

1900-1935 -- My Father's Family Background

My father was born May 20th, 1904 in [Nemirov, Ukraine](#) to **Benzion Shnayder** and his wife **Sosya**, and was the youngest of 13 siblings. **Benzion** was locally well-known tailor, who made clothes for rich families in Nemirov. **Sosya** died, when my father was young, and I was named after her. My father's Hebrew name was **Nachum** or **Nuchemia**. His parents and siblings called him **Emmya** and his Russian name was [Emma](#) (according to the official documents). He was born into a very poor family during czarist times, before the [Socialist Revolution](#), when Jews' educational opportunities and Jews' employment-prospects were limited. So, his father sent him to work as a shoemaker apprentice when he was just 9 years old. I am not sure if he got any Hebrew education, but he was not frum. When the Communists took over, he was a teenager. In the early 1920s he enrolled with [NKVD](#) to fight crime. That allowed him to attend law school and became a lawyer. By the time he graduated, he got disenchanted with NKVD (later KGB) practices and decided to never work for them again, which most likely saved him from Stalin's [Great Purge](#) in 1930s. After he got his law degree, he got a job as a chief lawyer for a government-owned textile factory and tobacco company.

One of my father's 12 siblings was **Zusia Shnayder** who turned 18 when [WWI](#) started in 1914. To avoid the draft into the Russian army, **Zusia** emigrated to Argentina in 1914. Our family deduced that **Zusia** must have later moved to New York, since a care package **Zusia** sent to my father in 1946 had New York return address.

Another one of my father's brothers was **Adolph Shnayder**, who was just a couple of years older than my dad. He married **Etya** and they had a daughter **Sofiya** (who was also named after our grandma Sosya). My **cousin Sofiya** was born 5/10/1934 and was 1 year older than I. **Etya** also had a son and a daughter from a previous marriage. At the start of the [WWII](#), Sofiya's half-siblings were already adults. Before the war both our families were living in [Odessa, Ukraine](#).

One of my father's sisters was aunt **Riva nee-Shnayder**. She was born in **Nemirov** and married **Yakov Genip** (aka **Yasha**) and moved to Moscow, Russia. She had 1 child - **Sofiya** b.1940 (also named after my grandma **Sosya**). Both, aunt Riva Shnayder and her husband Yakov Genip spent WWII working in a Moscow factory, and therefore did not encounter Nazis.

Another one of my father's sisters was **Basya**. She had a daughter **Velya**, who got married at the age of 21 and had a baby at age 22.

1900-1935 -- My Mother's Family Background

My mother's mother name was **Ida** (pronounced Eeda) nee-Magaras born in [Vitebsk, Belorussia](#). She was very shy, and never worked outside of her house. So, she was a housewife, who stayed at home and took care of her

family. Although **Ida** was frum and her husband **Mark** was fervently frum, she did not wear a [sheitel](#).

My mother's father was **Mandel (aka Mark) Beskin**. He was a very frum Jew living in [Surazh, Belarus](#), near **Vitebsk**. He worked for the government as a forest ranger. He was so frum that he would not eat or drink anything from our house, would not even drink water from our glasses. So, he could not visit our home in **Odessa**. Instead, we would periodically travel to **Surazh** to visit him. My maternal grandparents were more frum than my paternal grandparents.

Ida's brother **Aron Magaras** lived in **Vitebsk**. Aron and his wife were killed in the holocaust. They had 2 sons who were very smart and both survived the war and became math teachers. The older son, **Abram Magaras**, had 5 kids and lived in [Sverdlovsk, Russia](#). The younger son, **Isaac Magaras** (b. 1921), moved to Vinnitsa and married Yelena (nee Poida, b. 01/28/1930), also math teacher who worked with him. They had 2 children – **Yuriy** (b. 11/5/1957) & **Marina** (b. 1/7/1962). Yuriy married Yelena and has 1 son named Sergey and is married and has a daughter Yaroslava. Yuriy's and Sergey's families live in [Moscow, Russia](#). Marina married Vladimir Sokolov and has 2 sons, Oleg who is married and Anton. Marina's family lives in [St. Petersburg, Russia](#). A magazine article provided by Yuriy about Isaac Magaras is presented in **APPENDIX 1** of this document.

