

ROSE RESSLER KOHN

Mother - Gitel Kirshenblutt 1887 - 1942

Father - Chaim Ressler 1885 - 1958

his parents: Faige and Hersh Ressler

He had four sisters and one brother:

Leldzia who married David Dembitzer

Rifka who married Moshe Aron Silver

Esther who married Benjamin Baumehl. Esther died in childbirth and Ben Baumehl married her sister Hilda.

The brother's name was Shlomo (Sol) who went to America at age 16 and settled in Detroit, Michigan. He married Seidy and had two daughters - June and Ilene. June never married and lives in Southfield MI. Ilene married L. Wolf and lives in Oak Park MI. They have a son and daughter.

Leldzia Dembitzer had six or seven children. Three of them came to America (Newark NJ) after the First World War. Son Ben Dembitzer, and daughter Sara who married Harry Baim, and Hilda who married Baruch Friedman. The rest of Leldzia's children died in the war.

My father's other sister Rifka had three children (two sons and a daughter). They all died in the war.

The last sister Hilda and Ben Baumehl had 7 or 8 children.
(Esther lived and died in Israel)?

Faige, Moishe, Lipka, Hersh, I don't remember the others, but Yosela (Joseph) survived the war and lives in Boro Park Brooklyn. He has a son Benjamin and daughter Siandle. Benjamin has three

children and Siandle has six.

I did not know any of my grandparents because they had all died before I was born. So that's where family information stops.

From my mother's side of the family I know even less. They lived in Leizank. It is not too far from Rzeszow but I have never been there. My mother's father was named Pinchas and her mother's name was Reizel. I am named after my grandmother. Our Philip is named after my mother's father. My great-grandmother's (my mother's grandmother) name was Siandel. My sister Sally was named after her. My mother had two sisters and one brother. Their names were Malcia, Brandel and Yankel. I never met them and that's how it stops now.

My mother and father were married in 1911. Their children were born:

Hersh 1912

Icha 1914

Faige 1916

Sally 1918

Pinchas 1920 (died of diptheria when he was 3)

Rose 1922

Murray 1924

We lived on a farm in a village called Ruizanka which is near Stryzov. We had a nice house for those days - wood and red

shingles on the roof. It had four rooms. The bedroom where my parents slept, the other room where the boys slept and the other two rooms were the dining room and kitchen and the bedroom where the girls slept (all in one). We even had a store in the same two rooms. The store had everything from groceries to material for clothes. The beds for us were like folding sofas, but they were from wood like benches, the mattresses were filled with straw. On the other side, connected to the house, was a stable and we had two cows, next to the house was a big barn where we kept supplies for the cows. We had a few chickens and I don't remember if we had any other animals. The outside was beautiful, a river (the Wislok) was on one side and a hill was on the other. Winters used to be very cold, a lot of snow, so when spring came and the snow started to melt, the river used to spill over. I remember one year when I and Murray were still quite small, the river spilled over, the water was up to the windows of the house, too high for Murray and I to walk through. A neighbor (Polish?) came with a home made ? like a little boat and took us out from the house up to the hill while my parents brought some stuff up from the house. Luckily the water stopped just below the window sills and started to lower after a while. But there was also a lot of fun, when we took a big sled up the hill, and four or five kids sat on it and we came down the hill. We walked to school, three kilometers, big snow or not, school was not closed, because its snowing or its very cold, the icicles were forming on the scarf around your neck from the warm air from your nose. One morning, Sally and I walked to school. On the side of the road were ditches for water to drain. That morning

became engaged to be married, Sally worked for somebody in Krakow, and suddenly in 1939 war broke out. Shortly before that, I remember German Jews, relatives to our neighbors, came to live with them, and there was talk that Germany is chasing out all Jews. I remember that day when my brothers Hersh and Itcha were called into the service. We thought we would never see them again. The Polish war broke up very quickly, the Germans taking over Poland. One day Hersh came home, all torn clothes and dirty, and than a day or two later, Itcha came home.

