In loving memory of my husband, Sam,
my parents, Zipa and Zalman Mordecai

and

for the enjoyment of my children

Miriam and Leonard
Dorothy and Martin
Daniel and Eleanor

and my grandchildren

Allen Howard
Ronna Beth
Barry
Larry
Caren Shelly
Kenneth David
Steven Charles

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Introduction:

I don't think of myself as a writer. It is hard to write a life history because one cannot always express all the episodes that occur in one's life. You have to omit so much of what happens in life. You cannot tell the bad happenings because you are trying not to remember what happened. Maybe it happened to somebody else. So you pick the happy occasions and pretend the unhappy ones did not occur.

A great writer I am not. I started to write for my grandchildren. Children and grandchildren are anxious to know their heritage. I am one of the fortunate immigrant mothers--grandmothers--who lived to be able to tell the story in detail. I tell the story of my survival and how we came to America. I write just to keep myself busy and to express myself...to gather my thoughts....to spill it out.

I didn't know how to write when I was younger. I didn't have the time. My advice, especially for grandmothers, is to start to write for your children. It will give them the best gift of all.

My children and grandchildren said, "Keep on writing, please." So I wrote.

## Life in the Shtetl

That I was born is a fact; but when I was born, I really don't know. It was probably about 1900. When I came with my family to the United States on July 4, 1923, I gladly accepted this as my birthdate.

I was born in a clayn (little) shtetl in Samotevich, Russia. Samotevich was in the state of Mogelerb. About 500 families lived there.

Our own family consisted of six brothers and two sisters. I was the third born child, with two brothers born before me. Parents were not the happiest when a girl was born because it was harder; you had to start as soon as possible to save for her dowry. But when a boy was born, there was rejoicing. They put a record of his birth in a Bible to know his Bar Mitzvah day. Girls were considered a big disadvantage.

My mother, Zipa Chafkin, was a very beautiful woman. She was 5' 3" tall and had an oval face, big brown eyes, and long black hair. She was a pillar of strength and was responsible for raising the children. My father, Zalman Mordecai, was born in Samotevich to a family of five brothers and five sisters. His father, a Talmudic scholar, sent him to the Yeshiva. He was a handsome, pious, and good hearted person. He would give his last ruble to the needy. In business, he never asked if you had money. If the customer paid, it was alright; if not, it was alright, too.

After my parents' marriage they set up their housekeeping in a home my father's father gave them for a wedding present. My Zaydy, Bobe and family moved to a big city, Novomoskovsk.

My Bobe was married at the age of 15. Her parents selected her 17-year-old husband because he was a pious man. They did not see each other until after the ceremony. Zaydy ruled his wife and family like King Lear. When one of his daughters was engaged to a musician, he disowned her. Bobe was not allowed to go to her wedding or visit with her because

she disgraced the "mishpocha" by marrying a musician. We were concerned with "yikhes" (status), and a musician was beneath our social class.

Love and respect are the main ingredients in married life. This love and respect never existed in my parents' life, unfortunately. Arguments and quarrels were a daily occurrence in the family. This was true of the majority of shtetl marriages. Life was hard and painful. Families just existed, not knowing from day to day whether they would survive.

Our village was surrounded by four villages. We were in the middle. In the middle of the street--across from our house--was a big well which was used by everyone on the street. Water was carried in big buckets.

In general, the life of a girl was not the happiest. There was a shortage of men because of lot of boys were killed by wars and pogroms. There was too much competition from other girls. The girl that was born to a rich family was able to get married without any difficulty because she had a dowry. The more money she had, the better man she was able to marry. The boys depended on the dowry to be able to start to make a living after marriage. The typical dowry was about 300 rubles. With that sum of money they were able to open a little store in the main business district. The majority opened grocery stores and sold flour for bread, cold herring, salt and kerosene. Other stores sold dry goods--ready-made clothes or material. Some orphan girls were married off by the shtetl's rich citizens.

They collected 100 rubles for the dowry. Of course, the boy she married was probably a poor shoemaker, but the girl was happy to be married.

Samotevich was a very pretty village. The houses were made from logs and had straw roofs. There were many trees.

At six o'clock one would see hundreds of cows marching in the streets to the pastures. One elderly man and his two sons, ages ten and twelve, helped the cows march in straight rows and brought them back at eight in the evening.

When I was 8 years old I used to get up at 6 a.m. to milk the cows and send them out to the pasture. Our beautiful red cow was named Krasney and had velvet hair and big horns. She walked like the leader of the herd and provided the children with milk.

During the Revolution of 1921, our beautiful cow was even arrested and put in jail for three days. She had tried to reach a bite of hay from a wagon. She was chased and grabbed by the horns and dragged to the jail. We cried from joy when we saw her coming back home. She was so happy to be home.

We had another true friend--the white horse. We purchased him as a youngster one winter. His feet were frozen. We carried him into the kitchen, working with all kinds of health applications until his feet were unfrozen. We rejoiced with his recovery.

Twice a year my family was able to purchase jackets, caps, and blankets. Not too many people had money to buy more than

once a year. Even the middle class made only one purchase a year. A suit or a dress lasted for many years; a coat for centuries.

Our shtetl had a dozen rich people. The majority were middle class; they made a living. We had one synagogue--Orthodox. In the synagogue the men and women were separated. The women were seated in a room that had little windows so that the women could look into the mens' side. While the women prayed, especially on holy days, they cried all through the services. Some women were not able to read. My mother was very good at praying and was often surrounded by the women who could not read. We had our own Torah and prayer books, and every Friday and Saturday we had services in our home. My father was the main "hazen." He was very educated and could be the rabbi for his village. He chose not to be the rabbi because the salary was not enough to feed his family of nine.

My house consisted of a living room, a table with a place for 12 people, three benches, six chairs, one dresser, one bedroom with two beds, and a big clock and mirror on the wall. Not every home had a clock. The kitchen had a big oven with bricks inside, and on top there was a small floor with bricks and a chimney stack. This was used for cooking and for heating the whole house. We also used the top of the oven for sleeping at least eight people, and, if necessary, ten people. When we slept on the benches, someone's feet were frequently

in my mouth.

Our shtetl had a bathhouse. The men used it on Friday; the women, on Wednesday. The price for getting into the bathhouse was three kopecks for adults and one kopek for children.

As a youngster I had many chores to perform. I had to peel a big kettle of potatoes for breakfast and bring in some logs to start the oven. Two or three people ate from the same dish. We had potatoes and sour milk every day, except on Friday. Our Friday meals consisted of blintzes and big pancakes. We used ten pounds of flour to feed our family of 11. Of course, we still had to bring pancakes to our neighbors. To this day I can still remember the delicious taste of the pancakes, covered with sour cream or melted butter.

On Friday night we had chicken soup and meat balls. Father and mother and all the boys were dressed up in their Shabbos clothes. They were a sight to see as they marched from synagogue.

Saturday was the happiest day of the whole week. Mother baked the challah, and you could smell the delicious aroma for blocks. The taste was out of this world.

The Shabbos dinner consisted of tsimmes, potatoes, kasha with beans, and a big kugel. We sure did not know about well-balanced meals or dieting. But I assure you that when I came to the United States, I did not know what a doctor looked like. The same was true for our entire family.

We raised everything in our own garden. The air was fresh and clean. The meat was butchered by us. We raised chickens

and enjoyed fresh eggs. We used to pick red and black berries--and were they delicious! We also picked mushrooms in the woods, and chav (spinach) in the fields. This was a great help during the famine. We cooked chav by the barrels, and together with potatoes, it helped to quench the hunger. Hunger was the most painful during the war and the Revolution. Sometimes I wonder if I am not "zindig" for complaining about the food I don't like or for watching my diet. God, we thought, if we would just have enough bread to eat, how happy we would be.

The one thing I did not like was that there were no toilets. This made life particularly difficult during the winter when it was ten below zero. It was so cold that the walls of our house were covered with frost and some snow. The only warm place was on top of the oven. I remember all the children and my father crawling to the top of the oven and singing and telling stories. These were the most enjoyable times.

The nights of Shabbos and the holidays were special because it was our only recreation. There were no radios or movies. We walked in the street from one end of the shtetl to the other. The trees in the woods were so straight--and magnificent. They appeared to look to the skies.

As each new year approaches, I remember the new year in my shtetl. God, what a difference--like night and day. Starting with slichos and twelve o'clock midnight, a voice of an old man announced time for slichos. Whoever was asleep arose in a hurry to run to synagogue to pray. Rosh Hashanah was a solemn

two-day festival, with delicious meals and prayers till three o'clock in the afternoon. Women were crying all through the services. Each one asked for a good year. I was in shul with my mother all through the services because I was very religious as a young girl.

My mother was the main prayer in the whole women's group. Every woman just listened to her prayers and continued to cry.

The night before Yom Kippur there was a custom called "kapparot." Every man had to have a white rooster and every woman, a white hen. They took the live chicken and circled it over their heads three times as a symbol of expiating sins.* Special prayers were said and the crying continued.

We waited for the choichet late at night. He came to our home and killed the chickens.

The day before Yom Kippur everyone used to go to the neighbors to ask forgiveness. We brought a piece of cake to each neighbor to wish them a sweet year. At four o'clock we were ready for the fast dinner, the most delicious meal of the year. There was chicken soup, chicken (all you wanted), challah, cake, piroshkas (from poppy seeds and honey), and tea. After we were through with dinner, we all put on our yom tov dresses and suits. We waited a whole year to wear them. Nobody was equal to us in the joy we felt when we entered the shul. God, how solemn, spiritual, holy and fearful: the spirit was in every heart and mind.

*Kapparot is practiced now only by very Orthodox Jews on the day before Yom Kippur

## Sukkot and Simhat Torah

These were the best of the holidays. Sukkot was so joyful. We built special dwellings and decorated them with fruits and flowers. We had our meals there because it's considered a big mitzvah to eat in the Sukkot. We danced, played games and sang.

Simhat Torah was a spiritual and happy spectacle to watch. The Torahs were dressed in beautiful mantles with silver crowns. The men carried the Torahs and everyone danced and sang until they were exhausted. After the happy service we went home to enjoy our good food and drinks. Only on Simhat Torah could you get drunk.

