

AS I REMEMBER MY FAMILY HISTORY

By Annie Nathan Schwartz

Today, on June 1, 1975, I am approximately half-way past my Eighty-First Birthday. My Grandson asked that I ^{RECALL SOME CF} ~~write~~ the major happenings in my life-time, from the time of my birth in Karostyshev (Spelling is probably in-correct), a small town in the State of Kiev, in Russia. As best I can gather, I was born in the early part of 1894, which was a time of Czarist rule in Russia. I can recall as early as 1899, when I was five years of age, my Father was manager of a small factory for processing leather from the skins of cattle. Because of the foul odor involved, the leather factory was forced to locate outside of the city limits of Karostyshev. Our family lived very close to the leather factory, in a two-room house. One room was used for a kitchen, with some sleeping facilities, on a make-shift basis. The other room served as a ^{combined} living room with sleeping quarters. As a substitute for beds, we used wooden benches covered by feather-type mattresses.

The leather factory was owned by a Jewish man, who naturally kept the business closed on Saturday and open on Sunday. I was one of twelve children. Five of my parents children died in infancy, and as I recall, most of the deaths were caused by Diptheria. The oldest of the children was my sister Sheindal (Jennie in English), followed by my brother Max; of the surviving children according to date of birth, I, Annie (Genendel was my Jewish name), followed next. Then, according to date of birth ^{WERE} ~~was~~ three brothers in a row, namely Seymour, Tobe and Dave. Last of the surviving children was Sarah, my younger sister who was the youngest of my parents surviving children. As I write this, or rather as I recall these events, I will have to qualify my statements with an explanation that the events, dates and facts are very clear in my mind, up to the present day, however, I may be slightly off on a few dates, spellings of names and places etc., since I have never made any recorded or written notes to guide me.

In Russia, very few Jewish children were allowed to attend school. The

only Jewish children allowed to attend Public Schools, in Russia, were those who had very wealthy parents. This does not mean that they qualified openly, since it usually involved a "bribe" to the Mayor of the town or the Principal of the school--or, sometimes both. My three ~~other~~ brothers attended Cheder (Hebrew School), however, my younger brother David was only about two and one-half years of age, when we left for the United States. When I was ten years of age, which was approximately one year before we left for America, I worked six days a week (all except Saturday) in a wool factory, and was paid 60 cents per week, or the equivalent of Russian money. There were no child labor laws, and even though there was Jewish ownership of the wool factory, all of the employees were paid the same starvation wages. Everyone in our family started working at approximately the age of eight, and all kicked in their meager wages to help keep the family going. My Mother, Sophie had a fine skill of making a very little bit of money go a long way. We existed off of a diet mainly of potatoes, bread, cabbage, and once in a great while, we had the luxury of enjoying a small piece of herring. Meat was usually un-available, because most of the people in our town could not afford to buy it. Karostyshev had extremely cold winters, which would hit 65 degrees below zero for months at a time. We usually enjoyed only about two months out of each year for warm weather. The unusually cold weather accounted for the high cost of meat, as cattle were raised in much warmer climates and it was costly to ship meat to our area. Such ~~other~~ items as Oranges and Lemons were ~~XXXXXX~~ hardly ever seen by any of our family.

The town of Karostyshev was too small to support a Synagogue. However, this did not stop the Jewish residents from having services, not only for the various Holidays, but, also for daily Minyan and Sabbath. Before departing for the United States, we moved to Radamoshev (spelling may be in-correct), a larger town than Karostyshev. As in Karostyshev, religious services were conducted at the houses of different Jewish people, on a rotated or volunteer basis. The Torah was taken, wherever the service was being held. My father Nette (Newton) was a 100% religious man.

in the United States, my Father placed his Family and his Religion first, and work was secondary. He worked very hard, however, he would never work on the Sabbath or Holidays.

