

My mother did not want to go. First she was pregnant. Second she was a well read woman. She knew in America you struggle. The streets were not paved with gold like some of the people came back and said it was. It was a hard struggle, and she didn't think, not knowing the language and all, that they could make a go of it.

So he left. And he promised to send for her when the baby was born. I (Sheindel--Sydine) was born in 1909. Sam in 1910.

The war broke out. (In the summer of 1915 The German army destroyed the Russian armies. They drove through Poland and into Russia itself. The following spring (1916) The Russians counter-attacked and drove the Germans from Russia.) When the Russians left, their policy was to burn the whole town completely down. The Germans came in.



I remember the screams and the hollers and everything else. I really don't know if I remember, or if they told me ...but all the (very small) children were on a big wagon. Little ones that could walk, walked with their parents. So, all of a sudden, I heard that one of the children was crushed. It

happened to be Sam. And they revived him. He was completely gone. And they started a fire. And they put his buttocks on a tepel, a training pot. They burned it or boiled it or something.

CHAGALL



And he opened his eyes. He was revived. But he was completely gone, they said. After the town was burned, my mother wrote my father that she wanted to come. At that time they said the Germans were wonderful. They gave the children chocolate. And they gave them flour. And while most of the Russian people went along with the Russian soldiers, we (the Jews) didn't like the Russians so much, to go with them. So we stayed behind. (It's just like the Arabs living in Israel during the war. Some stayed in the small towns and hamlets. That's what the Jews did.) They didn't have any milk, they didn't have anything. So they went to the field and they dug up radishes and onions. It was in late July, early August. "We were in a small village that each one had a plot of ground. We didn't live; we just took a

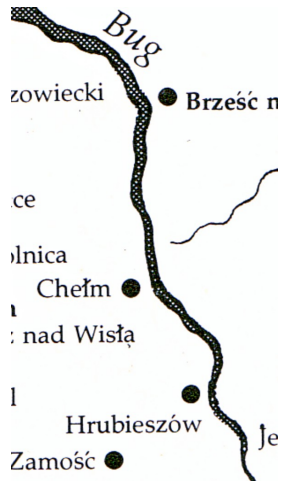
house until someone came back. I don't remember how long, but to me it was a long time. When the U. S. entered into war, and they were against Germany, everything was closed up (You couldn't go to America). They didn't have any money. They didn't have

anything. I don't know how they got the flour. But they used to make bread for the soldiers. And the soldiers used to keep pouring in all the time. Later on my mother was a smuggler. She used to buy uniforms. They (the soldiers) used to run away. And she used to buy uniforms on the black market. And sell it as cloth (for clothes) for the children and for people. All her money was lost. Of her three brothers, one was



married, 2 were hiding, so they wouldn't be drafted. There were younger sisters than she was; she was the oldest.

She got married when she was 15-16, in 1907. She was 25 during the war. She had to make a living for the whole family. The boys were hiding. The girls were afraid of being raped. Her sisters were very beautiful girls. So she was the whole breadwinner. She had one dress that was lined with tobacco. She used to give tobacco. I don't know where she got a hold of it. She was very weary and tired. She wanted to go to America. But my father couldn't be reached; there was no mail.



After we were in the fields and they all came back, and they all gave up, and the soldiers were gone and all. We went to live in Hrubieszów, 20 km to the north, near the Bug R. The Goldfarb's father, Avraham, and my grandmother (my mother's mother) Chia Fayge, were brother and sister. The Goldfarbs had an apartment. One small room and a great big room. Then on the side they had another room, a separate part--like 2 apartments. And they lived in the basement. So there was one house here and here on top and ... (3 apartments: 2 on top; one on the bottom.) They used to buy straw and cut it up by hand. They mashed the straw to feed the animals. A very poor living. We didn't have anyplace to go, so we stayed with the Goldfarbs, in the big apartment. (It was about 18 ft. long. The smaller room was about 9X6) There was my grandfather, grandmother, Sam and I, and my mother's 3 sisters and brothers.

No one could make a living. My mother started traveling from town to town buying cigarettes on the black market and that's how she made a living.

We got a loaf of bread a day. No one could stand in line. The lines were very long. My mother had to make some money so she could buy a loaf of bread. They couldn't let the boys do it because they would grab them..into the army: I don't know why they didn't let the girls. I guess they'd grab the girls too. So guess who stood in line? Sam and I. They put us in line at 8 in the morning, and they'd pick us up whenever we got through.