## Purim

A couple of days before Purim my mother was very busy baking hamentashen. In the morning we fixed up plates with all kinds of goodies and went around to all the neighbors to wish them a happy Purim. They then took a piece off their plate and put back something else. In the evening we had a big suda (celebration) with our relatives and friends. We wished that all Hamens would disappear from the world and that next year we should celebrate in Eretz Yisrael (land of Israel).

## Pesach

We made a general yearly cleaning before Pesach. All the rivers had begun to unfreeze and we could start to wash our clothes. We would wash the whole household because all winter long we could not. Potatoes were stored underneath

the floors and even the chickens had to be in the house during the cold winter. During the month of April the house was in a turmoil. There were matzos to bake since we did not have any bakeries. Fortunately, we had special tables to roll the matzos and a big oven to bake in. The water, needed to mix the dough, had to be brought in from the "Broonen"--the well. Before sundown, on the day the matzos were to be baked, there was a celebration. It was a big event and mother and father were so excited. Ten women, dressed in white dresses, arrived for the happy occasion. They were ready to start rolling the matzos. When my matzos were finished, I went to help them. We helped each other bake the matzos.

My father was the main mixer of the dough. I was considered one of the best matzo rollers around; I made them thin like paper. It took a whole day to finish the project. During the week of Pesach about one hundred pounds of white flour would be used. Some of the leftovers were used for the next few months of the year.

After the feast started, we had Kasha with milk, fruit, and a glass of tea with cookies.

Was I glad the holiday was over. I was very tired and my mother was especially exhausted. Preparing for the holiday was not an easy undertaking. Days before you would bring in all the tables, scrub them clean, and remove all the debris and dirt that had accumulated during the previous six months. This included getting the fifty (or so) chickens out of the house. What a relief!

## Passover

Passover was the most spiritual and joyful holiday. We prepared for one month for the Seder night. There was also the tradition of putting some pieces of bread on the window-sills the evening before the Seder. Dad scraped together, in a little dish, the bread which was to be sold to a gentile person. This was the Redemption from chomets.

The big table was covered with a white table cloth and the best silver and dishes were in place. Father was dressed in a white kittle (robe). He looked like a king on his throne with his two white pillows behind his back. That night mother was dressed in a white dress; she looked like a queen. All the children were dressed in holiday clothes. We marched to the table like Moses and the people did in Egypt 2,000 years before. Mother lit the candles and the Haggadah prayers began.

Our delicious meal consisted on chicken matzoh ball soup, gefilte fish, tzimmes, tea and cookies. We all wished that next year we would be in Jerusalem.

Pesach celebrated the liberation--the exodus--of the Jews from Egypt. Pesach represented the hope that we would be liberated from the Czar. We were the slaves in Russia as were the Jews in Egypt. We looked for a way to survive. Religion was our means of survival. If not today, then there is a tomorrow.

## Long Winter Nights in Russia

Winter in Russia usually began around the first of November. It was so severe that even the pogroms were frozen. It started with a deep snow--about 18 inches high--and the temperature was frequently below zero. Your face was frozen the minute you ventured outside the house. The snow in our shtetl stayed for 6 months and some of it was never removed during the duration of the winter. We were locked inside the house because the snow was so deep. There was no way for any travel, and even short walks were an ordeal.

The "chedar" was held in our home--and in other homes. Children from three to fifteen were given religious training by a Rebe. Our "chedar" had twelve to fifteen children.

The winter was doubly hard for my mother because the children stayed in the house all day. We had only one room and our place was a little crowded....but we managed.

## Summer in Russia

The summertime in Russia was great, but also full of hardship and pain. In addition to raising nine children, mother worked fifteen hours a day to help my father provide for the family.

The business included leasing seven acres of land from rich land owners and cultivating and planting all kinds of vegetables: cabbage, potatoes, cucumbers, beans and carrots. My family would then sell the vegetables to the peasants and to the people from the shtetl. My mother had to get up at six o'clock in the morning. She would wake the girls in the village

next to ours to help plant in the fields. These were gentile girls; no Jewish girls planted. The whole day was spent seeing that things went along with the planting. Some days the hired help included a hundred girls. Their pay was 25 kopeks a day and my mother gave them herring for lunch. The girls provided the bread.

We planted, watched the vegetables grow, and prayed that rain would come when it was needed. But instead, a heat wave came and burned out the crop. So, the next year you try again; there is no other way to make a living.

One year we rented a big orchard of apples, pears, and plum trees. Two partners and their families helped with the chores. We watched carefully during the day to prevent anyone from stealing the fruit. My father and his partners watched during the night. It took almost six months for the fruit to ripen and gentile boys and girls were hired to pick the fruit. The Jewish boys were busy studying Torah. The fruit was then packed in wooden crates and shipped to Gomel for sale. This work was not one of the easiest undertakings.

When I was 16 years old, one land owner, Andre Petroveski, offered us a free acre of land to be used for the planting of vegetables. The profits were to be divided between the two of us. In Russia, Jews could not own their own land. The acre of land was located in a village ten miles from our shtetl.

I moved into the partner's house, hired a man, and with the help of my white horse, took care of the plowing. In

addition, three girls were hired to plant the vegetable seeds. The project took six months. It was not so easy for me because I was too religious to eat any cooked meals; I just had cheese, milk, eggs, vegetables and fruits. On Friday I harnessed my white horse and wagon and made the trip home for Shabbas. On Sunday I returned to continue working.

## My First Love--Levi

It was spring; I felt so good. I was twenty years old and considered one of the beautiful girls in the shtetl. The Revolution of 1917 was taking place and gangs of bandits were everywhere, especially in the villages. People were moving to safer communities.

A boy who had just arrived from another village passed our house, jumped out of his wagon, and seeing me standing alone, said, "Hello." Levi was tall and handsome; he had brown eyes. In one moment we both knew that we were in love.

Levi used to say that he fell in love with my curls. How wonderful life is when you're in love, especially for the first time. It seems that the whole world is yours. Every flower sings to you and every blade of grass talks to you. I think we felt more romantic because there were no other distractions--no entertainment, except love. In our shtetl, love was much stronger than any other place. Dancing and singing--that was the way of life.

After the first meeting we continued seeing each other every day and every evening. Love was growing stronger and

stronger. Unfortunately, life does not always end up the way you hoped it would.

One summer morning half of the shtetl went up in flames and our house was destroyed. We were forced to move in with our uncle who lived in another town, not too far from where we lived. My aunt thought that Levi was not rich enough for me; she felt that I deserved a better fellow as a husband. Without my knowledge, she told Levi that she disapproved of me. She told him that if he loved me, he would discontinue seeing me. Thinking that this was the right thing to do, he followed her wishes. My girlfriend, Hannah, was glad that we had broken up, and she married him right away.

## Max and Sam Leave Russia

Since 1913 our dreams are spinning and spinning. Little did we know that war was imminent. In 1914, when the war broke out, life changed drastically. My oldest two brothers, Max and Sam, had left for the United States in 1913 to escape the Czarist military service.

My life was hard, working to support my family. The Revolution was a horror. We stopped getting any mail from my brothers. Murders were being committed every day all over Russia--and in our shtetl. The only person in authority was a clergyman, Grigori Y. Rasputin, adviser to the Czar and the Czarina. The royal couple believed Rasputin was a holy man who was saving the life of Prince Misha (Alesha).

When the monstrous Revolution began in 1917, they took away the little that my parents possessed. It was called

"speculating." Anyone caught with the smallest amount of goods of any kind would be sent to a labor camp.

The Czarist government was already a model of goodness against the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were worse than the Czarist.

My family was actually on the brink of starvation. For months we did not have a piece of bread in the house. The farmers would not sell any grain or wheat because the currency was worthless. Our only salvation was my going to work in the fields of rich land owners. I worked helping to gather the crops. My payment was seven pounds of flour a day. My mother w uld mix the flour with 50 pounds of mashed potatoes and make prisnakes (big flat pancakes). They were baked and eaten with milk or cheese.

## Lillian--the teacher

During the winter of 1920, I was fortunate to get a teaching job. I had less than two years of high school. Since I was respected and loved by many people in my shtetl, they entrusted me to teach 5-year-old Jewish children to write and read in Jewish and Russian. All of my students were from Samotevich; all were undernourished and hungry.

The school consisted of one, average size room. To heat it, each child was responsible for bringing in one piece of wood every day.

My salary was not paid in money. Once a month I received 40 pounds of flour (for bread), one pound of kerosene and enough material for a coat. I made a long blue coat...and the whole world was mine. The coat lasted until I came to the U. S.

I received a pair of shoes annually.

While I was teaching first grade, I received a permit to go to Moscow to buy some Russian books. Moscow was experiencing real famine and people were dying in the streets. It was a dangerous trip. I knew that one way to help my family to survive was to buy some kerchiefs in Moscow and then sell them to the peasant women in the four villages. We would receive flour in return.

My cousin and I started on foot. We had to catch a train forty miles from our shtetl. I stood in line for one whole day just to get the tickets, and it took two days and two nights to catch the train. I slept on the dirty floor of the train station. The trains were designed for cattle, not for humans. After we arrived in Moscow I was recommended to a doctor and we slept at his house. In the morning I succeeded in purchasing four dozen kerchiefs from a Moscow market. But now we had to face the problem of carrying them home safely. If the Bolsheviks caught me, they would send me to a labor camp in Siberia. Since I was young and good looking, I would be used for the entertainment of the soldiers.

An idea struck me. I sewed the kerchiefs together into shorts, dresses, and blouses. Then the doctor bandaged my head and face--like a sick person--so nobody would suspect me of any wrong doing.

In Moscow I can still hear the cry of helplessness from people who were running in all directions. Germans were massing their troops hoping to occupy Moscow. We ran with the masses towards the train station trying to get out of Moscow. They

had stopped selling tickets to civilians. True, the trains were running, but just for soldiers. Fortunately, as night arrived, we crawled unnoticed on the top of an old, slow moving train. At the next city, Bobruysk, we waited again until dark. Exhausted, we were able to get some bread and water. I took a chance and crawled inside the train. There I found a nice young soldier and told him that I had just had an operation and that my brother was taking care of me until I came home. He suggested that I crawl on the top of the bunker and pretend to be his sister. I was lucky.