My brother Max was about seventeen years of age, when my Aunt, Leah Sakowitz sent him a ticket for passage from Russia to Galveston, Texas. As I recall this was about one year before the next member of the family, my brother Seymour, at the age of approximately ^{eleven} ~~eleven~~, left for Galveston with Isaac Kurson, who was a brother-in-law of my sister Sheindal. Shortly thereafter the rest of our family departed for Galveston. Even though the Czarist regime that ruled Russia at the time, mis-treated and persecuted Jewish people, they ~~did~~ not allow Jews to leave. In order to leave Russia, there was some "cloak and dagger" activities that might fit into a current Hollywood ~~xx~~ movie pattern. ~~Brother~~ ^{Brother} Max had sent some money to us, and my Father saved an additional amount. ~~together~~ ^{together}, this money was used to bribe an organization of Russian smugglers that ~~had~~ ^{operated} outside of the law. ~~similar~~ It is possible that some of the ~~members~~ ^{members} of the smugglers may have been Austrian. Escaping Russia in those ~~days~~ ^{days} was the same as playing for very high stakes. If anything went wrong, ~~there~~ ^{there} were no trials or judges, the penalty for being caught was --death. ~~anyone~~ ^{anyone} caught trying to escape by the Russian soldiers would be shot, on sight.

Getting back to the first member of our family to leave Russia. When ~~Max~~ ^{Max} left, he was near the age of the Russian military draft, which would have ~~meant~~ ^{meant} four years of service. Even though we depended upon smugglers, or, people who ~~worked~~ ^{worked} outside of the so-called Russian laws--for our escape, we ~~weretold~~ ^{were} told, on pretty good advice, that the ~~smugglers~~ ^{smugglers} also paid the Russian soldiers to "look the other way," when any of their "clients" were leaving Russia. ~~despite~~ ^{despite} our assurances that the proper arrangements had been made, nevertheless, it was quite a frightening experience, knowing that ^{four} ~~five~~ children and our ~~parents~~ ^{parents} would be shot on sight, if any small detail went wrong. I might add that my oldest sister, Sheindal, was married in Russia, and had already ~~departed~~ ^{departed} for Galveston, with her family. We took a train trip to the border ~~between~~ ^{between} Russia and Austria. In

zone existed, ^{WERE} we forced to walk through side-roads and "off of the beaten path. I recall that my Father carried Brother Dave in his arms; also, ~~my~~ my sister, Sarah, being approximately one and one-half years of age, at that time, was carried by my Mother. I also remember that I grabbed onto the hand of brother Tobe, partly through fear of being separated. I want to ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ mention that this organization of smugglers, even though they were not exactly "Kosher" seemed to deliver ^{what} ~~them~~ they promised. On the other hand, the very rich people could secure a ~~VISA~~ Visa and ~~exit~~ leave Russia in a legal way. However, most of the Jewish people could not pay for the high cost of securing a Visa.

Once in Austria, we boarded a train for Bremen, Germany. When we arrived in Bremen, we received the sad news that the boat had left for ~~XXXXX~~ America, one day earlier. As a result, we had to wait a full month, for the arrival of another boat. We ran out of money, while waiting in Austria. My father cabled brother Max in Galveston, who scraped together enough of his meager savings, to keep us going in Austria, on mostly ~~XXXX~~ tea and bread. When ~~the~~ the boat finally arrived, it took us twenty-one days to reach Galveston. The boat had accommodations ranging from first-class to second and third classes, plus "steerage." All we could afford was the steerage accommodations, where we existed off of our provisions that we brought, namely bread and tea. The thought ^{of} ~~reaching~~ reaching America kept up our spirits.