Ida's oldest sister was **Mira** (pronounced **Meera**) She married well-known pediatrician Dr. **Tzukerman** and was a doctor herself. She was famous for treating tuberculosis. **Mira** had 1 child – a boy **Lev (Lyova)**. The family lived in [Vinnitsa, Ukraine](#) in a free-standing house build by Tzukerman family in the middle of the city. The house had living quarters and a separate room that served as **Mira's** husband's pediatric medical office where he saw his patients. **Lyova** was very smart, and was a classmate of the Soviet WWII hero, [Larisa Ratushnaya](#), He was 20 years old when WWII started and was drafted into the Soviet Army and was reported missing in action. After the war Mira tried to find information about him, but was warned by the government officials to drop her search, which can be interpreted as a sign of some kind of role of Soviet authorities in Lyova's disappearance.

1900-1935 -- My Mother & her siblings

Mark Beskin and **Ida nee-Magaras Beskina** had 3 surviving children. My mother was given a secret name Alta because there were a few children that died before she was born. Surviving children oldest-to-youngest: **Savili Beskin**, my mom **SimaAlta nee-Beskina**, and **Bronia nee-Beskina**.

Bronia, my mother's younger sibling, was born 1911 in **Surazh Belarus**. **Bronia** attended med school in **Vinnitsa**. Late in life and after the war, **Bronia** married **Boris Sonaiko**. **Bronia** bore Rita (b.1946) and Lilya. Rita married a Ivan Panasyuk and had 4 children with him while

in her late 30s, early 40s. Her oldest daughter was severely disabled and died when she was a teenager. Her 3 sons live with their parents and their families in [Khmelnitsky, Ukraine](#).

Savyeliy (aka Salik) Beskin was my mom's oldest sibling. He was born in **Suresh**. During WWII, Salik was head doctor in a military hospital in **Mari Turkmenistan**. After the war, he was a doctor in Balashov Russia near Saratov. **Savili** had 2 kids - **Mark** and **Ludmila**.

SimaAlta, my mother, was the middle child, born 1909 in **Suresh Belarus**. She was given the middle name **Alta** in hopes of it increasing her chance of survival, since her birth followed 2 miscarriages (after **Savili's** birth). **SimaAlta** got a degree as a nurse practitioner (which qualified her to diagnose and treat patients almost like a doctor) in 1930 from a medical school in **Vinnitsa**. But the job she was employed at as a nurse keeping track of medical statistics. In 1935, **SimaAlta** entered med school to become a doctor. While in med school in 1934, my mother **SimaAlta** met my father **Emma** when he was a patient in **Vinnitsa Paragola Hospital** and she was a nurse there. They married in 1934. In 1935-4-8, 2 years after starting med school, **SimaAlta** bore me (Sofia) and quit med school to care for me, which is why her career was nurse practitioner and not doctor. Throughout my youth, my shoes were always store-bought, but during my younger years my clothes were handmade, and only in later years were my clothes store-bought.

My parents would read newspapers **Pravda** and **Investia**. After reading the newspapers, we used the newspapers as toilet paper. Our house had a small radio. Not everyone had a radio at home, and radios were located outside on streets, so that people could congregate outside and hear the news.

In our family, we spoke Russian – not Yiddish or Ukrainian. My brother **Vladimir** was never bar mitzvahed. There was no mention of Zionism. Our family was financially average. At school, students did not know each other's religion or discriminate based on religion. While growing up in **Odessa**, our family never kept Jewish holidays and Jewish holidays were never mentioned. Except that when visiting my maternal grandparents in **Belarus**, we did hear about Jewish holidays and kept Pesach in **Belarus**. In my maternal grandfather's household in **Belarus**, on **Pesach**, we refrained from eating chametz and ate matzah, and used a different sink and different utensils (than for the rest of the year). And on Shabbos, we prayed and ate a special meal and refrained from work. But no shuls existed in **Suresh** or in **Vinnitsa**. And I have no memory of Chanukah.

Bronia Baskina, my mom's youngest sibling, was born 1911. In ~1930, she moved from **Suresh** to **Vinnitsa** to enter med school, and she became a pharmacist.

My brother **Vladimir Shnayder** was born in 1940. He was named after **Marik's** relative **Velvel**.

1935-1941 – My life before the war

I, **Sofia** (nee Shnayder) Lekhter, was born in 4/8/1935 in a hospital in **Odessa Ukraine**. **Odessa** was a beautiful city on the Black Sea, with large Jewish population in **Ukraine**

My parents had a relative that owned their own house, so our family lived in that house.

In 1941, when I turned 6 years old, we moved from that house to a government-assigned apartment in **Odessa**. The apartment contained 1 room plus a kitchen, with no fridge.