We arrived in the city of Vitebsk and were able to get tickets to Smolensk. We finally arrived in Suraze, where we spent a week with an aunt and uncle by the name of Samanchfolow.

A week later I finally arrived back at the shtetl--after walking forty miles. I had the personal satisfaction of knowing that I had saved my family from starvation. I walked with the peasants who were all carrying bags of merchandise.

For two days my family did not have much food to eat. My father looked so pale and tired. As soon as I was able to untangle my skirts, mother took some kerchiefs to the nearest village and sold them for 50 pounds of flour. Every kerchief was a treasure in itself. These kerchiefs were worn by the gentile girls when they attended church or got dressed up. My kerchiefs played a major part in our survival, for no matter what the price, the girls were ready to pay.

Shabbos was nearing. We heated the big oven, baked some prisnakes, and felt that happy days were here again.

## The Revolution of 1917

I remember one morning at 7 o'clock I was awakened by shouts and cries from people in the street. Rushing to see what was happening, I found everyone shouting, "Long live the Revolution." The streets were filled with joyous people and we thought that better days would be coming our way. Little did we know that the future would bring misery.

I can still picture the horrors of the Revolution. Gangsters roamed the country killing and robbing the Jewish people. This was especially true in the small shtetls and villages because nobody was there to stop them. The villages which had just a small number of Jewish families were all killed. We were forced to hide in the homes of Gentiles, especially at night. It was pretty safe during the day because the gangsters wouldn't dare to strike at this time.

Fortunately, our shtetl was one that contained many Jewish stores where salt, kerosene, sugar and herring could be purchased. Ivan Savitsky, the main gangster leader, lived in our vicinity. The villages that surrounded us sent out a warning message to Savitsky telling him that if he came to our shtetl, he and his gang would be killed by the Gentiles.

In our shtetl were five landowners who lived with their families on hundreds of acres of land. Most of the land was rented out to the peasants, and the landowners treated the people very nicely. I was very good friends with their children; on Saturday nights we used to go for rides. In the winter we enjoyed ourselves on sleds. A week after the REvolution, the ignorant mob burned whole estates, killing

all the families. What a tragedy! The killings in Russia went on for years and years. Leon Trotsky was trying to bring the army from chaos and destruction to order. The army was hungry.

I remember Lenin, the first dictator of Communist Russia. My cousin, Moishe, was the right hand of Lenin. Alexander F. Kerensky, a socialist, became premier. Kerensky was a highly educated person, but he did not understand that the people were illiterate and that their primary interest was in the land and in obtaining food. He did not last more than six months.

I read in the papers that the Czar and his family were killed and that the whole intelligentsia were destroyed. Luckily, the Jewish population were educated and the Bolsheviks turned to the Jews to help run the government.

Joseph Stalin was one of the cruelest rulers in world history. When he came to power, he disposed of all the Jewish government jobs. Only one man of Jewish ancestry remained, Litvenov, Ambassador to the United States during the Roosevelt Administration. He was the man who influenced Roosevelt to recognize Russia and signed a treaty with the United States.

During the Revolution all businesses were forbidden to be run by private citizens, and if they caught someone selling or buying, they sent them to labor camps or prisons.

The War of 1914 and the Revolution was especially hard on us because we were considered bourgeoisie. We were in a small business and the government confiscated everything we had. The most prominent citizens were the shoemakers, dressmakers, and the peasants.

## Fifel: 1921

During May of 1921, my friend, Fifel, and I were sitting in the back of my home. Fifel was handsome--tall, blonde, and blue eyed. He was 25; I was 23. We knew each other for years and years since we were raised together. I always adored him but never hoped that he would ever tell me that he loved me. We used to go out mostly with a group. That evening, when Fifel declared his love for me and told me how he secretly had admired me for a long time, I was the happiest person in the world. At last my dreams came true.

We started to see each other every evening, enjoying every minute we were together. Every Saturday we walked in the woods and picked berries and flowers. The skies were a clear blue, and the birds were singing. The world belonged to us. We walked hand in hand dreaming of a bright future.

Fifel was in business with his father and his older brother. They had a nicely furnished 5-room house. Their business was cattle and they also had a butcher store. In the shtetl they were considered well off and I was considered a lucky girl.

But at the end of 1921, the emigration restrictions to the United States were lifted, and my brothers, Max and Sam, started to send letters and affidavits for us to come to the States. How heartbreaking it was not to receive any letters for nine years. When at last that letter came from my brothers announcing the good news, you could understand our happiness and joy. We were to be reunited with our loved ones.

At last my mother could see her beloved children. My father was happy to hear from his boys, but not happy about going to the U. S. To him it was a tragedy. He felt that he and his children would have to work on Shabbos in the U. S. and that America would mean a weakening of his faith. Going to the U. S. was a fortunate opportunity for my family, but for me it was difficult. I was torn between two worlds--the love for my brothers and family, and the love for my boyfriend, Fifel. I cried for joy knowing that at last I could see my brothers, but my heart was full of pain knowing that I had to give up the one I loved. There was no way for Fifel to come to the U. S., but I hoped that once I arrived, I would be able to bring Fifel there, too.

## Preparing to leave Russia

The first step in preparing to leave Russia was to get birth certificates. In our shtetl we never had anything like a registration. We had a Jewish magistrate, who was called a "starosta." His name was Moishe Bar and he was a little man with a big heart. Moishe Bar made out the certificates in order to get the visas.

Another one of the requirements was for my parents to have eye examinations from a well-known doctor who lived in the city of Homel. We traveled by horse and buggy for three days and three nights. While traveling on the road, we encountered an area of quicksand. We screamed for help and some peasants helped us out of that distress. We arrived safely at the doctor's place. His name was Morris Goldberg, so it was not difficult to get a good report on the examinations of my parents.

It looks as if I am now becoming one of the wandering Jews--running all over the country getting permission to leave.

My first stop was Surash, where I got a train to Gomel. It took me two days and two nights to get there. At last I am at the office where the certificates had to be certified. What a heartbreak to hear a man named Ditlow say that the rules had been changed. By the new rules, I am now two days late with the applications. I explained to him what a tragedy it would be to my parents if they could not see their children in America. He told me, "Dear girl. Go back to your hotel and change the dates on your papers and come back tomorrow."

You can imagine my joy in getting the visas. One month later the government shot Mr. Ditlow. He was too kind for the gangsters.

In the summer of 1923 we started to prepare for the voyage to the United States. We sold our house for 350 rubles. We also sold some of our furniture and gave the rest of it away. The potatoes and the flour were given to some of our relatives. On our trip to Moscow we carried the chicken fat in gallon jugs. We baked 100 pounds of bread, sliced it, and also carried it in sacks. Somebody told us that on the boat we would not have enough to eat. What a foolish idea! We had plenty to eat.

I remember it like yesterday. The night before we left, I did not sleep. We had a party at my Bubbe's and uncle Shelnuchen's home. After everyone left, my boyfriend and I talked until eight in the morning. The house was full of people and the whole

shtetl came to say goodbye. They all followed us through the town, crying. It was snowing that day, and very cold. Two sleds were standing near the house, and I recall seeing a man named Esau.

We arrived late at night at our mama's Bubbe in Surash. Their family of eight lived in a small apartment: one bedroom and a tiny living room. Our family of nine moved in. But we found room to sleep. We visited them for four days.

From Surash we left for Moscow. It took us four days by train, and travel was miserable. From Moscow we left for Riga and Latvia. Here, too, the trains were miserable. In the middle of the night, the train stopped. The conductors wanted more money for the trip, and we gave it to them. We then had to move to some other trains.

On January 12, 1923, my whole family was separated when they ran to catch a train. I still remember my mother's screams, not knowing where most of the children were. It took hours to find everybody. When we were reunited, our joy was great.

We arrived in Riga and a committee of kind people from HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society) took us to one of their hotels. It was a Friday night and we feasted on chicken soup, meat and challah. I will never forget the joy of that Shabbos night. Through the hospitality of the HIAS people, we spent a week regaining our strength and preparing to continue our trip.

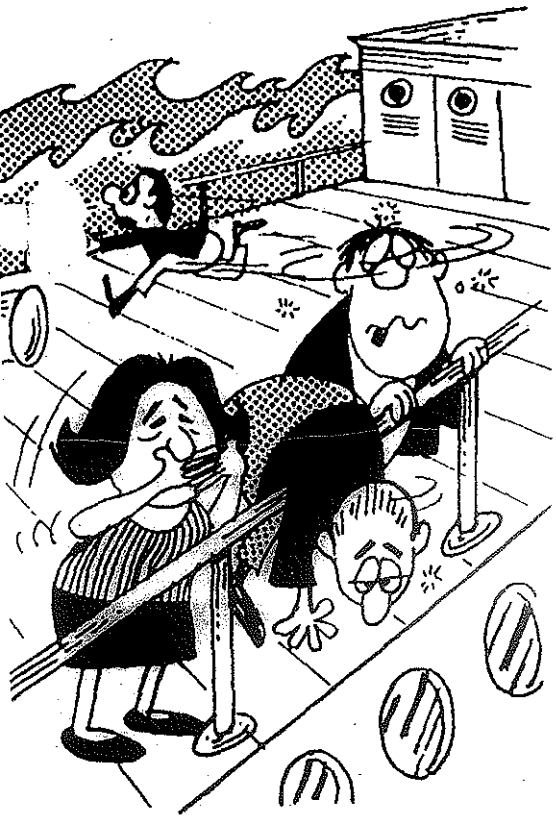
We paid $200 for the visas and made the journey to Luboba, where we were to take the boat to America.

The HIAS people again met us at the station and took us to one of their big buildings in Luboba. This building could accommodate about 1,000 people. Imagine our dismay to find out from the United States Embassy that the Russian emigration quota was filled and would be closed till July 4, 1923. We would be stranded for six months. What a joke! Our money was gone and we had to ask my brothers for help again. Seeing that there were so many people in the same boat, made it easier to face the battle. We became experts in solving all kinds of problems during our difficult journey.

