

Skidel – 26 July 2012 - Kupperman Family trip.



Our father – Zeev



Our father birth certificate

My father, Zeev (Welwel) Kupperman was born in Skidel in 1922, his father was Itshak Kupperman & his mother Chaja Kupperman the daughter of Kramar family.

My father came to Israel in 1936 while he was 14 years old, all alone leaving his Mother, Father, brothers & sisters in Skidel, it was still the time before this area moved to be under Russia as per the agreement of Molotov / Riventrop. In Israel he joined his uncle & aunt Eshel & Ester Kupperman (Eshel was the brother of my father's father (our grandfather) & Ester was the sister of my father's mother (our grandmother) – two brothers from the Kupperman family got married with two sisters from Kramar family.



Our grandfather Itshak



Our, grandfather, grandmother, father (right) & his sister Shifra our grandmother - Chaja

I guess that my father expected his family to join him in Israel & for this reason, his aunt & uncle went to Skidel in order to convince them to do so, however they never did it, when I came back, I was in touch with Mr. Levit David that was born in 1923 in Skidel & he told me that my grandfather had a show trial that was took place in the firefighting hall in front of all citizens, my grandfather refused to sell Vodka to one the none Jews & he blamed him to the authorities & he condemned 5 years in prison, maybe this was the reason why they did not make it to Israel, I guess that our grandfather was released from prison in order to move to the Ghetto with the rest of the Jewish in Skidel after the Nazi's occupation.

My father's family , mother, Father, sisters brother, all of them died, we have no idea if they died while in the Ghetto or later on, when they moved to the concentration camp Kolbasino near Grodno, any way, there is no record that even one of them was transferred to Treblinka or Auschwitz or survived .

My father joined the British army during WWII war & I know that he have made lot of efforts to find his family, it was too hard as this area was under Russia govern.



Kupperman Eshel & Ester visit Skidel trying to convince the rest of the family to come to Israel

Unfortunately, my father passed away very young, in 1965 while he was 43 years old & we never had the chance to talk with him about his childhood & his family.



With our father – in better time



Kupperman family in Skidel – in front of their house

For so many years, me & my mother, brother & sister have deep passion to visit Skidel, to be & to experience the place where my father spent his childhood, the place where my grandfather & grandmother & the rest of the family were born & lived, we planed this trip since the time when Belarus open its borders & thank god, we have managed to do it with the great help of Linda & my beloved cousin Irene.

In order to get to Belarus we had to pre arrange visa, of course, lot of beaurocracy (also money), but we got it in the Belarus consulate in Tel Aviv.
Some weeks before departing, I have send a letter (in Russian – google translator) to Ilya Alexandrovich Borisov as was recommended by Linda & Irene & also, I asked a friend of mine to call him, just to make sure he have got my letter & will wait for us.

We have spent the night, before going to Belarus in Bialystok - Poland & early in the morning we headed to the Belarus border expecting to "enjoy" a long time for the border procedure, it was great surprise while it took just about 40 minutes & we was on the other side of the border cross heading Grodno & Skidel.
We arrived to a Gasoline station on the highway in Skidel's junction & our driver Pioter (amazing guy) called Ilya to give him directions, very soon, we found ourselves in the main square of Skidel. As, a while ago, I have got a short movie of Skidel that was taken in 1926 by a member of Levine family (many thanks Linda), I could imagine this square

at that time while it was crowded with horse carriages & people. Now days, it is a green park with grass & trees & of course Lenin's statue in the middle.

We have waited for Ilya to come to pick us up in the Sq. & very soon, his daughter came to us & took us to his house. It was very exciting meeting, Ilya, with the translation of our driver Pioter told us about the Kramer family & a bit about Kupperman. After spending few hours in his house, asking lot of questions, we went to the street where the Kramer home & factory was, we met an old lady name Tanya that was born in Skidel & lived (still do) next to Kramer's residence, we showed he photos of the family & she recognized some of them. We hanged around & went to the street that my father was born, we have the address but, we did not find the house, I know that my grandfather owned a grocery. We went to see the place where the Ghetto was located – there is no remaining of the Ghetto Just an agricultural area. We saw the place of the Jewish cemetery, there are no remains of the cemetery out of one tombstone that was transferred by Ilya to the Christian cemetery near by, the rest was used by the Nazis for roads etc. Ilya put in the place a sign to memory the Ghetto & the cemetery.

After some hours of hanging around in the Shtatel, trying to breathe the old atmosphere & identity with our relatives, we said good bye to Ilya & insisted to show him our appreciation & we went for a short visit of Grodno, mainly the beautiful Synagogue that now is under reconstruction.

On the way back to Bialystok, it took us 3 hours (could be much more if we did not have this amazing man name Pioter with us), to cross the border.

Later on we went on to visit Lublin, Majdanek, Krakow & Auschwitz – very exciting & tough trip, about this trip, I will tell you next time.

For us, the visit of Skidel was a life time experience as it was the chance to re connect to my father & his family after loosing all of them, part of them without even come to know & may father, when he was so young.



**Near by Kramar office (grandmother family) - (left to right) :
Moodi, Aya, Aviva (our mother), Tzachi (myself), Hava my wife**



Ilya Alexandrovich Borisov



With Ilya in the memorial of 2330 Jews of Skidel that died – it is next to the Jewish cemetery & Getto.



Showing photos to Tania – Kramar neighbor



The only Jewish tombstone in Skidel



The location of the Ghetto as it is today



Bye Bye Ilya, thanks a lot & have good health



Almost the last place on earth with our "beloved" Lenin.