Both of my parents worked (my mother as a nurse practitioner and father as a lawyer for a factory). So my parents hired a babysitter to care for me. My parents were not frum and did not keep kosher, which is why my mom's father never visited us

Soon afterward, when I was 6 years old, my babysitter was replaced by my maternal grandmother **SimaAlta**, who volunteered to take care of me and the apartment. Each day during the summer, while **SimaAlta** was taking care of the apartment, I played outside with the neighborhood children. One day, the older neighborhood children left the play area to enter the local elementary school to start their first day of the new school year. Although I was not enrolled in the school and I was too young for school, I followed those children into the school building and entered the 1st grade classroom. The 1st grade teacher assumed, mistakenly, that I was enrolled in her class, and treated me as an official student. From then on, when I left home each morning, instead of playing outside, I walked to the 1st grade class. I was good student & I enjoyed it. However, I never told my parents or grandmother that I was attending school. And they naturally thought, mistakenly, that I spent each day playing outside, since my parents and grandmother were too busy with their own duties to keep track of what I was doing during the day. One day, I misbehaved in school, and the teacher told me to bring my mother to school. I brought my mother to class, and my mother told the teacher that she was surprised learn that I had been attending school.

I attended school for 2 years.

1941 - Life in our hometown Odessa

In the summer of 1941, we were still living in **Odessa**. I was 6 years old at the time, and my brother **Vladimir** was 1 year old. My dad **Emma** worked as a lawyer. My mom had a career as a nurse. She was on temporary maternity leave, staying home to take care of me and my brother. We occupied a small 2-room apartment that had a kitchen and a small bedroom. These were considered good living conditions since we didn't have to share with anyone.

In June 1941 my dad was called up to Soviet Army.

1941 - Our visit in Suresh

Since my father away in the army, my mom decided to take us kids to visit her parents in **Suresh Belarus**, near **Belarus**' border with Poland. She locked up our **Odessa** apartment, leaving everything there, and did not take much clothing and provisions, thinking that she will return to **Odessa** in a couple of months.

We stayed at her parents' house in **Suresh**. My grandparents were frum and kept kosher, and had a small farm with cows and chickens. My mother's father was a forest ranger, and was well respected in the Jewish community. He had a house, a chicken farm, and a couple of cows. My mother's mother was a heavy woman in her 60s.

On 6/22/1941, in the middle of the night, Nazi Germany attacked Soviet Union on the border where we were staying. The Nazi army was advancing toward our area, and Soviet soldiers were retreating past our city, **Suresh**. My mother feared that if Nazis reached our area and discovered our father was serving in the Soviet Army, they would kill us. So my mom decided our family should evacuate along with the fleeing Soviet soldiers. My mom convinced her mother to join us. But my mother's father refused to leave for 3 reasons: (1) he needed to stay to care for his farm, (3) he thought the Nazi occupation would soon end, and (3) he was confident he would not be harmed by the Germans, since he remembered that the German soldiers that occupied his village in WWI were decent.

1941 - Our fleeing from Suresh

My mom convinced some Soviet soldiers, who were fleeing in an open bed pickup truck, to take us with them in the truck as they fled eastward toward Russia. The fact that our father was serving in the army might have been a factor in the soldiers agreeing to take us along. So my family (my grandmother and mother and brother and me) all rode in the cargo bed of the truck, along with Soviet soldiers.

While we were traveling in the back of the trucks, German airplanes were constantly passing overhead. Some of the German planes dove downward to attack us. (I don't remember if it was by bombing or strafing.) Each time an aerial attack started, Soviet soldiers would grab me and my brother and run with us to an adjacent field overgrown with hay or grain. We would hide there until the bombing stopped. But my grandmother was too old and heavy to run (She was heavy and in her 60s), so she stayed in the truck. And my mom stayed with her in the truck. While we were taking cover in the field, the Nazi planes would fly so low that I could see pilots' faces smiling. After each attack ended, as I was returning to the truck, I dreaded the possibility of not finding my mother and grandmother alive, while my mother dreaded the possibility of not finding my brother & me alive.

After a few days, the German army caught up with us our caravan of trucks. Some of the Soviet soldiers were

killed in a shootout; others ran into the woods and joined partisan units.

1941-1942 - Our stay in Iliyeno ghetto

In about July 1941, the Germans placed my family in a ghetto in a village **Ilyeno** in **Smolenski** oblast **Russia**, near the **Ukrainian** border. Where we lived about 18 months, always in fear and hunger.