We settled in one big room in a four-story building. It had nine costs for sleeping and one table for our meals. The The reason we had a private room was that my father was the "chazen" and the president of the synagogue in the HIAS building. Otherwise, they separated the women and men; the girls went with their mothers and the boys with their fathers.

Life, as a whole, was interesting because there were all kinds of characters among the 800 people living there.

Unbelievable as it may sound, each person was able to find his own friends just as if he would be at home. I was lucky to associate with an intelligent group of girls and goys. We found a teacher to teach us English and we enjoyed it very much. In the group were two sisters, Sony and Tani, from Ainks; Nena from Moscow; and two brothers, Gricha and Sasha, from Gomel.



The Polonia

At last, on June 10, 1923, we were able to board a huge boat, the Polonia. Before boarding, the HIAS people took us to a bathhouse and gave us a steam treatment. Even our clothes were steamed to protect us from lice. After the bathhouse there were physical examinations. We were searched for all kinds of illnesses--especially glaucoma of the eyes. Fortunately, we were healthy.

We traveled third class and it was not comfortable. The cabins were small and crowded. The waves were very high especially as we reached the Black Sea. One time the water broke through some parts of the boat. Luckily it happened at midnight when the passengers were asleep and the crew was able to fix the leak. One night while we were watching a movie, the film caught on fire. Everyone screamed, "fire." The safety boars were placed in the ocean in case of an emergency. What panic as the passengers looked for their families. At last the

fire was extinguished and everyone returned to their cabins. One could hear, "Please, God, no more troubles. Enough is enough."

During the trip my mother and father were very sick. I was able to help because I was not seasick. One of my brother's girlfriends was traveling first class so when my brother got very sick, she took him in her cabin and nursed him back to health. Due to the erratic Atlantic, there were so many sick people--and just one doctor and two nurses to take care of them. Cries for help were heard all over the boat, especially in the lower class cabins. Occasionally the whole family was able to spend some time during the day in the first class section and catch some sunshine and breathe some pure air.

## It Was a Very Good Year

### Castle Garden

Hurray! The Polonia landed in the United States on July 4, 1923, and the immigrants were received at Castle Garden. It was the last walk to reach the gates of freedom. Inside Castle Garden we entered a massive hall and broke into dozens of lines, each divided by metal railings. There, they put a big white chalk mark on my shoulders and took me out of the family line. Others needing further medical checking were marked "H" for heart, "K" for hernia, "Sc" for scalp, and "x" for mental defects.

What a heartbreak now knowing where the inspector was taking you. I knew that this was a place where families were

separated because of minor medical and physical conditions. An official took me to a room on the upper floor and closed the door behind me. I waited about five hours and worried about what was happening to my family. In the middle of my thoughts, a nice girl came in, handed me a Russian book, and told me to read. How amazed she was to see how well I read. She said she was sorry to cause me so much grief. She thought I was illiterate because I failed to answer questions which were asked of me. My mind must have been on my father's physical exam. I was hoping that he would pass it.

I was overjoyed. We were on our way to being reunited with our loved ones. How can I describe the happiness at seeing my brothers? Can you imagine how my parents felt after seeing their sons after 10 years?

After the war and the Revolution in Russia, we were finally at the entrance to the "goldeneh medinah" (Golden Medina)--where the streets were paved with gold. All of our relatives and friends were standing and waiting at the gates of Castle Garden in New York--waiting to welcome us to the land of freedom and opportunity. What a reunion!

## The Best Years of My Life

We arrived at the home of my brother, Sam, and my sister-in-law, May, on Spaulding Avenue in Chicago. The home was so beautiful and full of love.

At last I had to start a life of my own. My first job consisted of sewing buttons on overalls. I worked in a basement and earned $10 a week. I took the job because I did not have to work on the Sabbath. I'll never forget the excitement and happiness of receiving my first check. During the night I went to school to learn English.

The second job was working for my cousin, Ann Kaplan, and her husband, in a drygoods store. My salary was $25 a week.

My third job was in a factory--sewing dresses. I earned $35 a week. When I applied for the job, they said they wanted someone with experience....and I did not know very much. But I said I knew how to do the work. I sat at a table with 12 women. One of the women, Sarah, was very pleasant. When the forelady brought me a dress and asked me to fix the hem, I really did not know how to handle it. Sarah saw the expression on my face. She gave me her very expensive silk dress and wrote my name on it. She then took my dress. Her dresses were never examined. When I was supposed to leave for the day, the forelady and the boss were very satisfied with my work. I continued switching dresses for six months until I became very experienced. I kept this job until I got married on March 10, 1925.

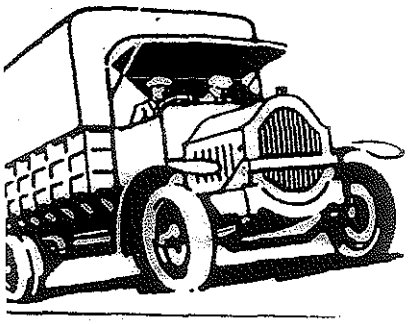
## Sam and I are Married: 1925

About September of 1923, I went with my sister-in-law, May, and her daughter, Ruth, to visit her sister, Ann, in Chicago. I opened the door to her home and saw a man sitting comfortably in a chair. He was a friend of cousin Cohen. He looked very handsome in his brown suit. We were introduced and I quickly noticed a sparkle of joy in his eyes. We spent an evening together and then he walked me home. We went to the movies and saw "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," and I enjoyed it very much. We continued to go steady, although I told him, "Sam, I am still in love with my friend from Russia and continue to correspond with him."

But Sam is very much in love with me. He would tell me that his love was so great that it would take care of both of us, and that he hoped that in time I would learn to love him. His dream came true. After two and a half years of going steady, we were married on March 10, 1925. The whole mishpocha were there. We had a big orthodox wedding in a hall on Ogden Street--and seven times we marched around. All of us were very happy since our wedding was the first one in the family. But our happiness ended the morning after the wedding. We had to rush my father to the hospital; he was suffering from cancer. I was by his bed for six weeks. I remember his words: "We all have to die, but the thought that you are going to die is horrible."

# WE ARE MOVING





Wyandotte, Michigan

Five months after our marriage we moved to Wyandotte, Michigan. We opened a tire store with $200 cash and $1,000 in credit. The rent for the store was $40 and we paid $40 rent for our apartment. We started a very good business. Then the Depression came and we lost our business and home and moved to a small apartment. Sam took it very hard. I tried to keep up my courage and spirit, and it paid off. Our name was good.

The Goodrich Tire Company came to us with a suggestion. They would give us all the merchandise and we could sell tires on credit. The business was flourishing since we were the first people in Wyandotte to sell on credit. A couple of years later, five stores (Sears, Firestone, Goodyear, etc.) opened up and started to cut prices. We were not able to compete with them and were forced to close the business. Again we lost everything except our good name. Once again we started to look for another way to make a living. Fortunately, a gas station was available and the bank gave us the money. We started to build up a rundown station. I worked like a slave.

But, again, life is not full of roses. I lost my first born boy in 1926. I got very sick with a goiter and it was a miracle that I recovered. (Years later my happy life was once again disrupted when I had a second operation on the goiter. I was left speechless, with little hope of getting my voice back. After eight months of pain, I did regain my voice).

## Miriam, Dorothy and Daniel

On October 24, 1927, our daughter, Miriam, arrived. Eighteen months later, on April 10, 1930, Dorothy arrived. Again, life is what it is. Our son, Daniel, was born on Saturday morning, April 30, 1932.

I can still hear the doctor's voice. It sounded like music to me: "Mrs. Fogel, a kaddishel is born to you and Sam. Mazel-Tov! Have a lot of naches from your son."

Strange as it sounds, I can still remember jumping and screaming, "That is not my son!" The nurse--by mistake--had taken a 3 1/2 pound Polish boy and brought him to my bed. I would not have known the difference if I had not seen Daniel once before.

The next Saturday we brought him home to our beautiful brick home on McKinley Street. The yard was filled with apple and plum trees.

## The Miracle: 1936

The greatest miracle in my life happened when my son, Daniel, was four years old. On Friday night, when my Shabbos candles were glittering, my son wanted to try some experiments. He waved his hand the way the candles waved and his new flannel pajamas caught on fire. Fortunately, I was on the telephone nearby. Just imagine my fright seeing my son in flames. I do not know where my strength came from, but I grabbed him in my arms and extinguished the flames. We rushed him to the hospital. Unfortunately, years ago they did not have the medication or the knowledge that they have today. I was with Daniel

in the hospital for three weeks. He was suffering so much that my heart was aching. I couldn't help him, nor relieve the pain. It looked like he was getting better. I was so exhausted that my family wanted me to come home for at least one night. So we had a private nurse that night. She did not watch him carefully, however, and Daniel scratched himself and caused an infection. His whole side was red and he could hardly eat or drink. He was fed intraveneously. One week later, the doctor examined him and gave him little hope for survival.

While I was standing outside of his room, it must have been like waiting for Elijah. God sent us an Elijah--Dr. Cohen. He asked, "Mrs. Fogel, why are you crying?" I said, "Please, doctor, help me save my son." He said that he could not come on another doctor's case, but that he would make an exception and see what he could do. He ordered a bathtub full of ice and placed Daniel in it. He then placed Daniel in a hot bathtub. The doctor asked my husband and my brother, Morris, to give him six pints of blood. Daniel started to gain his strength, and after three weeks, we took him home. He had open sores on his skin and I had to watch him carefully to prevent him from catching a cold or any other sickness. Imagine our feelings when Miriam and Dorothy came home with chicken pox. I could not get any help in the house on account of Daniel's condition. After three months, he felt better. An operation was then needed. Skin grafting was needed. It left some scars, but who cares!

That summer we rented a cottage in Woodhall Lake and Daniel regained his strength.

The best years of my life? Personally, I think they were when my children were young. I used to get up at six o'clock in the morning and get breakfast ready. I would hear their voices, loud and sweet: "Mom, how's the cereal and cocoa this morning?" You had a purpose in life--seeing them grow up so beautifully.

I spent every spare minute with my children trying to teach them to be good persons. My goal was to encourage them, not discourage them. If they made a mistake, I taught them not to repeat the same mistake a second time.

