



The Story of Dvora's Family

Nov 2018, by Dvora Levin

A summary of my parents' experiences from their childhood before World War II until their absorption in Israel

Mother: Matilda Sternhartz.

Maiden Name: Winter. She was born on February 2, 1923 in Lvov (at the time, part of Poland).

Her parents: Dora (nee Mantel) and Chaim Winter. A wealthy family, her father managed a weights and measurements factory in Lvov (Dora and her sister).



Matilda was the eldest daughter. In 1925, her sister Alla was born.

In 1929, their mother, Dora, died while giving birth to a third child, who also died shortly after birth.

A short while later, their father, married an 18 year old relative, Rosa Winter and together they gave birth to a son, Zvi, in 1930.



The family employed a nanny to raise the children.

Every summer the family used to spend a few weeks in a resort area.

The girls attended a Gymnasium in the city and also learned to play the piano.

Matilda was an outstanding student and was loved by her friends and teachers. She aspired to become a medical doctor but was forced to stop her studies at the age of 17, due to the war. (High school class photo)



When the Soviets invaded the city, in September 1939, life changed; their father was expelled from the factory he managed, and after a while he was arrested and was never seen again. Years later we learned that he was executed together with a group of Jews.

The family was deported to Kazakhstan, all their possessions were confiscated, and they were forced to work in labor camps (kolkhozes), first in Kazakhstan, and from 1942 in Uzbekistan. Matilda worked in a variety of occupations, including a tractor driver, a nurse at hospital where typhoid patients were treated, a kindergarten assistant, and in instrument department in a factory.

While working in the camp, Matilda met Avraham, whom she later married at the end of the war.

Father: Avraham Sternhartz. He was born on September 5, 1918 in Lvov.

His parents: Yehudit and Pinchas. A wealthy family, the father managed an electric-light factory (OSRAM) in Lvov.

Abraham was the only child of his parents. He was talented in his studies, played the piano and excelled in playing table tennis. (Avraham with his parents)

When the war broke out he was an engineering student. The Soviets arrested his father, confiscated the family's possessions, and deported Avraham and his mother to Kazakhstan, to a labor camp. The father, Pinchas, was released from prison in 1943 and reunited with his wife and son.



Abraham absorbed languages quickly, hence he communicated well with the locals, especially with the camp foreman. He served as a liaison between the Jews and the foreman and was soon appointed deputy director. When he met Matilda, he worked as a bookkeeper and she was involved in transporting kerosene destined for tractors in a mule-drawn carriage.

In 1943 Avraham was drafted to the Polish army. At the end of the war he received a two-week leave from the army, returned to the village where his parents used to live, Mankint, and went directly to Matilda's house to propose marriage. My parents got married on September 5, 1945. First at a civil registry, and later, under the direction of my grandfather Pinchas, at a Jewish ceremony.

Wanderings after the war: From Russia to Poland

At the end of his vacation, Avraham had to return to his army service. He obtained permission for my mother to work as a secretary in the army, and took her and her sister on a journey with his unit back to the camp. The military camp was located at the town Zerardow in Poland. Despite my mother's work permit, she and her sister did not have permission to cross the border. They sneaked into a train while it was empty of soldiers and hid under the bench. The two sisters hid there until after the end of the border inspection, and only then did they leave their hiding place to the surprise of the soldiers of my father's unit.

When they reached the military base in Zerardow, Matilda began to work as a secretary. It soon became clear to her that she was pregnant. I was born in a military hospital in the town, on June 3, 1946..

My aunt's wandering, Alla

Alla decided to leave Poland to reach Palestine. She joined a group of young people who traveled to France in order to sail from there to Israel. They sailed from the port of Marseilles on the ship "LaNegev", were caught by the British, and deported to Cyprus, where she remained on the island for two years until the declaration of the State of Israel. While in Cyprus, she served as a courier for the headquarters of the Haganah, where she was responsible for transmission of Mors Code communique also receiving a bullet wound to the leg. After returning to Israel, she joined the Palmach and participated in escorting convoys on their way to Jerusalem which was then under siege. At that time she met Moshe Goldfarb, the son of a wealthy family, and they got engaged. Unfortunately, Moshe was killed in the battles of Gush Etzion.

Alla chose to open a new chapter in her life and entered a nursing school in Jerusalem, which provided her with both professional and housing security. (Alla as nurse). While studying she met Shimon Moses, a medical student and they got married in 1951. (Alla and Shimon). They brought into the world two sons, Amir (passed away at age 42 after lung cancer) and Yoram. At a later stage of her life, Alla studied sculpture at Bezalel, and abroad, and worked on it for decades until her death in 2003. (Alla in her studio).



Wandering through of my Uncle, Tzvi, and his mother Rosa

Rosa became involved with a man she met in Uzbekistan.

In 1943 she and Tzvi separated from Matilda and Alla to live with Rosa's boyfriend. In May 1946 Rosa and Tzvi (photo) left Russia, through Ukraine to western Poland.

They joined a group that was organized as a "kibbutz" in order to immigrate to Palestine.

A few weeks later they smuggled through the border into Czechoslovakia and from there by train to Austria, to a transit camp in Ebensee.