In the ghetto, the Nazis kept us in a basement of a one-room shack with few elderly Jewish men, women and children. The shack had no electricity or running water or toilet or bed, and we slept on the floor. We had to wear yellow stars on our clothes. We were prohibited from leaving the ghetto, and there was no food. The other Jews in the ghetto would trade their belongings for food with the locals who sometimes entered the ghetto. Since we brought very few provisions with us on vacation, we did not have much to trade, so we were always very hungry.

My brother **Vladimir**, at the age of 1 year old, started to walk & speak while we were visiting **Suresh**. But then he stopped walking and speaking while we were the ghetto. To this day, **Vladimir** does not remember anything about the ghetto.

We had lice & itching, and my mother used to check our clothes and hair for lice.

The winter at the end of 1941 was very cold, and we had no warm clothes, since we had packed for summer (when leaving **Odessa** for **Suresh**). At night, under the cover of darkness, my mother and other women would leave our shack and search through empty houses in the ghetto to scavenge for firewood to keep warm and for clothes to keep warm. She would also, under cover of darkness, enter fields in the ghetto to dig out a frozen carrot or potato. And that is how we survived the winter.

The ghetto was administered by guards – both German soldiers and local Ukrainians. The guards in the ghetto would sometimes pick a Jew at random and take him/her out to be executed. So we always tried to be inconspicuous, or hide if possible, whenever we saw a guard coming.

One time, the Nazis marched us out of the ghetto into a field to execute us. Just then, partisans attacked the Nazis, and we fled into the forest with the partisans. We begged the partisans to let us join them, but they refused to take an old woman and 2 children. Without protection from the partisans, and with no shelter against the bitter cold, our family had to return to the ghetto.

Another time, the Nazis marched us out of the ghetto and into a field to execute us. But Soviet planes appeared and strafed the Nazis that were about to kill us.

1942 - Our fleeing from Iliyeno ghetto

In the winter of 1942, Soviet army broke through Nazi lines in a bloody battle. The Soviet army freed us from

the ghetto, and formed a narrow corridor through which we could flee eastward into **Russian**.

The Soviet army opened a temporary military hospital near **Ilyeno** to care for wounded soldiers. My mom, whose profession was a nurse, asked the hospital's head doctor if she could help him care for the wounded soldiers. But the head doctor told my mom that the Nazi army would be returning soon to retake the area, and that all the Soviet soldiers and even his hospital will be leaving **Ilyeno** soon to flee eastward, and that my mom and her family should join them. Wounded Soviet soldiers were being evacuated on Red Cross trucks.

So, our family hopped on the back of one of the Red Cross trucks that was carrying wounded soldiers eastward. While we were traveling in the convey of trucks, we were periodically attacked by German planes, despite the fact that our trucks were clearly marked with the red crosses.

1942-1944 – Our stay in **Mari**

Our family was taken in the trucks to **Mari Turkmenistan**. In **Mari**, our family lived in a 1-room house that had an outhouse. The house had a big yard. Nearby were other houses that were occupied by other refugees -- mainly gentile. It was very hot in Turkmenistan, so I would cool off by wading in a river and I learned to swim.

In **Mari**, my mother **SimaAlta** found that her sister **Bronya nee-Beskina Magaras** was a rehab/recovery doctor at a military hospital in **Mari**, and that her brother **Salik Beskin** was head doctor at the hospital. My mother started working in the same hospital, taking care of wounded soldiers. For that, she received meager rations to feed her family.

My uncle **Savili** used his position as the military hospital's head doctor to search for my father **Emma** using the Soviet army's records. The records indicated my father was severely wounded by shrapnel from a direct hit on a military vehicle that he was about to enter. Everyone in that car was blown up. Salik requested that my father be transferred to his hospital in **Mari**. My father arrived in **Mari** in such grave condition, which included a concussion, that my uncle **Savili** at first did not recognize him. For about a year, my dad was bedbound and was constantly cared for by my mother. **Emma's** concussion caused psychological problems for **Emma** the rest of his life, including episodes of anger.

As a family of a wounded soldier, the Soviet army gave us rations of a bowl of soup and a slice of bread each day. Since my mother was constantly caring for my wounded father, my mother sent me (I was 8 years old) to go to the soup kitchen daily and bring back food rations. One time, neighborhood Turkmen boys, who knew the route I took from the soup kitchen, waited in ambush for me and stole the food I was carrying. I came home with nothing, and was

severely scolded by my mother for leaving the family without the food. I felt very guilty, and avoided further ambushes by taking a different route every time.

When my father **Emma** recovered, he got a job as a lawyer for some government department in **Mari**. And his salary made us less dependent on rations.