I never had an open account when the children were young. I taught them to spend the cash, if they had it. If not, I told them to wait till they had the cash. I still believe that even in my old age.

The years went by swiftly and soon we were celebrating Daniel's Bar Mitzvah--a happy and beautiful occasion. Then came Miriam's college graduation, Dorothy's graduation a year later, and Daniel's graduation, five years later. My pen cannot describe all the happiness we had sharing these memorable occasions.

## The Grandchildren

Life is a parade of happenings. Every day, every moment, something is happening.

Now my children begin to have their own families and I become the proud grandmother of Allen Howard, Ronna Beth, Barry, Larry, Caren Shelly, Kenneth David, and Steven Charles.

I can still the remember June 19, the day Caren was born. I visited Eleanor and Daniel in Cincinnati while Daniel was still in Rabbinical college. About 3 o'clock Eleanor started to have labor pains. Daniel and I took her to the hospital and at 6 o'clock, the nurse announced that a daughter was born. Mother was fine. The next day I went to see Eleanor and my granddaughter.

Eleanor looked beautiful and happy; Daniel was the happiest and proudest father. We celebrated--my family, Eleanor's family, and the congregation. When Daniel started the blessing to Caren, there were tears in everyone's eyes. I was the happiest grandmother. I wish Caren all the happiness in the world.

More simchas! I can still hear my son's voice on the telephone saying, "Mom, we have a son--a beautiful baby, 7 pounds. Eleanor and our son are feeling fine, so come soon; we need you very much." I called for reservations and in one hour I was on the way to be with my dear ones. There are not enough words to describe my happiness at the arrival of my

new-born grandson, Kenneth. Kenneth was born on the first day of Rosh Hashannah.

My joy was great. Eleanor looked so well and the baby was so cute. The bris was held in a special room in the hospital. Rabbi Rubin was the Godfather and I was the Godmother. We had refreshments and went to the apartment where Caren was being taken care of by the babysitter.

## Ken's Bar Mitzvah

It seems like yesterday that we were celebrating Ken's Bar Mitzvah. On the Friday before the Bar Mitzvah, we prepared a Shabbat dinner. The table was set with the best dishes and silver. Kenneth looked so handsome; Caren looked just beautiful. Eleanor and Daniel were beaming with happiness. For me it was the greatest time in my life.

After dinner we went to services, where hundreds of friends came to help us celebrate. The services were spiritual and the sermon was inspiring. After services the Sisterhood prepared the most delicious refreshments.

Saturday morning, at 8 o'clock, we all got ready for Temple services. The weather was so beautiful and warm. Just like they say, "Rabbi's luck"--and that was double luck because it was the Rabbi's and Rebitzin's son's Bar Mitzvah. God, what a magnificent sight to see a gathering like this. All my children and grandchildren looked great. I was wearing a long dress and looked pretty...if I do say so myself.

When the services started, you could hear a pin drop. There was complete silence. Tears of happiness were streaming down from my eyes. I felt as if my heart had stopped beating.

My son, Kenny and Caren, were reading from the Torah. There was a shine on their faces. Kenny performed the whole service and was really great. When my son started to bless his son, there was a wave of spiritual silence.

After the services we went to the Temple hall, which was beautifully decorated with yellow chrysanthemums. The food was delicious and an Israeli band entertained us. Everybody had a wonderful time, and this was one of the happiest days of my life.

After the affair everyone went back to Daniel and Eleanor's home. On Sunday most of the relatives left for home.

So my baby grandson's Bar Mitzvah was over. Now I have to look forward to my grandchildrens' weddings. I hope that I shall be able to celebrate many happy occasions, Please, God, give me only good things in life.

## Ronna and Larry

Today we went to visit Ronna and Larry in Ann Arbor. How strange to see Ann Arbor again after 20 years. Dorothy and Daniel went to college there. Now I visit my grandchildren and enjoy it very much. We also visited the Rattrays and spent a couple of hours talking about the olden days.

Dorothy and I went shopping and met Marilyn Gordon for lunch. On the way back we visited with Sylvia and Leonard. So I think I did a day's work.

Whenever I go to Dorothy's, I always try to see Ed and Jo Simon. Ed is one of the finest men I know. He is a friend in good times as well as bad. For instance, when my husband was stricken with a heart attack and I was forced to sell the gas station, he helped for months. I don't know what I would have done without friends like Ed and Joe. God should help them, their wonderful family, and give them all the happiness in the world. I have no words to express my thanks and appreciation for their friendship.

## Naches and Tsores

Shepen naches is attending our daughter, Miriam's marriage to Leonard.

Shepen naches is also attending Dorothy's marriage to Martin.

One hot August day, my husband had a terrible heart attack. The doctors gave up hope, but he survived. We had to sell our station and move to Florida. It is hard for me to believe that this episode ever happened.

When we moved to Florida, we bought a lovely home, furnished it nicely, and the lovely children and grandchildren visited us. We had a beautiful housewarming and invited all of our friends and relatives. My daughter, Miriam, Allen and Barry were there with us to enjoy the happy occasion.

Then on July 15, 1957, we went to Detroit for our son's wedding. We were getting ready to go home to Florida, and Sam had a heart attack and passed away. I was in shock for a long time--about seven months. I could not stay in my Florida home for long and sold it. I bought a home in Detroit. Then I went to Israel for six months and had a nice time.

I came back for my son's ordination. This was the happiest occasion that a mother could wish for. Miriam, Dorothy, and my brother, Max, and Sophie shared my happiness.

Then I went to California for a visit to my brothers and bought an apartment. I lived there eight months, but felt it

was too far from my children. I sold my apartment and came back to my son in Roslyn.

Again I moved to Florida, this time buying a condominium for $10,000. I enjoy it very much.

# MAZEL TOV!

Today is Dorothy and Martin's Silver anniversary. I wish them Mazel-Tov and all the happiness in the world.

Dorothy, Martin, and the children called. It was my greatest happiness to talk to them. God, what memories go through my mind.

How strange this may sound. It is unbelievable that 25 years could pass so quickly. It seems like a dream, but it is a reality.



# MEETING IN PROGRESS

Ain Karem

The first couple of years in Star Lakes, Florida, were most enjoyable and productive. Eleven years ago, in 1966, I organized a Hadassah group, Ain Karem. It was a very hard job because every one of the ladies was against it. They said that they had had enough of the groups up north and that they had come to Star Lakes, North Miami Beach, to relax and enjoy themselves.

But I am what I am, and I continued to bake my hazen blozen and strudel and invite the girls for coffee and dessert.

Finally, the ladies agreed to start a new chapter of Hadassah.

I made lunches for everyone who was interested in joining. I used to bake and make all kinds of egg and tuna salads. I solicited nice presents from Burdines, Richards, and the rest of the stores. At the end of two years our chapter had 100 members. The group grew to 250 members.

I remember my first speech at Ain Karem. My knees were trembling, but I made it.

Dear Friends and Members:

At last my dream comes true. We have a new-born baby--Ain Karem, and this is one of the happiest moments of my life. Needless to say, I am scared. But, with prayer and courage, we will meet the challenge. We have made a wonderful beginning, but we still have a long way to go.

In the near future we will be proud of our group. We pledge to help in honoring the 20th anniversary of Israel. We pledge to help heal the sick and wipe away the tears of the children with music and song. The more members, we have, the more we can accomplish.

We ask Thy blessings, O God. Give us the foresight to plan with care and judgment the activities of Ain Karem. I thank you, all my dear friends, with all my heart.

To you, the president and the officers, come my wishes for your good health and happiness.

## Syosset, my second home

February 15, 1975

I spent this winter in Syosset, Long Island (New York), where my son is the Rabbi at North Shore Synagogue. Syosset has been my home for seven years.

The Synagogue is simply beautiful--surrounded by lots of trees and shrubs. It has about 450 members and the people are wonderful and intelligent. They admire Daniel and Eleanor very much and show their love for them.

I love Syosset very much and have acquired a lot of wonderful friends. I belong to Hadassah, ORT, Temple Sisterhood, a Yiddish group, and Saturday minyon, where we spend five hours reading and discussing different topics.

I especially enjoy Friday night. I have so much naches when I see my son on the pulpit carrying the Torah in his arms. His sermons are so inspiring to me and to the rest of the congregation. After services we gather for refreshments and discussions. Everybody seems to like me a lot. They think of me as a great mother of a great Rabbi.

I remember with joy the second seder we had at the Temple. Everybody had to bring their own food and we shared a table with the Stern family.

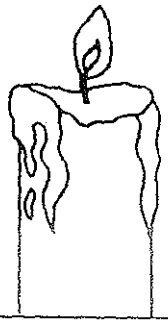
The first seder night we were invited to the home of Rabbi Rosen and Esther. We sat with their daughter and two sons. We were surrounded by fifteen guests. The table was set so beautifully. We started the seder services at 6 o'clock and finished at 11 o'clock.

These past months were a combination of joy and a lot of trouble with one of my teeth. The dentist in Florida was a butcher and it took almost three months to clear up my dental problems. Luckily, I had a good dentist here. If the infection had not been corrected, it would have poisoned my system.

I'm amazed at how fast the five months have gone. It was a cold winter, but I felt good. Maybe it's because I had such a wonderful time surrounded by Daniel, Eleanor, Caren, and Kenny. My good friends brought me so much warmth and love that it made up for all the snow and rain.

I'm getting ready to go home soon after Pesach. But, believe it or not, I don't feel like going home--even though the weather in Florida is much nicer. But even the sun does not give me as much warmth as I find here in Syosset.

# Happy Birthday



JULY 4, 1975

It is Friday, the Fourth of July, 1975. It is supposed to be my birthday, and my children are making a big deal. I got up at 9 o'clock in the morning and at 10:30 had breakfast with my best friend, Ida. I had a waffle and coffee and returned home to swim in my lake. I talked for awhile with Ida. Then it started to rain.

I came into my house to wait for the telephone to ring. At five o'clock my sweet daughter, Dorothy, Larry, and Steven called. It was so wonderful to hear their voices. Ronna was in camp. At 10 p.m. Daniel, Eleanor and Kenny called. Caren also was in camp. "Happy birthday, Mom and Bubbe." Then Miriam called. I was really happy to hear that she moved to a nice apartment with a swimming pool. Let's hope next year we'll celebrate again and that we're all in good health.