We arrived in Galveston in 1905 or 1906. Max, Seymour and Sheindal were already there. Max married Becky Sakowitz around 1903, in Galveston, with the service performed by Rabbi Henry Cohen. The very kind and friendly Rabbi Cohen was already well-known and loved and respected throughout the entire United States, even in those early years. In 1915, Rabbi Cohen married me and my husband, Nathan Schwartz. In ~~or~~ about ~~XXXX~~ 1929, he married brother Dave and his Wife, the former Tillie Harr. In 1946, when my second-oldest son returned home from Overseas in World War II, Dr. Cohen married my son Seymour and his Wife, the former Naomi Finkelstein. ^{AT THE GALVESTON HOME OF TILLIE AND DAVE NATHAN.} All ~~XXXXX~~ through his long life, Rabbi Cohen imparted in others, his knowledgable, kindly and positive outlook on life

a strictly Orthodox ~~XXXXXX~~ service for my wedding, that completely satisfied ~~the~~ the religious beliefs of my Father and Mother. At that time, there was no Orthodox Rabbi in Galveston.

Back to my first years in Galveston. I was about twelve years old, when we arrived. I immediately went to work in a ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ factory that manufactured overalls, owned by the Miller Brothers. My pay was \$2.50 per week. I do not need to add that there were no child labor laws, ~~XXXXXX~~ and no Union organizations, in those days. Out of my \$2.50 wages per week, I paid \$1.25 per week, or half of my wages, to a Mrs. Zinn, who taught me how to read and write. I worked during the days and Mrs. Zinn taught me, at her home, during the nights. Six years before my arrival in Galveston, the disastrous 1900 storm hit that Island city, destroying practically all of the available books, school-rooms and libraries. In 1906 and the ~~next~~ years following, when the public library was re-opened in Galveston, books were so scarce that they would not allow check-out. I worked a half-day on Saturdays, and would usually spend Saturday afternoons at the Public Library.

After the 1915 storm, my future husband, Nathan Schwartz was forced to take a ~~train~~ ^{TRAIN} from Houston to Texas City. Because the bridge (causeway) was washed out between the mainland and Galveston, he was forced to take a boat from Texas City to Galveston, to attend his wedding. After we were married, it took us six hours to travel from Galveston back to Houston, for the same reason. Four boys were ~~XXXXXX~~ born of our marriage, namely, Charles, Seymour, Leo and Newton. As of this writing, I have eleven grand-children. Brother Max and his wife Becky ~~had~~ ^{HAD} two daughters (Doris and Leah) and one son, Charles. Brother Tobe and Wife, the former Etta Lehman, had two daughters, Loyce ~~and~~ and Nina. Brother Seymour and his wife, the former Gertrude Seline, ~~had~~ ^{HAD} have twin daughters, Nona and Jo Anna. Dave and Tillie ~~have~~ ^{HAD} three children, daughters Carolyn and Marlene; and son, Neil. Sister Sheindal ~~has~~ ^{HAD} four children, daughters Bessie, Dorothy and Sara ~~XXXX~~, and son, Abe Tolsky. Sister Sarah ~~at~~ ^{an} ~~husband~~ ^{MAURICE WILENZICK} had one child, Newton Zalman, ^{WILENZICK} who passed away at the early age of 33.

Having been through Russian persecutions, World Wars I and II, the

Korean and Viet Nam Wars, I am hopeful that peoples of the World, and their leaders will find a way to solve their differences and live in peace for many centuries ahead.

Due to failing health, I certainly do miss many of the activities that I enjoyed, when my health and eye-sight were good. I recall many happy years at my old sewing machine, at my former home at 1601 Francis Avenue here in Houston where I was privileged to make dresses for orphans ^{BLIND CHILDREN,} and other under-privileged children of ~~many~~ many different races and religions.

I have enjoyed ^{MUCH} happiness, and have also suffered through many periods of grief and sorrow. Having lived 81 years, I am firmly convinced that the greatest possessions a person can hope for, are the love of family, friends and neighbor: ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ un-selfish service ~~XX~~ and aid to less fortunate people; and complete faith in Almighty God. Faith can convert into courage, and courage can help to make a complete person.