The Germans were advancing very fast. They came into Stryzow in a very few weeks. They started taking the Jewish men to work. They ordered every Jewish man, woman and child to wear a yellow armband with the Jewish star. In our home it was still not so bad, we still could work in the field. We had enough to eat and even to sell some. In the beginning we could still sneak into town without the arm band, so we girls went for some things. But then the Germans started shooting Jews if they caught them without the band. One day we heard that they shot of cousin of ours (Yosela Bauhmel's brother) for just going into a restaurant. He was coming home to Stryzow from Krakow and a Jew could not walk on the sidewalk when a German walked. Most Jews stayed in their houses for fear that they would be shot.

I remember one day they came to our village and took men to work on the roads in Dobzechow (it was between Stryzow and Frysztak). They took my father, Itcha and Murray. Also a lot of Poles. The Poles

could go home for the weekend, but not the Jews, they had to stay and work. One day the German commandant sent Itcha and another man to Stryzow for some supplies. He went into a coffee shop and a German noticed him there. He beat him so hard that he was black and blue over his whole body. In a few weeks when the roads were done, they let them go home.

We lived in our home until sometime in September or October of 1941 when all Jews had to move out from their homes. We had to move to Frysztak into a ghetto. It was a little town with mostly Jewish people, maybe 10 or 15 kilometers from where we lived. We had some relatives house to live in, we thought it will only be few days or weeks. The brothers did not come with us. They stayed and worked by some Poles on their farms. When I say "ghetto" the Jews were not allowed to leave the town, otherwise you would be shot. Like most Jewish men, my father had a beard, so he had it cut off before we moved to Frysztak, in fear that the Germans shouldn't do it. One day in July (1942), I don't remember the date, but on the Jewish calendar it was Tamuz 18, all Jews must report to the market place in the morning. How my brothers Itcha and Murray came home I don't remember, but Hersch said he will not go to the market place. My mother was crying, afraid of what was going to happen if one of her children did not report. In the morning, we went to the town market. We were all lined up. The Germans brought big trucks and nobody knew what was going to happen. Then they started the selection, one here, one there, the older people on the trucks, my mother was grabbed away from us and put on a truck, children on

trucks, babies grabbed away from their mothers, throwing them onto the trucks. My father, Itcha and Murry were on another truck. My sisters, Faige, Sally and I went back to the apartment stunned and not knowing what is happening and what to do. So we sat together and cried. Next day, the truck with the men came back, and the trucks with the children and elderly never returned. Then we learned that they were taken to the woods not too far from Frysztak and were shot and put in a mass grave. The place is called Wazyce. A few days later, the men had to report again, and this time they have been taken to a work camp at Plaszow. At this time the work camps were still not so watched, and my father was smuggled out and came back.

Our brother Hersh was staying around the villages of Niewodna and Wisniowa and there was looking for a place for us to hide out. We knew that the Germans were going to clean out all the Jews from Frysztak (Judenrein) like all the other towns in the area. One day he came to the family Swieton. There was a father, a son Pietrek, and a daughter Bronia. Hersh was a very handsome man of 28 (years old) and Bronia liked him. He did some work for them and stayed there for a few days. That's when he asked them to take us in for a few weeks. Nobody thought that it will be two years. One day toward the evening, Pietrik came with a wagon and horses and took Faige out, she dressed like a farm girl, and rode with him on the wagon. She had light colored hair and Pietrik said she didn't look Jewish. Next night he came for Sally and me, and he and Sally and I walked after dark on side roads so we did not meet any people.

I honestly don't remember how our Father did get there, but I think he was hiding in the wagon with Faige.

When we got to the Swietons, they had one big room where all the family slept and very poor looking surroundings. The stable was next to there with three cows and another room, storage for grain. On top of the stable and the storage room was an attic for hay for the animals. They also had a seperate barn for the wheat and corn. On the attic they made a hiding place for us where we slept. I forgot to tell you the house was on a hill and had a window on each side, so in the daytime, one of us stayed at the window and watched to see if anybody was coming. Hersh used to come whenever he could and brought food.

The Swietons were very good to us, and we even made some packages and Pietrik walked with Sally and me to a man (I don't remember his name) and he took it to Plaszow for Icha and Murray. One day Hersh heard that they were suspecting Swieton's place that there were Jews and a search might come. So we all decided that we should go into the woods which wasn't very far from the house and stay there until someone will come for us. We stayed there all day and nobody came, the thought came that something was wrong. Then when it was almost dark, Pietrik came and told us with crying eyes that a friend of Hersh with whom he spent a lot of time called the Gestapo and they beat him so he would tell where the family was hiding. He died and didn't tell.

