skies on a golden throne surrounded by harp-playing angels with wings.

He always had a benevolent smile on his face and patiently listened to all my requests when I spoke, reverently lifting my head to Him.

When my life changed so drastically and I found myself in such difficulties during the Nazi era, indeed my view of God changed. Many times I questioned His existence and wisdom. I would ask, "Please, Almighty God, why? When will it all come to an end? Why did you stop caring for us - Your People?"

After the liberation, following a lot of healing and maturing, I began to believe that there is a Great Superior Force, after all. I no longer see the benevolent old man with the beard, but a very wise man who says: "Mankind, do... try... apply yourself with all I have given you, and I will help you fulfill your potential."

As to the question, do I seek revenge? Yes, of course, but not of the kind you might think.

After our liberation, we survivors found ourselves alone in a strange world. We were sick, weak, full of fear, and always seeking a friendly face. We didn't know what to expect, how to start over, or even where to go. We were refugees, "greenhorns," and many people said we would never fit into society.

But perseverance or determination made us quickly understand that we had to help ourselves, count on ourselves, think positive, stand on our own two feet and build our futures. We had to become the masters of our own destinies.

I am very proud of the fact that Rachel, Ed and I never put out our hand for charity. This is part of my sweet revenge. Nobody went on welfare. We were a proud group who went to work, went to school, learned new languages, sought partners and formed families.

When our children came along, we armed them with education as a weapon against ignorance and poverty.

As we prospered, we began to support Israel, and got involved in philanthropic and charitable causes, as is our tradition and heritage.

We pulled ourselves together with all the strength of our young years, and became proud, educated, prosperous and productive members of society. We straightened our bent backs and looked with confidence toward a new future, one we built ourselves.

This, my dear children, is my sweet revenge.

In the early 1980's a large group of Holocaust survivors gathered in Washington DC for a reunion during which the cornerstone was put into the ground where the Holocaust Museum was to be erected. It contains two milk cans full of documents from the Warsaw ghetto.

I participated in these memorable activities with a group of friends from New York. Survivors from all corners of the world came to the gathering, and "Survivors Village" was built in Constitution Hall. There one could find information about family, friends, neighbors.

President Ronald Reagan and the First Lady were there with

many other dignitaries. There were lecturers, concerts and meetings.

On the last day, late in the evening we were sitting at the foot of the Washington Memorial, each with a flickering candle and a box dinner, listening to the various speeches that were given. It was a solemn and dignified occasion.

Finally, a female professor of Judaica from the University of Florida took the podium. I'm afraid her name escapes me, but she put into words the essence of our sweet revenge in a way I will never forget. It went like this...

"Fellow survivors, you can and have to be proud of all you've accomplished, with your own brains, your own hands, your good sense, and your remarkable determination. You are now citizens, productive and proud citizens of these United States Let me ask you a simple question: Who has a son or a daughter currently studying at a college or university? Please raise your hand."

Every hand went up.

"Who has offspring studying for a masters degree, a PhD doctorate, enrolled in a medical school here or abroad, a law school, a school of journalism and so forth? Please raise your hand."

Surprise, surprise, many hands went up.

"Fellow survivors, pat yourselves on the back. You are not second class citizens, you have grown your own roots. You belong here, you are a part of this great country of ours."

At that moment, sitting in the fresh night air surrounded by my happy and smiling fellow survivors, I knew I had exacted my sweet revenge.



Lake George, January 9, 1967
Our sons
David and Michael

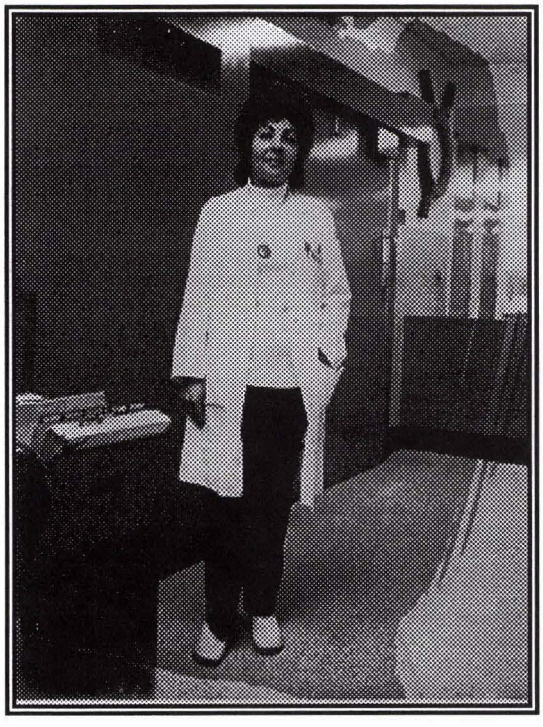
1962
David's Bar Mitzvah
Lily, David, Edward, and Michael

