



In October 1928 Manuel caught the ferry boat from Danzig to Königsberg, a 6 hour trip. (Manuel was impressed with the way non-Jewish Germans went out of their way to direct him to this or that place.) In Königsberg they caught a passenger ship to Cuba. The boat seemed like a luxury craft. It slept 2-4 people in a room. Food

was plentiful, even for people like Manuel who ate no meat. There was a protest one night among the meat eaters. They claimed the meat was rancid. The captain tried to placate them with canned peaches. Manuel never ate anything so delicious.

The trip went smoothly.

In November they docked in Havana harbor. The immigrants were detained in a comfortable jail-like quarter while the Cubans decided which of the passengers would be allowed to enter the country. Manuel's blond companion was acceptable. Manuel was rejected. He couldn't stay in Cuba. Many others were rejected. Some would return to Europe. Others would seek asylum elsewhere.

A middle aged man in a dark suit came in and started talking to the rejected men. He had red hair and was clean shaven. He was from AYAS (The international Hebrew Immigration Society:) How could he help you?

Manuel asked him to send a telegram to his brother Dave at this address. The AYAS man said



he would.

HIAS, also known as the **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society**, is America's oldest international migration and [refugee](#) resettlement agency. Dedicated to assisting persecuted and oppressed people worldwide and delivering them to countries of safe haven, HIAS has rescued more than 4.5 million people since [1881](#).

Manuel waited. The building that housed him, the "Tris Kovnea" building was made of white adobe. It had a patio where he could bask in the warm Caribbean sun. The food was good.

Dave arrived 3 days later. He left when the telegram arrived, got on a train to Miami, and took the first boat to Havana. Dave contacted the AYAS agent, a man trusted by the Cuban government, and the AYAS man got Manuel a one day pass. They climbed in a taxi, and screeched through the narrow, windy Havana streets.

They visited a man named Sheftel, a Jew whose brother lived in East St. Louis. Dave gave Sheftel greetings from his brother, and they discussed the problem. Sheftel was a deeply tanned man in a white suit. He looked Spanish or Indian. He suggested they try to get Manuel into Santo Domingo.

Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) is one of 2 nations that occupy the large Caribbean island of Hispaniola. It is Spanish speaking. The other country, Haiti, is French speaking. It was a poor country with half a million inhabitants.

Dave, Manuel and the AYAS man took a taxi to the Dominican embassy. It was in a plush neighborhood, in a large white stucco building with arched windows and flags in front. The ambassador was available. Manuel remembers his office. It was light and airy. The floor had rich blue Spanish tiles (that look like the tiles on Wydown) The ambassador spoke no English. The AYAS man translated. Dave was a businessman. He was looking for a place in the Caribbean where he could start a factory. Manuel was his brother. He was looking for a home in the Caribbean. The factory would be built where Manuel lived. (There was also, apparently, money passed under the table.)

The ambassador said his country needed new blood, people to build it up, industry. Manuel was accepted as an immigrant.

Manuel remained in the compound until passage was arranged. Dave visited Sheftel again. Sheftel had a brother in Santo Domingo that he would contact. Then Dave returned to America.

When Manuel left for Santo Domingo his blonde Jewish friend from Danzig saw him off. He brought him a goodbye gift, a pineapple. After the boat set sail Manuel tasted the Pineapple. It was wonderful. He devoured it. Half an hour later he returned it to the sea. The ship to Santo Domingo was smaller than the ocean going craft. The Caribbean was rough. And Manuel had his first bout of sea sickness.

Sheftel's brother met Manuel at the boat. Manuel must have stood out in his dark woolen European suit. Sheftel took Manuel to his apartment where he



lived with his wife and son. He rented Manuel a room in the same building.

Santo Domingo is a tropical paradise. The rains are warm and brief. The vegetation is lush year round. Exotic flowers, like the blazing red poinsettias abound. The streets were paved with brick. People's clothes are light colored and scantier than they are in Europe. I can imagine how it must have felt after a life time of harsh Russian winters.

One day Manuel saw a familiar face. It wasn't anyone he knew, but it was a stranger with a skinny body and a curved nose.

"Sholom Aleichem."

"Aleichem Sholom."