Then they moved to a DP camp near Kassel, Germany, where they lived until their immigration to Palestine. The teenaged Tzvi learned

welding there. During their stay in the camp, Rosa met and married Jacob Posarino.



With the decision to partition Palestine in November 1947, volunteers sought to help defend the country. The three volunteered and arrived in Israel in July 1948. Zvi was drafted into the Israeli army immediately. Rosa and Jakob got an apartment in Jaffa and a year later in June 1949 their daughter Hannah was born. Tzvi was discharged from the military in 1950. He studied independently for two years and managed to pass matriculation exams externally while working full time as draftsman for building. In 1952 he begun his studies at the Technion in Electronics Engineering. Tzvi excelled at his work as an innovative engineer, even being awarded the Israel Defense Prize.

In 1965 Tzvi married Tzvia, a multidisciplinary artist (painting, sculpture, poetry and dance). Their daughter, Shunit was born in 1969. Rosa died in 1991 and Yaakov died in 1994.

My parents wandering with me

When I was a few months old, my parents decided to leave Poland and began their journey southward. Using smugglers, they crossed the border to Czechoslovakia, and from there to Austria, where they spent several days in the Joint camp in Steyr. After that they crossed the Alps (Krimml Tauern Pass) and reached Italy. The family was housed together with dozens of other families in the area of Milan, at the Scola Cadorna school, which was converted into a DP camp.



My father worked as an administrator in the camp. As a well-known table tennis player, he received offers to immigrate to Canada and Australia but eventually rejected them in favor of immigration to Israel. Later, the family moved to southern Italy, to Barletta.

We spent two and a half years in Italy, during which the DPs were informed about the declaration of the State of Israel, and the joy was great.

From Barletta we continued to Bari, and from there we sailed to Israel on a ship called Campidulio. We arrived in Israel in June 1949.

Absorption and Life in Israel:

We arrived at the port of Jaffa and were sent directly to the transit camp (MAABARA) at Beer Yaakov. We lived in a tent, under harsh conditions. I contracted diphtheria, and my aunt, who arrived to Israel the year before, helped my parents out. The parents of Moshe Goldfarb (Alla's partner who fell in the War of Independence) maintained close contact with her, and when they heard that her sister's family had arrived in Israel, they opened their house and allowed us to live there for a period of time, until my parents managed to rent a room in Jaffa. The lease was made possible by a loan they gave my parents.

We lived in Jaffa close to 5 years. We rented a room in the home of an Arab whose family had left for Syria. He lived in one room, my parents and me in a second room, and the family of immigrants from Morocco lived in a third room in the same house, we shared outhouses in the yard.

My father worked initially at odd jobs, and a few months later he was hired as an accountant for the "Alliance for Supervision of Agricultural Cooperatives" and was in charge of auditing the accounts of moshavim in Lod - Ben Shemen area. In addition to his work, he continued practicing table tennis, won various championships and even traveled in 1954 with a delegation of players to represent Israel in an international competition in Hungary.



In 1954, we left Jaffa and moved to live in a two rooms apartment in the "Shikkun Amami Gimmel" neighborhood, at 87 Derech Hashalom Street in Tel Aviv. This Shikkun was one of many projects that Golda Meir initiated as then Minister of Labor. The acquisition was made possible thanks to a special savings scheme provided by her office.

My grandparents on my father's side came to Israel a few months after us, and settled down in Jaffa. Fortunately, back in the 1930s, my grandfather bought real estate, and when they immigrated to Israel they sold the property and they financed a kiosk on Yefet Street, where they made a living.

They lived in Jaffa until my grandfather died in 1955. Afterward, my grandmother moved to an elderly home near our apartment.
My grandmother died in 1972.



On February 19, 1957, my brother was born. He was named after his two grandfathers: Pinchas – Chaim. He has later changed his name into Dan Hart. My mother was a housewife and raised us with love, devotion and warmth. In addition, she worked part-time job at the CPA that my father took as additional work. Upon my brother and I leaving home to begin our own lives, my mother studied cosmetology, opening a small practice in her home. She also began studying painting and enjoyed painting for decades.



Both parents were generous and sympathetic people among their acquaintances and colleagues. I remember that my father was invited to be present during internal elections in the moshavim where he worked as an auditor, as a reliable and impartial inspector. My mother liked to entertain - family relatives, my friends and friends of my parents. Nurtured relationships with neighbors and relatives. She had a special relationship with the Goldfarb family, who opened their home to us when we immigrated to Israel. For many years she used to "adopt" new immigrants mainly from the USSR, and support them.

My father passed away in November 1986. My mother passed away in December 2014.

I have grown up in a warm and loving home with parents who have invested all their resources in ensuring that my brother and I have a solid foundation for life. For each of us they paid our university studies and helped us to purchase our first apartment when we married.

In the summer of 2017 I first joined the APC (Alpine PEACE CROSSING) Peace Hike, marching through the mountains that my parents crossed 71 years ago when I was a baby in their arms.

In the summer of 2018 I reached the top of the passage in the Alps with my brother, Dan and my husband, David, and we continued to Italy in their footsteps.

May their memory be blessed.

Dvora Levin, Tel Aviv,
7/11/2018