While my parents were away at work during the day, my grandmother **Ida** did household chores. Due to a very hot weather and lack of air conditioning, I spent most of my time playing outside with neighborhood kids. One day, the neighborhood children were playing soldier which included throwing rocks. One rock hit my nose, and my nose was badly wounded and bleeding. My grandmother **Ida** informed my mother **SimaAlta** who was at work. My mother ran home and took me to hospital. Days later, my nose became black-and-blue and swollen and I could not breath through it. The episode left a scar on my nose that I still have today.

People in **Mari** knew that our Jewish family was related to the head doctor. So no one in **Mari** treated us badly or displayed antisemitism.

In **Mari**, I contracted malaria and recovered.

I liked living in **Mari**, and especially compared to ghetto.

One day, I was 6 years old and playing with neighborhood children that were 7 years old. At some point, they stopped playing and went to the school building to go to class. I tagged along with them and even walked into a classroom with them (even though I was not enrolled in school since I was too young). The teacher let me stay in her class and treated me like a regular student. Although the other students knew how to read and I didn't, I did well in the class. That is because I had a good visual memory and was able to memorize what others read word for word and, when asked by the teacher, pretend I am reading, by using pictures to identify what to pull out of my memory. After a few weeks, the teacher realized my ruse and told me to bring my mom to come see her. My mom was very surprised to be called to school, as she didn't even know I was attending it. But at the end, my mom let me remain in school, since she felt that it's safer for me to attend school with other kids, then to be by myself all day long.

One day, on May 9, 1945, when I was 10 years, old, we heard fireworks and celebrating. We were told that WWII ended.

1945 - Family members who died in Holocaust

During the holocaust, almost all of our relatives were killed in the holocaust. We found that every family member who did not evacuate was killed

My maternal grandfather **Marik**, who stayed behind in **Suresh** to care for this farm, was murdered along with other Jews in **Suresh**, and his farm house and farm in **Suresh** were destroyed.

Among those killed were ALL of our from relatives.

My father was born in **Nemirov**, the youngest of 13 siblings. When the war started, my father's 2 parents and 11 of his siblings still lived in **Nemirov** along with their children and grandchildren – comprising over 30 people living in **Nemirov**. All of them were killed in the Holocaust. So I never got to meet any of the **Nemirov** relatives in my life, since I never visited **Nemirov** before the war and they never visited us in **Odessa**. Of my father's 12 siblings, the only ones who survived the were one of his sisters (**Riva nee-Shnayder Genik**) and his brother **Izak** (who had emigrated to Argentina decades earlier) survived.

Among those killed in **Nemirov** were my father's 21 year old niece **Velya**. At the start of the war, **Velya**'s husband left home to join the partisans, while **Velya** herself had to remain home to care for her 2-month-old baby. When the Nazis entered **Nemirov** and were informed that **Velya**'s husband was a partisan, they tried to extract information from **Velya** about the partisans, by first killing her baby in front of her eyes and then torturing her (**Velya**) to death.

My father's brother **Adolph** and his wife **Etya** (my paternal aunt) and his daughter **Sofia** (my cousin) lived in **Odessa** before the war. **Adolph** was drafted into the Soviet army, and was killed in battle when he was ordered to attack German tanks while on horseback. We were told that **Adolph** lost the will to live when he heard (incorrectly) that his wife and daughter were lost at sea. But **Adolph**'s wife **Etya** and daughter **Sofia** survived because they qualified (due to their status as being a soldier's family) to be evacuated before Nazis arrived. Also, **Etya**'s son and a daughter from a previous marriage, who had been married with children and living in **Odessa** before the war, survived the war because they, too, qualified to be evacuated before the Nazis arrived.

Before the war, my maternal grandmother's sister **Mira nee-Magaras Sukerman**, was a tuberculosis doctor in **Vinnitsa**. She was able to survive the war, because she was evacuated before the Nazis came to **Vinnitsa**. After the war, **Mira** returned to her own house in **Vinnitsa** to find that it was still intact. But **Mira**'s pediatrician husband and **Mira**'s 20-year-old son **Lova** both vanished on the front lines fighting Nazis.

All those that lived remained in Vitebsk – **Aron Magaras** and his son **Isak Magaras** and their wives -- were killed in the holocaust, But **Aron**'s 2 sons survived and were orphans.?????

My paternal cousin **Basya** in **Nemirov** had a daughter **Velya**, who married early in life and had a baby before WWII started (as mentioned above). **Velya**'s husband left his family to fight with the partisans. In order to extract information about the partisans from **Velya**, Nazis killed **Velya**'s baby in front of her and then tortured **Velya** to death.