The stranger was a Polish Jew named Shmuel Anfleeg. He

had just come to Santo Domingo from Curacao. He was working at a factory where he made \$6.50 a day. He lived on 35¢ a day. He had saved \$500, some of which he sent to his father in Canada. They became friends and roommates. Sheftel set them up in business. His brother sent purses to Santo Domingo. Sheftel paid \$3 for a purse and sold them for \$6. They were stylish, made of leather, and well put together. They sold them on credit. The purchaser gave them \$1 the first time, and 50¢ a week until the purse was paid off. The Dominicans didn't like Jews, so Manuel told people he was a German immigrant. They met 2 young Russian Jewish boys. One day they all tried to go to Haiti. They rented a wagon and drove across the island, past the pineapple and sugar plantations, past the slums and the villages. They were denied entrance when they reached the Haitian border.

There was a wealthy Jew on the island. He had a rubbing alcohol factory. He invited the boys over for dinner. He had a pretty daughter, but if Manuel was interested in her he did nothing about it. He didn't plan to spend the rest of his life in Santo Domingo.

In 1929 Santo Domingo had the biggest Hurricane in its history. The country was flattened. 1800 people were killed. 15,000 were injured. The newspapers showed pictures of General Trujillo walking through the ruins of his country. Manuel saw Trujillo walking through the streets. Behind him were guards carrying sacks of money. Trujillo handed a silver coin to everyone he saw.

Manuel's business was ruined. Everyone was displaced. Even if they could be found they had no money.

The hurricane also destroyed the hall where all the nations' records were kept. A few lawyers that Manuel knew had an idea. The law stated it was necessary to live in the country for 10 years before one could apply for citizenship. But all the records were gone. For \$100 they thought they could find 10 citizens who would swear they knew Manuel for 10 years. Manuel gave them the money. Within days he was a citizen. It was now possible to get papers, to travel, to see his brothers in America.

A month later Manuel packed his belongings and caught a boat to Cuba. He now wore a white suit, and a straw hat. His complexion was dark.



He looked like a Spaniard. In Havana he visited Sheftel's brother. He asked him how he should go to America. Sheftel remembered an article in the paper. A new small airlines was starting between Havana and Key West.

Manuel went to their small office and bought a ticket. However, he was informed, before they could bring him to America he would have to show the authorities in America that he had \$600, so he wouldn't become a burden on the state. Manuel assured him he would have the money.

Manuel wired Collinsville Illinois, U.S.A. "Send \$600 so I can come to America. Manuel". The reply said: "Kimmt Kusher?" (Are you coming legally?)

He wired: "Kusher."

The money came.

Manuel flew to Key West, took a bus to Miami, and a train to St. Louis.



Manuel's brothers came to the St. Louis station to meet the train from Miami. They wondered if they would recognize their brother who was wasted to escape, the army the last time Dave saw him.

It was winter in St. Louis. Everyone was bundled in long overcoats and hats. Harry knew how they would be able to recognize him. "He'll be wearing a straw hat."

They watched as a train pulled into the station and people began disembarking. Then suddenly a straw hat emerged from the train.



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"It's du." Harry shouted.

Manuel had arrived.

Manuel spent his early years in Vandalia. He worked in the back of the store. English came slowly. He watched how his brother bought and sold. He knew that when his time came he could handle the store.

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But he had entered the country as a visitor. He would soon have to leave. He could stay, of course, if he married an American. And he was ready to get married anyway.

Manuel was introduced to a few women in St. Louis and a few in New York. But no one seemed interested. True, he had his good points. He was nice looking. His brothers had money. But he was clearly a bad risk. His English remained primitive. He had no formal education. He was still a salaried employee. And he was quiet. Maybe he was shy; and then again...

And what would he do once he became a citizen? Would he dump the woman he had married? Did he have any integrity? any potential? No one could tell.

And then, as his time grew near he got lucky. (Or from my perspective 2 people got lucky.) Manuel gave Mr. Gitt and a stranger a ride to Kuni Bermi's house. The person who opened the door was a pretty girl. And Manuel wanted to meet her. Her name was

Sydine(Sheindel)



Pre wedding



middle age



citizenship papers



MANUEL 1951



MANUEL OPENS STORE IN WOOD RIVER




MANUEL AND HIS ZIONIST BUDDIES IN TORCZYN





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12 7245		IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION CARD	
Fredman		UNITED STATES	
SURNAME		DEPARTMENT OF LABOR	
Manuel			
GIVEN NAME			
Poland	Jan. 15, 1908		
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	DATE OF BIRTH		
Dominican	Brown (Brown)		
NATIONALITY	COLOR OF EYES		
PORT OF ARRIVAL	STEAMSHIP		
DATE ADMITTED	STATUS OF ADMISSION		
IMMIGRANT'S SIGNATURE			
ORIGINAL	IMMIGRANT INSPECTOR		

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