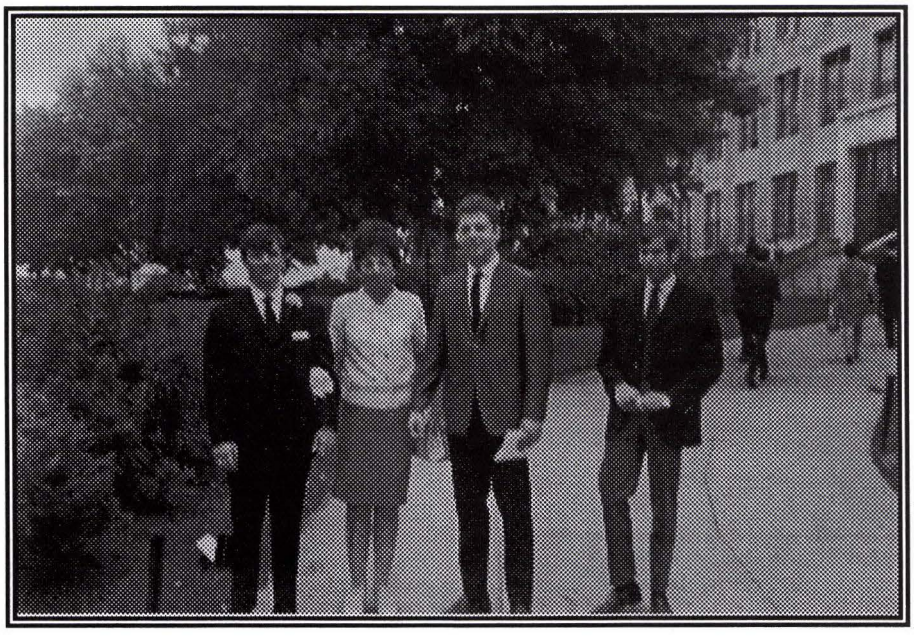




1966
Michael's Bar Mitzvah
Edward, Michael, Lily, and David

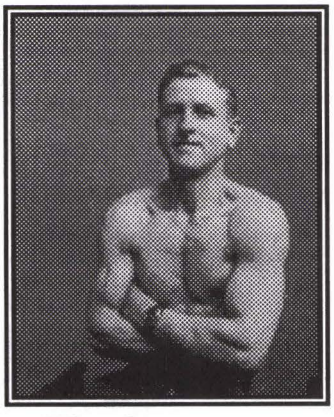
1968
Radiotherapy Department
Montefiore Hospital. New York