The thing that saved them was bran. You could get all you want of that bran. People cooked Nebech. That's why they were so healthy. Each one got a piece of bread a day. It was rye bread. My grandmother used to fast two times a week, Mondays and Thursdays. And she saved those pieces of bread for us. I was very fond of my grandmother. You know how you give a piece of candy? We got a piece of bread.

JEWISH REFUGEES WWI

We all slept together. And there wasn't much soap and there wasn't much water. And everybody was full of lice. My grandmother was constantly washing my hair, combing my hair, worrying about it. All of a sudden those boys were gone. I don't know what happened to them. I could never find out. And my grandmother, grandfather, mother,

Sam, and I, and one sister moved into a room that was 6X9--Maybe a little larger..because it had a stove and something or other. That's when my mother got sick. She had typhus. Goldfarb had a gorgeous brother, real tall with blonde hair. He was engaged to one of my aunts, my mother's sister. And he died of typhus. And I think we were contagious; and the other boys and girls went away; and we were moved in (to that small room.) When you had typhus, whether you lived or you didn't, they fumigated all the stuff that you had--including you. Then they cremated the bodies. It was a real tragedy. They didn't want to call anybody and tell them they had typhus, because cremation was forbidden by Jewish law. It was the worse thing that could happen. My mother was so sick she couldn't move for about 3 days.

So they sent me to :The grandmother (Chia) was the sister to Avram Goldfarb (Sheindel in Israel's father.) And the grandfather was the other side. He came from a very wealthy family. Their father had flour mills.

His brothers were in the flour mill business. They were integrated into Poland) Polish, not Yiddish, was their first language. They had maids and lived in a big house. They were thrown out too from that little town. So they came to Hrubieszow. But evidently they had a lot of money. They moved into a yeshev, into a big house. Their kids went to the gymnasium. They didn't associate too much with the Jewish people. But they still tolerated relatives. I don't know if they wanted to get rid of me or what. But they told me if my mother had eingemacht, strawberry jelly, she'd get well.

So late at night I ran about 1-2 miles; it seemed like forever to me. I was out of breath



when I got there. It was about 12 streets or so. I knew the house. And I ran.

When I got back I found that my mother was in the bathtub. And there were towels. And there were men sticking her with needles. And the steam, they had boiling water underneath. And the next day she was better ...she was fine. And that's why I wanted to be a doctor from then on.

A Stetl in Poland

I didn't know very much. I never went to school. There was no school available. There were Polish schools. But you had to go on shabbos. That was out of the question for me to go on shabbos.

They wouldn't let me. So I was an ignoramus. But whenever my mother had a few minutes, she used to tell wonderful stories. She was fluent in Polish, Russian, and Yiddish. because she ran the store. And she read a lot. My grandmother gave her a real good education.

I used to go around barefoot. I didn't have any clothes, any playmates, nothing. And I had an uncle that I hated, may he rest in peace, Yisrael. He always hollered at us. Maybe I was dirty. Maybe I didn't clean myself. I don't know. But he always hollered at us. And we would cuddle up together, Sam and I, cause my mother was gone most of the time. My grandmother actually raised us during the war years. My mother was traveling all the time, trying to make a few cents to feed the whole family. She was responsible for everybody.

Six blocks from us there was a big sooit. A sooit is a place where they grow all And you could walk through and you could pick up a piece of fruit and eat it if it had fallen on the

floor (and was stepped on.) And you bought your penny's worth, or groshen's worth. Anytime anyone wanted to go, I used to volunteer to buy the few pieces of fruit. Because, on the way, lots of time they gave you some. The war was going on. But there was a lull. I used to get scared. They'd find dead bodies (in the soot.) It was an area full of trees. That's where the soldiers were shooting from. One time I ran to get some fruit, and I walked over a dead man. I went screaming to the men. They came and sure enough it was a dead man. I used to have nightmares. I went through a lot. Market Day Poland 1925



You had to be tough. A lot of times you didn't eat. A lot of times you didn't drink. And you didn't have any parents. And they were hollering at you all the time. Of course grandmother, she was so gentle and kind. So was grandpa. They gave us lots of love. But that's it. They didn't have anything else. So we went out. My mother wrote desperately to my father. She'd do anything to come to America now. She'll scrub, and she'll clean. And she'll do everything. Then

the war was over. This is hearsay. I don't remember. The first letter my father sent \$200, and he said come as soon as you can, because they were talking of peace. My father volunteered for the army, so he automatically became a citizen. And he was accepted. And he was about to be inducted. As he was about to go in, the war was over. As a citizen he could bring his family in right away. At that time the law was that if you were a citizen you wife and children were automatically citizens. You didn't have to have a visa from anybody else. That's why he wanted to join the army, so he could get his family over. We had an easy time. We didn't need to worry about getting a visa or anything. We were American citizens. And he sent us papers right away. And he sent us money. He said: I want you to come.