Pietrik was crying together with us, and told us that we could come back to the house. That from now on he will take care of us. The next day we sent word to Icha and Murray in Plaszow that they should try to escape the camp and told them where we were hiding. The days were passing while we were hiding in the attic. When Icha and Murray came, we were very happy to see them. They were cold and hungry. After they came, the Swietons decided to make a better hiding place in case the Nazis were still suspicious that the family was hiding there. So the plan was to dig out a space under the storage room floor and put a wooden floor on, then the very big boxes with wheat and corn and oats, the whole supply for the winter, hundreds of pounds of grain. It was done at night because the soil had to be removed and put in the field so no one would recognize that this was fresh soil.

The space was not high enough for a person to stand and not long enough to stretch out, but enough that we could sleep and hide in case of emergency. The door to the space was very small, coming from the cow stable, which was next to the storage room. It was covered with straw, with some of it pasted on, so when we opened it, the straw would not fall off. And so from what was supposed to be a few weeks of hiding, became a month and a year. The war was going bad and the Germans kept on going into Russia. The Swieton family were getting more and more frustrated but they did not throw us out, and we were never hungry. At night we stayed in the storage space, and in the day time, we were doing the house chores. Watching at the windows, Sally was doing the cooking, Faige and I

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were doing the washing and grinding the grain with a hand stone grinder because that's all the Swietons had. Our poor father (his soul should rest in peace) was always sitting in the storage space, because if we saw somebody coming up to the house, he could not jump in so quickly. He only came up at night when he had to go to the bathroom which was the stable.

Our father was very religious, he had his tallis and tefillen. He prayed every day and he had faith that we would survive. If it had not been for his faith, we would have given up, and gone out of hiding for whatever would be will be. But he kept us going with his dreams, of his parents, of his rebbis, that they told him so and so (and he was right).

One night, I don't remember if it was in 1943 or 1944, all night, the farm dog kept on barking and crying. A little superstitious, we decided to stay in the barn afraid that something might happen. Mr. Swieton (Driadek like we called him - that means grandpa) was somewhere in the fields and only Bronia was in the house. Pietrek was also away. The Germans came that day, they spoke Polish, and they were asking her where are the Jews. She said we have no Jews here. They searched all over the place. At one point, a German slapped her in the face, she should tell where are the Jews. Of course, she could not tell because they would have killed her together with us. We were sitting in the storage space and heard every word, and we thought we would be discovered any minute. Everyone prayed in his heart and (thank God it was answered) the

cow that usually jumped up when a person walked in, layed down on top of the trap door and did not get up until they left. It was a miracle that we were not found. Icha started coughing and could not stop, but the Germans were already searching the barn, and did not hear him because it was a distance from the house.

Finally, the Russians started to advance, pushing back the Germans. We had a drop of hope that maybe there is an end to the terrible time. The Swietons started being more relaxed, but it took until September or beginning of October 1944 for the Russians to come. Mr. Swieton was so happy that we survived. We stayed a few days longer with the Swietons. We were not in a hurry to go home because there were no Jews left. Finely we went back to our house in Ruizanka, but we could not stay there because it was occupied by the Russian headquarters. There were some Jewish officers among them, they were very good to our father. We were the first Jewish survivors they met. Our father stayed in our house, but us girls had to hide again because the Russian soldiers were not very nice to women. Finally, our house was empty. We returned to it, but the struggle to survive was very empty because there were no Jews left. It seemed that we were the only ones, but we had each other. Finally, one day a Jewish boy came to our house, we were so happy to see him, then some others arrived, and we heard that in Rzeszow there were more Jewish people. So we travelled to Rzeszow. There we met more and more Jews. But the Polish organization didn't like that there were Jews there that had survived. They started a pogrom, so we had to run again. We had to get out of Poland and

get closer to where the Americans were. We traveled on Russian trucks which we got through some influence and went to Bytom. This was closer to Germany where the Americans were. We lived in Bytom about a year.