My maternal grandmother's Ida's brother and his wife, who lived in **Vitebsk**, were both killed during the war.

1944-1945 Immediate aftermath of the Holocaust

In 1944, **Ukraine** was liberated from the Nazis, and my father recovered from his wounds. My parents wanted to move away from Turkmenistan, due to it hot weather.

My father returned to our apartment in **Odessa**, to find that it was occupied by neighbors who trashed our belongings. The neighbors explained to my father that they thought we would never return, since they knew almost all Jews had been killed.

Also while in **Odessa**, my father learned that his brother (my paternal uncle) **Adolph** Shnayder was killed in battle (as explained above), but that **Adolph**'s wife **Etya** and daughter **Sofia** survived, and that their house in **Odessa** was destroyed. My father took **Etya**'s daughter (my cousin) **Sofia** to live with our family while **Etya** remained in **Odessa** to find a new home in **Odessa**. After 1 year living with us, my cousin **Sofia** rejoined her mother **Etya** in **Odessa**.

We learned that my maternal grandfather, who had stayed behind in **Suresh**, was killed and his farm and house in **Suresh** were destroyed.

My dad visited his birthplace, **Nemirov Ukraine**, where, before the war, his parents and most his siblings and their children and grandchildren were living before the war. My father found that all those living in **Nemirov** were murdered by the Nazis.

So the 6 of us (my maternal grandmother Ida, father **Emma**, mother **SimaAlta**, brother **Vladimir**, me **Sofia**, and my cousin **Sofia**) were looking for a home or relative that could take us in. And we had no home or relatives left in **Odessa** and **Suresh** and **Nemirov**.

But we learned Ida's sister **Mira** survived the war. She was living in her stand-alone house in **Vinnitsa**. She was all alone, since her husband and son were killed in the war. **Mira** took, into her house to live with her, all 6 of us and also the 2 orphans of her nephew **Isak Magaras** (who were our maternal cousins).

So my family moved to **Vinnitsa** to live with aunt **Mira**. Meera's house had internal plumbing and an indoor bathroom, which was a luxury in those days. The 6 of us were given the biggest room of the house to live in, and we shared the kitchen and bathroom with **Mira** and our 2 maternal cousins. **Mira**'s house was across the street from a park. **Mira**'s house was also near a KGB headquarters where KGB agents worked, so the neighborhood was safe from crime. So, for many reasons, living in **Mira**'s house was a luxury compared to the living conditions of many other Ukrainians. We lived in **Mira**'s house well into the 60s, until Soviet leader **Khrushchev** built high rise apartments for citizens. In **Vinnitsa**, my father worked as a lawyer, and my mother worked in a medical office.

Vinnitsa's football stadium was red. And we were told that the stadium's red color was due to executions that Nazis performed in that stadium.

After the war, my mother never talked about her experiences in the ghetto. It was common for adults, who

had been captured by Nazis, to avoid recounting their experiences, since the Soviet government accused those who survived Nazi imprisonment as traitors.

1945-present – What happened to my aunt Mira

Mira's son **Lova** (who vanished in the Soviet army) was good student of foreign languages in **Moscow University**. **Mira** was searching for information about the fate of her husband and son, until KGB told her to stop searching. **Mira** surmised, from the facts that (1) her son was good student of foreign languages in Moscow Univ, and (2) KGB wanted her to stop searching for him, that her son might have been used by the Soviets as a spy against the Germans due to his foreign language skill.

Mira died in 1962 in **Vinnitsa**, at maybe age 70.

1945-present – What happened to my maternal aunt & uncle Bronia & Savili

As mentioned above, during the war, my mother's brother **Salik** and sister **Bronia** worked as doctors in a military hospital in **Mari** during the war. After the war, **Savili** moved to **Balashov** near **Saratov** in Russia, where he had 2 children - **Marik** and **Luda**. And **Bronia** moved to **Proskurov** (now called **Khmelnitski**), where she married **Boris Sonaiko** who worked for railroad in **Proskurov**. **Bronia** had a baby girl **Margarita** (aka **Rita**) in 1946 and triplets in 1950. My maternal grandmother **Ida** moved out of **Mira's** house and into **Bronia's** house in **Proskurov** to care for **Bronia's** children. **Ida** remained in **Proskurov** for the last 7 years of her life. 2 of **Bronia's** triplets died of the pneumonia at age 6 months, and the surviving triplet was **Lilya**, who now lives in **Proskurov**. **Rita** became a teacher and moved to **Saratov** where her uncle **Salik** was living and still lives there.