So we started to come. And the revolution started. Kerensky took over. They started shooting people in the streets. That's the way it started. We were in Warsaw. There were thousands of people. They were all around. This was a field like the St. Louis Cardinals field. A great big park. I remember Warsaw. People were sitting on the ground. Some were begging. There were more people all around. And when the first train came you didn't have to buy tickets or anything. Everybody just dashed on and pulled them up. And there was a fellow there. I think my mother must have paid money or something. And they pushed us on the train, Sam, I, and my mother. But they pushed us on differently (onto different parts of the train.) And we couldn't find each other. For a while we were frantic.



Imagine one of your little children getting on that train. It was the most frightening think I remember in my life. But soon we were united. We were sitting on the train from Warsaw to Danzig. No tickets or nothing was collected. Everybody wanted to run. It was packed. One on top of the other. We didn't have suitcases or nothing. Just what we had on. So we went to Danzig. Somehow or other the papers were lost in the shuffle with the baggage. We didn't have any luggage.

So we came to Danzig. We were eligible first. But we didn't have any money. We were citizens, so we wrote to America. My father got a letter that we were in Danzig, to send us some money or send us some ship tickets.

They had a barracks in Danzig. They had 3-4 thousand people in a barracks. You slept in your clothes. Refugees came from all over. After we were there for a while and we were waiting we couldn't get out. Because we were examined by a doctor and a nurse for lice. And that's where I found out I had lice. So mother washed and she cleaned and she did everything. She didn't want to bring me with a shaved head. I was examined twice. Sam had lice too. But with boys it was OK. So they shaved Sam. He had pretty blonde hair. They shaved his hair off. And he got stamped. So after Sam got stamped he went for me (and stamped me by mistake.) They didn't pay any attention. A child was young and they stamped him. But they were very particular. (If it wasn't for that mistake I'd still be sitting with the lice there.)

We went on a slow boat to China. (The voyage to America). On the bottom passages. Everybody was sick. It was a dirty old ship. And my mother was so sick. And Sam was sick. And I wasn't because my stomach wasn't used to eating. One time they gave everybody lemon and grapefruit to eat. As soon as I ate the lemon I got sick to my stomach. And for a long time I never used to eat lemons. The sight of grapefruit in a shell made me sick. We were on the boat 14-16 days. We came before the holidays. That's when the revolution really broke out good, while we were on the boat.

We got off the boat (in New York.) We didn't have to go to Ellis Island. We were citizens. The Adamofsky family, Marilyn's mother and father and the brother, came to the boat. And they took us off. We stayed in New York for the holidays. I was vaccinated before I went to America. When I came to America my hand swoll up. So I couldn't go anyplace or do anything. They went to shul and they went places. They took my mother. And I was confined to the house. I couldn't talk to anybody. And I felt just miserable.



My father didn't come to meet us at the boat. He couldn't afford to go. He was in the insurance business. He couldn't leave because he was a collector who collected a nickel each week from people. If he didn't collect they'd "X" the policy.

After the holidays they put us on the train. I thought my father had a gorgeous home. We didn't have any electricity in Europe. But I saw electricity in New York. And the relatives lived in a very, nice apartment. She had nice furniture; she had 3 or 4 rooms, a living room, and furniture. And they had food. So I figured my father has the same thing.

We got on the train and they gave us food along. I think it took us 2 days from New York. I vowed that I'll go back someday and speak perfect English. There were 2 vows: I'll speak English; and I'll become a doctor so I can save people's lives. I don't remember how we got off the train. Maybe I was asleep. I don't remember daddy meeting us at the train. Anyway I came into the house. It was nothing like I expected. We had a kitchen and a bedroom and a living room. And we slept....you know. The Zuckers, my cousins . . . we saved up \$2000. In the 20's, it was after the war, everything was high, high, high. So people were giving presents. If you bring me in I'll give you something. So a cousin brings in a cousin, and the other fellow gives him money. They sold him junky furniture. One of those coal stoves I came in the house and my dreams broke; it was nothing; But the only thing was the promise of going to school, of starting school right away.