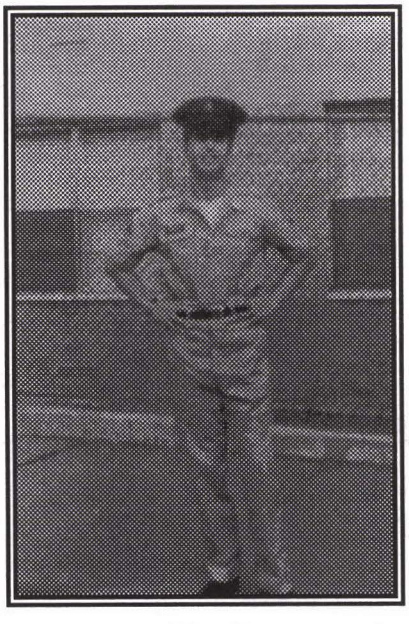


1968
Michael's graduation

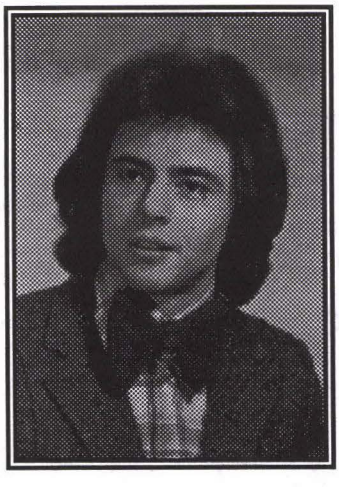
Father and Sons



Edward-as a young man.
Member of the Maccabi Sport Club in Poland



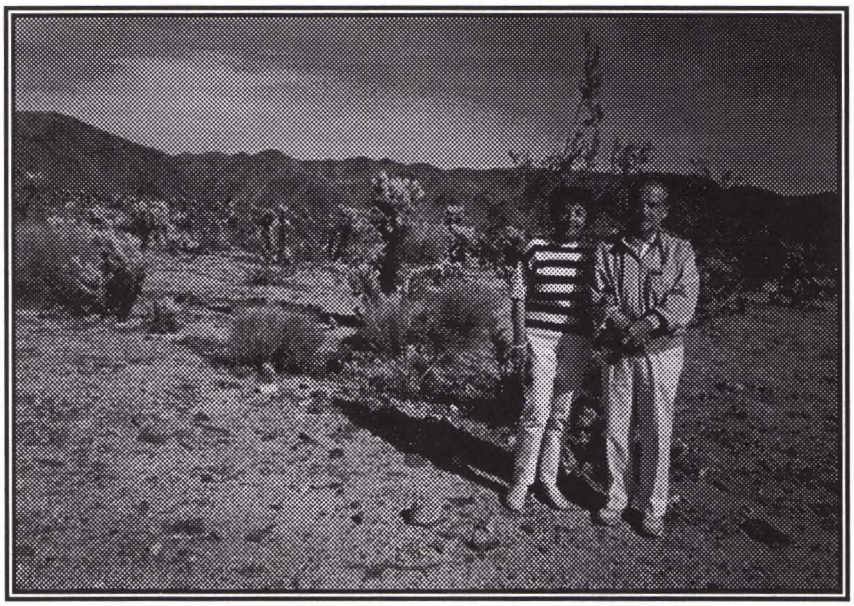
David
Serving at the National Guard



Michael
Graduating from Boston University



1977
Mar del Plata, Argentina
The sisters and husbands



1998
Lily & Edward
Palm Springs, California



LILY MAZUR-MARGULES, R.T. WAS BORN IN VILNA, POLAND TO PROFESSIONAL PARENTS DAVID, A PHARMACIST, AND GUTA, A DENTIST. ALONG WITH HER SISTER RACHEL, LILY WAS RAISED WITH CULTURAL EXPOSURE TO MUSIC AND THE ARTS, AND GIVEN THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION. HER CHARMED LIFE ENDED IN 1939 WHEN GERMANY INVADED POLAND. SHE IS A SURVIVOR OF THE VILNA GHETTO, KAISERWALD CONCENTRATION CAMP, DÜNAWERKE SLAVE LABOR CAMP, STUTHOFF CONCENTRATION CAMP, STEINDORF SLAVE LABOR CAMP, AND "THE DEAD MARCH." THE MAZUR SISTERS WERE LIBERATED BY RUSSIAN TROOPS IN 1945 AND, AFTER A LONG ODYSSEY THROUGH RUSSIAN FIELD HOSPITALS, CONVALESCENT HOSPITALS, AND DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS IN GERMANY AND ITALY, IMMIGRATED TO BUENOS AIRES IN 1948. IN 1956, LILY AND HER HUSBAND, EDWARD, ALONG WITH THEIR TWO SONS, ARRIVED ON THE SHORES OF THE UNITED STATES, AND HER LIFE BEGAN ANEW IN NEW YORK, WHERE SHE RESIDES TODAY. LILY IS A RETIRED RADIOTHERAPY TECHNICIAN, PROUD OF HER FAMILY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DEDICATED TO TELLING AND RE-TELLING OF THE DARKEST ERA IN HUMAN HISTORY IN HONOR OF THOSE WHO CAN NO LONGER SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

ProStar Publications
Printed in the U.S.A.