I was watching television and the telephone rang. I ran to answer it. "Hi, Bubbe." I was happy to hear Allen's voice. We talked quite awhile about different subjects. He told me he was going to continue his college education. I was very

proud and happy because I always believed in his ability. Thanks God that my hopes come true--my blessings and best wishes for Allen's future.

How strange to realize that 52 years have passed since we came to the United States from Russia. God, how many memories and episodes start to come to mind. First I recall seeing the Statue of Liberty. Then I remember myself so young and beautiful--with a full head of curls. I'm dressed in a light blue suit, walking with so much enthusiasm and hope--and a future full of dreams. God, how fast life seems to have passed. I look at myself after 52 years. My head is full of gray hair, my beautiful face wrinkled, and my legs full of varicose veins.

I try my best to survive. I think, "Where do I go from here?" In the old days I had so many difficult problems and I was able to solve them--right or wrong. But not it is more difficult to decide. Shall I sell my home or not? Where do I go? Shall I live with my children? Rent an apartment? Stay where I am?

As we travel on the road of life, we face so many obstacles. Some of them are really difficult to battle with... not knowing which road to take. Left or right? At each turn there are some good, some not so good choices. So, we swim through life just taking chances.

Sunday, March 4, 1979

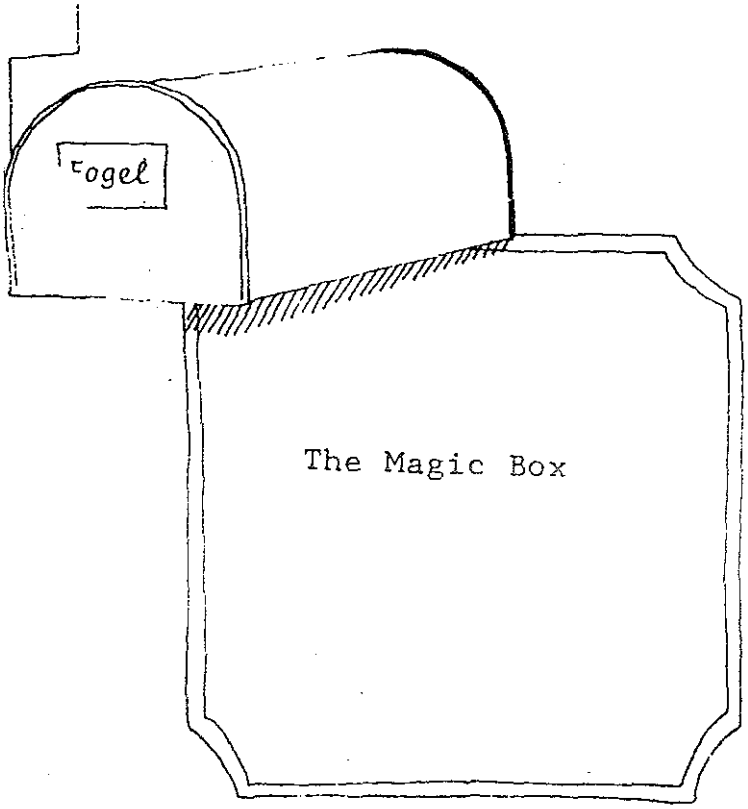
I had a miserable day worrying about Israel. What will happen? There are so many humans ready to destroy Israel, including President Carter, his brother, Billy, and Sadat.

God, why did Moses bring us out from the wilderness into a worse wilderness?

But as we approach Purim, in the year 5739 (1979), my hopes and prayers are to get rid of all our enemies. What happened in Mordehai and Esther's time should happen in our time....in Israel, and all over the world. A little bit of happiness and joy, please, God.

Note

On March 26, 1979, a peace treaty was signed with Israel. Egypt became the first Arab nation to recognize the existence of Israel. The treaty capped 16 months of difficult negotiations. It was signed by President Anwar al-Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister, Menachem Begin in Washington, D.C. The formal documents were exchanged on April 25 at Umm Khisheib in the Sinai. Israel began its Sinai withdrawal on May 25, turning over the town of El Arish to Egypt.




The "Magic Box" is the mailbox. Does anyone realize how important the mailbox is in my life? I spend about half of my life running to the mailbox. Everyday I wait and hope that there is a letter.....or maybe two or three. When there is no mail in the "Magic Box," how disappointed and miserable I feel for the rest of the day.

I just wish my children and grandchildren would just know. If they did, they surely would find five minutes more often to write. But they have their life also--with so many different problems and responsibilities, God bless them all.

## Graduation

To all my dearest grandchildren:

I wish to congratulate you on your graduation from high school. The diploma is just the beginning of your career; it is the beginning of an education.

My dearest, as the years go by, you will understand more and more the beauty of education--the great wisdom. Once you acquire it, you can never lose it. Education is the most precious gift one can give oneself. No one can take it away from you. Man may acquire richness--and lose it--but man will never lose the wealth of knowledge.

Thank about it! You are building the foundation of your life's future, like an architect, who makes the blueprints for a building. He has to make the foundation good and strong, to hold up the building for years and years. Now, at your age, you are laying the foundation of your future. Build it good and strong.

Love,

Grandma

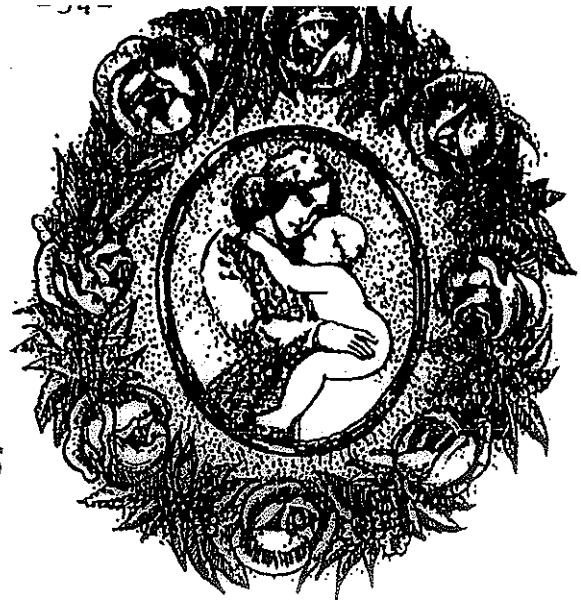
## My Lake

I don't remember if I ever described my palace or castle. My lake (Star Lakes, Florida) is so beautiful. It's shining and peaceful. Even Chagall would not be able to paint a picture like that. Why can't a person's life be as beautiful and peaceful?

But, like my mother used to say: "Gay freq a kashe bye dem Rebe Neshlom." Translated, it means "Go ask God a question."

However strange it may sound to my children, the lake is a part of my life. I could sit for hours at a time watching the waves. The fish are swimming around and around enjoying life. Each fish has its own identify, and must struggle for survival. This struggle goes on day and night.





# Mother's Day

1978

Today is Mother's Day. This is a beautiful day--one that mothers really deserve. What a beautiful word--"mother."

As a mother I am blessed with children and grandchildren, and I pray for their long life, good health, and happiness.

For all the labor, is there another profession that pays better wages or benefits? I say, "No." From my personal life I made the best investment in the world by having my precious children. Their love makes my life so beautiful and happy.

First, sweet Ronna called. "Happy Bubbe's Day." Oh, to hear her voice and know that she feels good and enjoys her work. Ronna serves and helps needy patients. God bless her with a lot of happiness.

Next, Miriam called. "Happy Mother's Day, Mom. I am coming to see you on the 29th of June." I am very pleased to hear the good news and look forward to seeing her soon. Maybe Barry will be able to come along. I hope so.

Three o'clock in the afternoon the telephone rings and I answer it. "Hi, Mom. Happy Mother's Day," I hear Eleanor and

Daniel's voice say. It sounds like the sweetest music. Caren is in college, but she sent me a beautiful letter expressing her love to me. She says she appreciates my inspiration and wisdom. Kenny was working and was not able to say "Hello," but I know his love for me is great. I felt it in my bones. God bless you all.

Dorothy called to wish me the happiest Mother's and Bubbe's Day. Ronna is in Ann Arbor, Larry is in Boston, and Steven, the doctor, is in Lansing visiting his girlfriend.

Last, but not least, Allen called to say "Hello, I love you very much." We talked for a long time and he promised to make me proud and happy....to change his life style for the better.....and even to go to Israel to make his home. I hope so.

The whole day was beautiful.

## Let's Pretend

Time is nearing for me to leave for my journey to visit my family. I look upon it with mixed emotions. As the years are passing by, it is getting harder and harder to decide which direction to take.

I live more in the world of "Let's Pretend"--a game my grandson, Allen, used to play when he was a baby of three years old. No wonder they say that the older you get, the more you resemble a young child who dreams and pretends.

Sometimes I don't recognize myself. I used to make up my mind in minutes--now it takes me years. And, sometimes, I still can't make up my mind which road to take. I always wonder what the future will bring.

Why is life so mysterious and sometimes so discouraging. I never thought I'd be afraid to grow old. I now see what age did to Max. It scares me a lot.

People wonder why I rent my home in the winter and go up north. The real truth is because I need the money. I save up to $10,000 and it lasts me three or four years. Then I do not have to come to my dear children for help. I always hope to be able to be independent, and pray I continue to have good health.




## Television--The "Magic Box"

How strange it is. How important a television becomes in your lazy life. It becomes your best friend. It keeps me from going nuts. By watching all of the programs you seem to get over some of the loneliness. You concentrate on what is happening in that program. Sometimes there is a lot of reality and truth in the program.

Recently I watched a television show which dealt with children's responsibility to aged parents, especially when one of the parents is left alone or in poor health. The truth is that parents can take care of 10 children, but 10 children cannot take care of one parent.

But the tragedy is that parents become children to their children. At the age of 70 or 80--or older--parents become a burden. The children must carry the responsibility for their own family as well as their parents.

Personally, I hope and pray to God that I do not become a burden to my children. I will try with my last strength not to be a cause of unhappiness to my family. It would hurt me so much.

## My Mother Lives in Miami Beach

I am sitting on my porch, knitting an afghan for Larry's high school graduation. I hope he will use it in good health.