My grandfather was teaching Hebrew to boys and girls. Father brought over his father in 1913. My grandfather's wife was dead a long time. He married a second time. She was a shrew. He couldn't take it. So he left. He was a redhead. He was an older man, but he was young at heart. He was one of those men who should have been born 50 years later... right now. He reminded me of the roten ruf. But he was very well educated. Howard is named after him. He got married when he was 13. And they had about 10 children. When my father was born, my grandfather already had a grandchild. His wife was 36 when she died. So he had a house full of children, and he married for convenience the second time. He didn't have any children from the second wife. Besides Kuni, Bessie, Hanna, and

Bosha were the children that were left. Boshka was killed by the Nazis. She had a family. They had a store. She was doing fine. She didn't want to come over. But my grandfather brought the other children over. He saved penny by penny and he brought them over. But



they lived with my dad. They all lived together. My mother kept them all. She dressed them and bought clothes for them. She cooked for them and she washed for them. My mother was such a perfectionist, such a terrific gal. She was quiet, yet she was full of mirth and laughter. And she was deep.

My mother came over and she saw my father struggling. Hardly making a living. She said "I've worked all my life. I can open a store He said, well, you can't open a store. You can open a store, but you have to stay open on shabbos.

She said, all my life I observed shabbos. I cannot work on shabbos. You can take shabbos. Or we can close shabbos. We'll still make a go of it. I want to be in my own business. I want to do it. No. Unless you work on shabbos we're not going to do it.

They bought a store. They saved penny by penny. But they never opened a store. That was one of her frustrations.

Janie was born in 1922 or 23. Of course I had to baby sit with her or whatever. Mother got pregnant again 3 years later. She went out in the back yard, and she was hit by a car. She had a miscarriage. And that miscarriage cause (a lot of trouble.) She went to the hospital. I became the



balaboosta. I took care of the house. I had to quit school because there was a child at home. My father couldn't afford help. There was no help to be gotten. So I quit school. I was going to high school, and I had all A's in High school. Because I was determined to go to medical school. (Women in medicine) were very few and far between. "Ah! A girl doesn't go." and this and that. I didn't care. But there was a little girl, and there was a boy, and there was a grandfather. That was before the girls came in (from Europe.) And I was a young kid. My mother was in the hospital. And the only thing I could do was stay home. That's all. So I stayed home for 12 weeks. Stupid me, at the end of the semester I took finals. I didn't know nothing. I took home the books and I studied. I memorized everything. At the end of the semester I went and took the finals. And I made terrific grades on the finals, A's and B's. But without realizing it was just memory. But they counted the work you did in class too. And when they averaged my grades, I had a "C." "They passed me through. But it killed my chance of getting a scholarship for medicine. I went to high school for 2 years. I couldn't go anymore. I went to night school and I got my diploma after I started working.



It was the depression. At first I worked in the Famous Barr tube room. You know, you put your money in, and it comes back. It was a basement thing. I almost went out of my mind. There were 6 girls working in the room. And I couldn't stand the closeness. During

my lunch hour I found there was a place with a jobber position open. I went down. I said I'll work for anything if you have something. What are your hours. From 9 till 5. I used to come 7, and leave 7. Because they had a boy who used to work in the office and they put him in stock. I was only 16 years old. The name was Menken. The fellow

married the owner's daughter. The son-in-law, he was a foreigner too. And I didn't know how to take dictation, because I memorized my shorthand and typing. But I really didn't know too much. Anyhow I took it. My English wasn't too good either. The letters he wrote ...he didn't know too much himself. So it was OK. He waited. Like he'd go down the street. He would talk to this and that fellow. And about 6 o'clock he would come in and dictate a letter. And he'd say: "did you look up ?"

"Yeah. I looked up all the words in the dictionary. Everything is fine."

He said "I forgot to give him this sentence. Let me say something else to him."



As a result I'd stay until about 7 o'clock every night. Then I'd go home. Meanwhile I got my mother a girl because when she came home from the hospital she was sick. I got \$15 a week. I paid the girl \$3-\$4 to come in and do the cleaning. I kept some money for myself. Lunch I took along. I didn't eat lunch half the time. I gave some money (to the household).

I went to night school. I got my diploma equivalent. I finished in 2 years. I got a day school diploma, because I took the test for a day school.



On his return trip from Europe Harry loaned some money to a Jew from Astilla. He wasn't sure he would ever see it again, but he did. The man came to Illinois and repaid the debt. Then he asked Harry if he could help him find a landsmann named Bermi. The answer was, yes. Clara's father, Mr. Gitt, came from Krilov. He knew Mr. Bermi. Manuel drove them or picked them up. And when they rang, the bell a pretty girl opened the door. Manuel noticed. When he picked Mr. Gitt up he told him he would like to meet the Bermi girl.