1945-present – What happened to my cousin Sofia

As mentioned above, my **cousin Sofia** Snyder was my maternal uncle **Adolph's** daughter. She was 1 year older than me. Right after the war, in 1945, when she was age 11, she joined our family when we moved into Aunt **Mira's** house in **Vinnitsa**. Her mother (aunt **Etya**) remained in **Odessa** to find a home to replace the one destroyed during the war. After living with us for a year, at age 12, cousin Sofiya returned to **Odessa** to rejoin her mother **Etya**. In perhaps 1953, at age 19, **cousin Sofia** married her 1st husband, Valentine Basisti, a gentile who worked in the **Soviet Marine Corp** as a theater-actor to entertain the troops. **Cousin Sofia** and her husband **Valentine** were stationed in **Poland**. The next year, at about age 20, in about 1954, **cousin Sofia** bore Ludmilla. After about 10 years of marriage, perhaps in 1963, **cousin Sofia** divorced. About 10 after that, perhaps in 1973, **cousin Sofia** married **Semyon Rubenstein**. **Cousin Sofia** and Semyon & daughter Ludmilla emigrated to New York in 1976, as soon as the Soviet government allowed Jews to

leave. In New York, **Cousin Sofia** worked as a seamstress, and **Semyon** worked for a company that renovated homes. They owned a gas station for awhile, which went out of business after a couple of years. **Cousin Sofia** encouraged our family to move to the U.S.

1945-1952 – My teenage years

In **Vinnitsa** after WWII Sofa's family (incl **Edward, Genya & Svetlana**) lived in apt on 3rd floor of a 5-floor apt bldg. When we moved to **Vinnitsa**, I entered 3rd grade. Each day after school, we were taken to pick cotton in a kolchoz. **Vladimir** was 5 years old and I was 10 years old. My maternal grandmother **Ida** was old and overweight, and so did not work but instead cared for us kids and our household

I attended an all-girls high school. During my last year of high school, my boyfriend was **Edward Lekhter**, who was attending an all-boys high school. **Edward** and I wanted to marry, but my mother prohibited me from marrying until I would graduate college. 234234

1952-1958 – My years in med school

I graduated high school in 1952 at age 17. I was straight-A student, and the rule was that straight-A student get a special medal that entitles them to entrance into **Vinnitsa's** med school. I applied to many med schools (including in **Vinnitsa & Moscow**) but was rejected for 2 reasons: (1) med schools' enforcement of Jewish admissions quota & (2) the recent "doctor's plot" affair prompting the Soviet government to label Jews as too dangerous to serve as doctors. (The "doctor's plot" affair was a Soviet government campaign in which many doctors, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were dismissed from their jobs, arrested and tortured to produce admissions. The deportation of the entire Jewish population of the Soviet Union to the Gulag was intended to follow. A few weeks after the death of Stalin, the new Soviet leadership said there was a lack of evidence and the case was dropped. Soon after, it was declared to have been fabricated.) One med school admissions officer that I interviewed with circled the word "Jew" in my citizenship ID with a red pen when he told me he could not accept into his med school.

My friend, who lived in **Kazan Tatarstan**, told me that **Tatarstan** had no antisemitism or Jewish quotas and that **Tatars** even prefer Jews more than Russians. So I applied to **Kazan's** med school and was accepted. I, at the age of 17, started med school in **Kazan**, which lasted 6 years. For lodging, in the first few years of med school, I rented a bedroom of someone's house with an outhouse. But in later years, the med school paid for my lodging and I slept on sofa in some apartment.

On Feb. 1, 1958, just 2 months before turning 23, I married **Edward Lekhter**. He was 2 years older than me and was living in his parents' 2-room apartment, which had no toilet, and was studying in a **Vinnitsa** teachers college

where he was studying for a college degree in physics education. **Edward**'s mom was a teacher in a med school and got permission for our wedding to be held in the **Vinnitsa** med school's assembly hall. Our wedding was large, with perhaps 75 guests. No photos were taken of it.

Immediately after our wedding, I returned to **Kazan** to continue med school, while **Edward** stayed in **Vinnitsa** to continue learning in teachers college. In July 1958, 5 months after our wedding, I graduated med school and left **Kazan** to join my husband in **Vinnitsa**. For the next 2 months, he and I lived together in his parents' 2-room apartment while waiting for the government to assign to a village to fulfill my post-graduation 6-year-stint of community service.