A television program appeared: "My Mother Lives in Miami Beach." The picture was very depressing. Hundreds of thousands of lonely, elderly mothers are shown sitting in their rooms, dreaming of the days when they were with their loved ones.

I think--regardless of the hard work and responsibilities and worries--those early days were the happiest days of their lives. Now their lives are empty. Some are even forgotten by their children. They were sent away to the "land of sunshine."

Yes, thank God, there is a Mother's Day once a year. They send a card.

## Love is Better than Hate

We humans keep on complaining--not satisfied with the way we live.

Envy, jealousy and hate is the daily diet of the majority of the human race. Why don't people realize that love is better than hate, that joy and happiness are the most important things in life?

Years pass by like a flash of lightening and all is just like a dream. When we are young, we don't realize what life is all about. It is when we grow older that it becomes a reality.

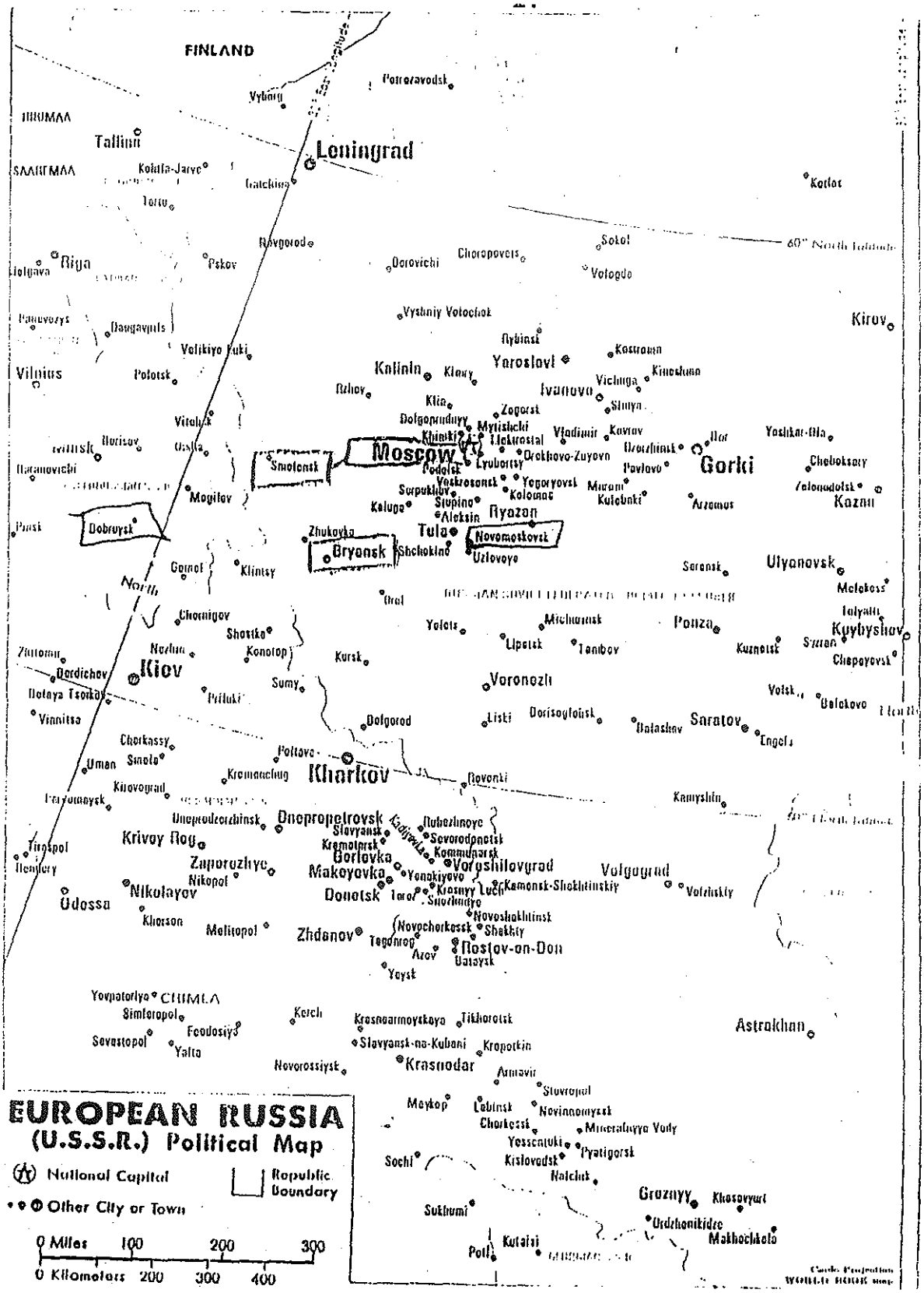
## The Golden Years--The Broken Dreams

One day is just as another day. Nights are worse than days, except that you sleep and dream of the years that have passed.

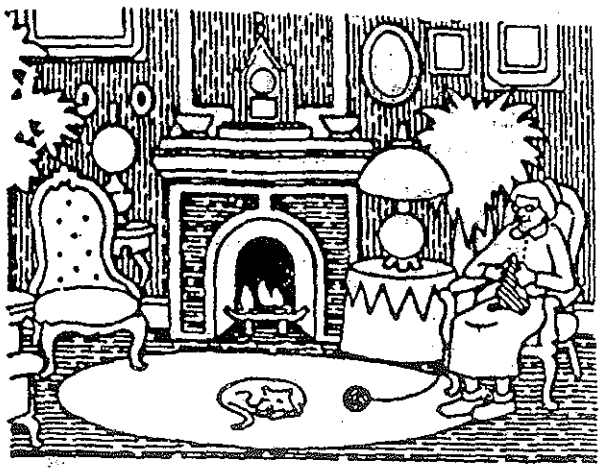
How I wish I could go back to my younger years and young dreams. But I have to forget about that--now that I am older.

But who am I to complain about my life. In the game of Life, I think I did a pretty darn good job, with the help of my dear friend, Sam. So, all in all, thanks to God, we raised two beautiful daughters and a handsome son. And, of course, we have seven great grandchildren.

I'm the happiest mother and Bube, Lillian Fogel, in the whole world, including Israel and the United States. God bless us all with happiness and joy.


FINLAND
Petrozavodsk
Vyborg
HIIUMAA
Tallinn
Leningrad
SAARTMAA
Kolatla-Jarve
Gatchina
Tartu
Kotlas
Novgorod
Sokol
60° North latitude
Riga
Pskov
Dorovichi
Cherepovets
Jelgava
Vologda
Panevezys
Daugavpils
Vyshniy Volochok
Kirov
Velikiye Luki
Rybinsk
Kostroma
Yaroslavl
Vilnius
Polotsk
Kalinin
Klimov
Kineshma
Vichuga
Rzhev
Ivanovo
Klin
Shuya
Zagorsk
Vitebsk
Dolgoprudnyy
Mytishchi
Vladimir
Kovrov
Yoshkar-Ola
Borisov
Orsha
Khimki
Elektrostal
Moscow
Orekhovo-Zuyevo
Gorki
Cheboksary
Baranovichi
Smolensk
Podolsk
Lyubertsy
Pavlovo
Volzhsk
Yegoryevsk
Voskresensk
Serpukhov
Kolomna
Murom
Kulebaki
Kazan
Mogilev
Stupino
Kaluga
Aleksin
Arzamas
Ryazan
Pinsk
Dobruysk
Zhukovka
Tula
Novomoskovsk
Bryansk
Shchekino
Uzlovoye
Gomel
Klintsy
Ulyanovsk
Saransk
Melekess
North
Chernigov
Ural
Yelets
Michurinsk
Penza
Kuybyshev
Shostka
Lipetsk
Tambov
Kuznetsk
Syzran
Zhitomir
Novhin
Konotop
Kursk
Cheboksary
Berdichev
Kiev
Sumy
Voronezh
Volsk
Belokovo
Belaya Tserkov
Priluki
Vinnitsa
Dolgorod
Liski
Borisoglebsk
Balashov
Saratov
Engels
Cherkassy
Poltava
Kharkov
Uman
Smela
Kremenchug
Rovenki
Kamyshin
Kirovograd
Pervomaysk
Dneprodzerzhinsk
Dnepropetrovsk
Slavyansk
Ruhezhnoye
Severodonetsk
Tiraspol
Krivoy Rog
Kramatorsk
Kommunarsk
Gorlovka
Voroshilovgrad
Volgograd
Zaporozhye
Nikopol
Makeyevka
Yenakiyevo
Kamensk-Shakhtinskiy
Volzhskiy
Nikolayev
Donetsk
Krasnyy Luch
Odessa
Snezhnoye
Novoshakhtinsk
Novocherkassk
Kherson
Melitopol
Zhdanov
Shakhty
Taganrog
Rostov-on-Don
Azov
Bataysk
Yeysk
Yevpatoriya
CRIMEA
Kerch
Krasnoarmeyskaya
Tikhoretsk
Astrakhan
Simferopol
Feodosiya
Slavyansk-na-Kubani
Kropotkin
Sevastopol
Yalta
Novorossiysk
Krasnodar
Armavir
Stavropol
Maykop
Lebinsk
Novinnomyssk
Cherkessk
Mineralnyye Vody
Yessentuki
Pyatigorsk
Sochi
Kislovodsk
Nalchik
Grozny
Khasavyurt
Sukhumi
Urdzhonikidze
Makhachkala
Poti
Kutaisi
EUROPEAN RUSSIA
(U.S.S.R.) Political Map
National Capital
Republic Boundary
Other City or Town
0 Miles 100 200 300
0 Kilometers 200 300 400

# DISCOVERY



## Grandma Remembers

By Marjorie Wolfe

*Reprinted from "Syosset Advance" 9/21/84*

When vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro and Gov. Mario Cuomo spoke of their immigrant roots, it struck a responsive chord in millions of Americans. The Great Hall of Ellis Island will begin a $128 million renovation. From its opening in 1892 to its closing in 1954, Ellis Island processed more than 17 million newcomers. Lillian Fogel was one of them.