The Bermi girl who needed a husband was Bess, Kuni's sister. She came to the U.S. in 1926 and wasn't a citizen. She wanted a husband who was a citizen.) Nonetheless a dinner was arranged for the Bermi family to meet the Fredmans in Collinsville. The whole family was going... everyone that is but Sydine. EDNA MALEN

At the time Sydine had a job as a secretary at Edison Shoe Company. It was a high paying, responsible job. She had friends. And she had a lot of confidence in her futureexcept for one thing. She had just broken up with someone-- someone she had dated for a long time--someone whose family found Sheindel unacceptable because she was in their eyes, really just an immigrant girl from a poor religious family. They put pressure on the boy and the relationship ended.

When she met Manuel, Sheindel was on the rebound. She watched Bess get all fapitized.

But Sydine had frequently reiterated that she was not going to marry an immigrant. Sydine was wearing a skirt, blouse, and bobby sox.

Bess asked her why she didn't come. "Don't worry," Bess said, "He won't even look at you. No one will look at you."

Sydine said "I can make him, if I want to. I can take him away from you."

"I'd like to see you do it."



And she did. She sat next to Manuel in the car and at the dinner table. She listened as he told her about Santo Domingo, how hard it was to get into the country, and how much he really wanted to stay in America."

Sydine remembered wanting to travel, to go to Israel, to see the world. She found Manuel very shy and bashful. She wanted to make sure he would ask her for a date. She wanted to "make him" for him

to say he liked her.

And he did. And they went out again many times that month. (He spoke Yiddish. She spoke and wrote Yiddish, but preferred English. She was a citizen and if she married him he could become a citizen.)

And she agreed to marry him. She says didn't intend for it to be more than a favor. Who knows what her motives were.

They got married on a farm. That evening there was a reception at the Coronado hotel in St. Louis. People danced. Sydine had a few drinks, and spent the night with her new husband. She recalls having to buy him pajamas. His English was very weak. The next day they boarded the bus to Vandalia. They spent the night at the small hotel above the



drug store and had a meal with Neil. Sydine remembers Neil as being volatile, whose anger tended to flare. He believed in disciplining his children by spanking them. She remembers a time when Neil disciplined his son Herb... They sat down at Neil's table and the chicken was served. The maid, who did not understand Kashrut, had not cut off the rear of the chicken before she cooked and served it. Neil grew angry and threw the chicken across the floor. Sydine (Sheindel) was embarrassed. When she returned from Vandalia Sheindel told her mother that they're not our kind of people.

She continued to live with her parents. Manuel would come to St. Louis, they would go on a date, and he would sit and talk to Tzivia, Sheindel's mother.

In order to become a citizen Manuel had to leave the U.S. and then come in as an immigrant. Sheindel heard he had gone to Canada, and that he was arrested and spent a night in jail.

(On June 5, 1932 Sydine and Manuel married. 6 weeks later on July 22, 1932, Manuel Crossed from Detroit into Windsor Ontario (alone). On August 22, 1932 - he obtained a visa to travel from Havana to Santo Domingo, and on Sept 4, 1932 - Manuel departed to Havana Cuba by ship (alone) Two days later, on Sept 6, 1932 - he returned from Havana Cuba to Key West. According to Ronnie Reisler, Sydine was concerned when Manuel left in July 1932, the month after the wedding, and didn't come back for while. She told Ron that she wasn't entirely sure if he was going to come back. "She wasn't sure that the marriage was going to work out.") Over the next few years Manuel continued to visit Sheindel and her family and she periodically thought about getting a divorce, but she didn't. When they were together communication was limited. Her Yiddish was poor, as was his English. So he continued to parts of his visit shmusing with Tzivia, Sheindel's mother. Tzivia liked him. She saw him as a gentle humble young man who obviously loved Sydine.



The post marriage courtship lasted years. After a time Sydine decided Manuel was a man she could be happy with. One day on a visit to Vandalia she saw a house she liked. She told him that if she could have a house like that she would move in with him. He rented the house within the week, and she moved to Vandalia and they started having children. Sheindel Miriam bat Alkanah Bermi And bat Tsivia Leah

I remembered that Mom was already living in Vandalia when Bessie married Harry because they went with them to Springfield Illinois. The story Dad told was that Mom was very pregnant with Steve and the justice of the peace's wife thought she was the bride and made her husband conduct the ceremony immediately when the four of them showed up in 1935. *L: Harry and Bess Berger*



Bess, Sam, Sydine, Manuel





MANUEL &
SADIE
FREIDMAN

RISSE
STUDIO



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