Lillian, 84-year-old mother of Rabbi Daniel Fogel, of Syosset, New York landed at Castle Garden on July 4, 1923. Her self-published book, "My Journey to a Golden Land," is told in a series of heartwarming anecdotes and observations. It covers her life from her "Klener" (small) shtetl in Samotevich, Russia, to the present, and is a vivid portrait of one grandmother's desire to share here family "roots" with her loved ones.

Excerpts from the books are shown below:

• A great writer I am not. I started to write for my grandchildren. Children and grandchildren are anxious to know their heritage....My advice, especially for grandmothers, is to start to write for your children. It will give them the best gift of all.

• I was born in a clayn (little) shtetl in Samotevich, Russia, Samotevich had about 500 families.

• Our own family consisted of six brothers and two sisters. I was the third born child, with two brothers born before me. Parents were not the happiest when a girl was born because it was harder; you had to start as soon as possible to save for her dowry. But when a boy was born, there was rejoicing.

• A typical dowry was about 300 rubles. With that sum of money one was able to open a little store in the main business district.

• Samotevich was a very pretty village. The houses were made from logs and had straw roofs. We had one synagogue--orthodox. My father was the main hazen". Our shtetl had a bathhouse. The men used it on Friday, the women, on Wednesday. The price for getting into the bathhouse was three kopeks for dults and one kopek for children.

• Winter in Russia usually began around the first of November and was so severe. The snow stayed for 6 months and some of it was never removed during the duration of the winter.

The "chedar" was held in our home--and in other homes. Children from three to fifteen were given religious training by a Rebe.

In addition to raising nine children, my mother, Zipa Chafkin, worked fteen hours a day to help my father provide for the family. The business cluded leasing seven acres of land from rich landowners and cultivating and lanting all kinds of vegetables. My family would then sell the vegetables to e peasants and to the people from the shtetl.

In 1914, when the war broke out, life changed drastically. My oldest two others, Max and Sam, had left for the United States to escape the Czarist ilitary service. We stopped getting mail from them. Murders were being mmitted every day--all over Russia--and in our shtetl...gangs of bandits re everywhere, especially in the villages. People were moving to safer mmunities. I was twenty years old and considered one of the beautiful girls the shtetl.

When the monstrous Revolution began in 1917, they took away the little at my parents possessed. It was called "speculating." Anyone caught with e smallest amount of goods of any kind would be sent to a labor camp.

During the winter of 1920, I was fortunate to get a teaching job. My salary s not paid in money. Once a month I received 40 pounds of flour, one pound rosene and enough material for a coat. I made a long blue coat....and the ole world was mine. The coat lasted until I came to the U.S. I received a pair shoes annually.

• At the end of 1921, the emigration restrictions to the United States were lifted and my brothers started to send letters and affidavits for us to come to the States. At last my mother could see her beloved children.

• It looks as if I am now becoming one of the wandering Jews--running all over the country getting permission to leave. The first step in preparing to leave Russia was to get a birth certificate. In our shtetl we never had anything like a registration. We had a Jewish magistrate, who was called a "starosta." Moishe Bar made out the certificates in order to get the visas. Another one of the requirements was for my parents to have eye examinations. We traveled by horse and buggy for three days.

• In the summer of 1923 we started to prepare for the voyage to the U. S. We sold our house for 350 rubles. We also sold some of our furniture and gave the rest of it away. The potatoes and the flour were given to some of our relatives. On our trip to Moscow we carried the chicken fat in gallon jugs. We baked 100 pounds of bread, sliced it, and carried it in sacks.

• We arrived in Riga and a committee of kind people from HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society) took us to one of their hotels.

• We paid $200 for the visas and made the journey to Luboba. The HIAS people again met us at the station. Imagine our dismay to find out from the U.S. Embassy that the Russian emigration quota was filled and would be closed until July 4, 1923. We would be stranded for six months. Our money was gone and we had to ask my brothers for help.

• At last, on June 19, 1923, we were able to board a huge boat, the Polonia. Before boarding, the HIAS people took us to a bathhouse and gave us a steam treatment. Even our clothes were steamed to protect us from lice. We traveled third class and it was not comfortable. The cabins were small and crowded.

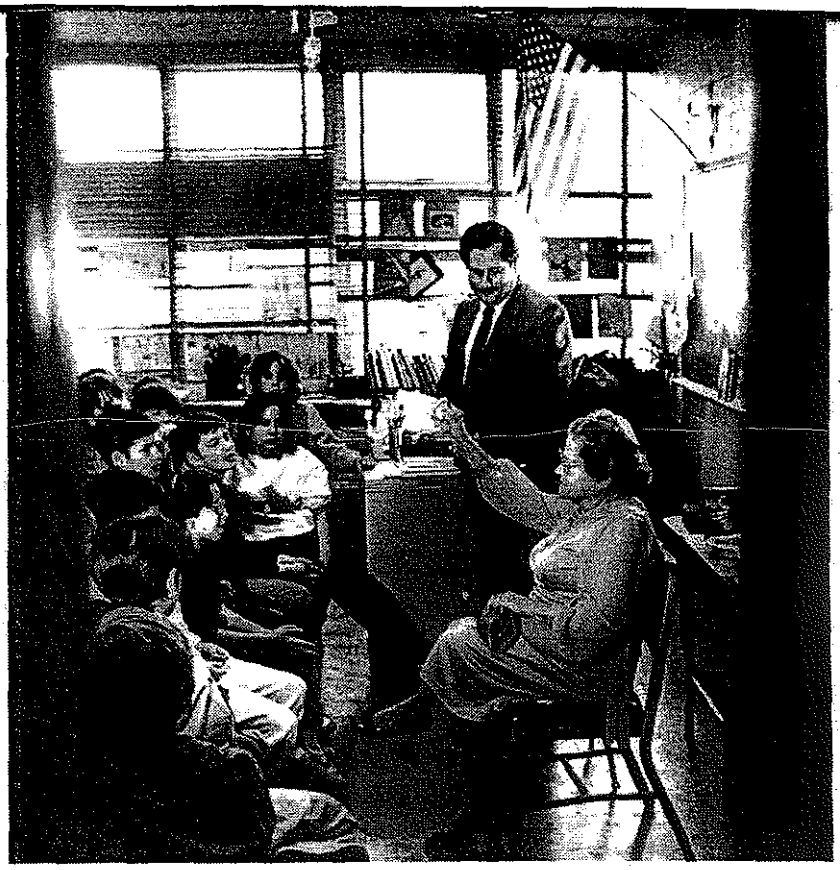
• Hurray! The Polonia landed in the U.S. on July 4, 1923, and the immigrants were received at Castle Garden. It was the last walk to reach the gates of freedom. Inside Castle Garden we entered a massive hall and broke into dozens of lines, each divided by metal railings. There they put a big white chalk mark on my shoulders and took me out of the family line. Others needing further medical checking were marked "H" for heart, "K", hernia, "SC" for scalp, and "x" for mental defects. What a heartbreak not knowing where the inspector was taking you. I knew that this was a place where families were separated because of minor medical and physical conditions. An official took me to a room on the upper floor and closed the door behind me. I waited about five hours and worried about what was happening to my family. A nice girl came in, handed me a Russian book, and told me to read. How amazed she was to see how well I read. She said she thought I was illiterate because I failed to answer questions asked of me. My mind must have been on my father's physical exam; I was hoping that he would pass it.

• I was overjoyed. We were on our way to being reunited with our loved ones. How can I describe the happiness at seeing my brothers? Can you imagine how my parents felt after not seeing their sons for 10 years?

• After the war and the Revolution in Russia, we were finally at the entrance to the "goldeneh medinah" (Golden Medina)--where the streets were paved with gold. All of our relatives and friends were standing and waiting at the gates of Castle Garden--waiting to welcome us to the land of freedom and opportunity. What a reunion!

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjorie Wolfe lives in Syosset. She is a business teacher in Plainview. As a free lance writer she has written a number of stories for Discovery.



# *Sharing Stories Of Immigrant Life*

**By Gwen Young**

Plainview — Like so many other grandmothers, Lillian Mordecai Fogel has family tales to tell. Tales of her life as a child in Russia, her family's struggle to come to the United States and their joy when they finally reached Ellis Island in 1923.

While memories like these are often lost with passing generations, Fogel took steps to make her memoirs permanent. In a white loose-leaf binder encased in clear plastic, the highlights of Fogel's life, from childhood to grandmotherhood, unfold on 59 double-spaced, typewritten pages.

There are tales of arranged marriages, of the boat trip from the Soviet Union, of Sabbath dinners, philosophies of raising children and the loneliness of growing old.

After writing with the help of a friend, Marjorie Wolfe of Syosset, the stories she has told for years, Fogel, 85, decided to share her personal history with others. Yesterday, dressed in a lace-trimmed lavender dress and black patent pumps, Fogel met 40 fifth-grade students at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Middle School who had read some of her stories. Wolfe, who teaches there, had introduced the manuscript to two other teachers. After reading the stories, the students invited Fogel to their classes.

The stories they read had piqued their curiosity. How long was the boat ride? "Three weeks." What was it like when you came to Ellis Island? "It was a dream that you never dreamed could be true." Her voice was barely audible, so the children leaned foward in their chairs to hear. With the help of her son, Rabbi Daniel Fogel, who presides at the North Shore Synogogue in Syosset, she was able to tell her tales.

Fogel and her family lived in cramped cabins in a section of the boat that had no windows, and she was the only one who didn't get seasick. They were allowed to bring only the barest necessities, and even their beloved Torah was left behind.

Daniel Fogel tried to help the children understand the sacrifices his mother and her family made in traveling to the United States. "Can you imagine leaving your home with almost nothing?"

After the questions and answers, the children gave Fogel a small bouquet of flowers that matched her dress. Encircled by a group of young girls, she gave them all grandmotherly kisses. Before leaving, she donated $18 to Ellen Smyle's and Elinor Froehlich's fifth-grade students for their Statue of Liberty Restoration collection. The amount, *chai*, the rabbi said, means "life" in Hebrew.

Together, the Fogels urged the children to ask someone in their families to write down the family story. Adam Abzeg, 11, said he would ask his great-grandmother Ida to do that. "Then she could become famous, like Mrs. Fogel, and she could come to the school," he said.

NEWSDAY, FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1985