1958-1964 – My years in community service in Voronovitsa village

In Oct. 1958, the Soviet government posted me (as a newly graduated pediatrician to start my community service) in a town called **Voronovitsa**, where we stayed for 6 years. **Voronovitsa** was a county seat of the **Voronovitski Rayon** farming region, and was near my hometown of **Vinnitsa**.

Some frum Jews lived in **Voronovitsa**. They practiced Judaism clandestinely, since practicing religion, especially Judaism, was against the law. The frum Jews of **Voronovitsa** told me that they remembered my father's relatives who used to live in **Voronovitsa** before the war. **Edward** and I rented a room from one of those frum Jews named **Mr. Katz**.

Before the war, **Mr. Katz** lived in **Voronovitsa** with his first family (comprising a wife and perhaps kids). During WWII, **Mr. Katz** fought in the Soviet army. After the war, he returned to **Voronovitsa** to find that his 1st family had been killed by the Nazis. The same fate befell all of my father's relatives who had lived in **Voronovitsa** before the war. In fact, all Jews of **Voronovitsa** that were not evacuated before the Nazis came were killed in the war. **Mr. Katz** married again and had a daughter.

Mr. Katz owned a cottage. It had only 2 rooms and a corridor. It had no bathroom and no kitchen. Cooking was done in the corridor on a kerosene stove. **Mr. Katz** rented out 1 room to **Edward** and me, and **Mr. Katz's** family lived in the other room. We had chickens while living in **Mr. Katz's** cottage. Life in **Voronovitsa** was primitive.

In **Voronovitsa**, I served as the village's doctor. Concurrently, **Edward** served as a physics teacher in the village as part of a teaching internship to fulfill a "practical" requirement of his college training before receiving his degree in physics education. At the school **Edward** worked at, the students were all grownups who worked at jobs full time and were finishing their high school degree part time. These grownup students never received finished because the war interrupted their studies.

A disadvantage of our marrying 5 months before my graduation is that we had to live apart for the first 5 months of our marriage. However, a big advantage of our marrying 5 months before my graduation is that it qualified me (as a married medical graduate) to have my civil service assignment to be in a village (the town (**Voronovitsa**) near **Vinnitsa**). In contrast, had I NOT been married, the government would have posted me in a village in Siberia.

While in the farming village, I became pregnant with **Genya**, who was born in 1960. I was given 5 months maternity leave (i.e., 2 months before delivery and 3 months post-delivery) during which time **Edward** and I lived in **Edward's** parents' apartment in **Vinnitsa**. During this time, **Edward** had to commute a few days a week, from his parents' apartment, to the village to fulfill his teaching internship. When my maternity leave ended, we moved back to the village. Once, when **Genya** was about 3 years old, he was playing with a chicken, and the chicken pecked him.

In 1960, 2 years into our 6-year stint in the village, **Edward** received his college degree in physics education. To improve his career opportunities, **Edward** then enrolled in an engineering program at Kiev Polytechnic Institute to pursue an engineering degree. This engineering program accommodated work-study and distance-learning. That enabled **Edward** to continue living in the village and teaching physics in the village while also studying engineering in the village, while periodically commuting to **Kiev** to attend engineering classes and take tests.

1964-1993 – My years as a pediatrician in Vinnitsa

In 1964, at age 29, I completed my 6-year-stint of civil service, and our family (**Edward**, me and 4-year-old **Genya**) left the village to return to **Vinnitsa**. Upon returning to **Vinnitsa**, I worked as a pediatrician for a series of medical institutions. And **Edward** worked as a physics teacher while concurrently pursuing his engineering degree.

In **Vinnitsa**, in 1967, I became a part-time pediatrics professor in **Vinnitsa Medical College**, while still seeing patients parttime. This medical college taught students to be dentists and nurse-practitioners. A nurse practitioner could diagnose illnesses and prescribe medicine and deliver babies.

In **Vinnitsa**, in 1968, at age 35, **Edward** received his engineering degree from **Kiev Polytechnic Institute**. He stopped working as physics teacher and started working as an engineer. He worked for a series of companies inventing food-production machines. He received 9 patents for his inventions and became an engineering manager. One machine **Edward** invented made potato chips. Another made candy, and another made cakes. **Edward's** candy machine was used by a candy company called **Roshen** which is now owned by half-Jewish **Petro Poroshenkowho** who later became **Ukraine's** president.

1993 Emigrating from Ukraine to the U.S.

We wanted to flee **Ukraine** because antisemitism was displayed openly in many ways. Both during and after Soviet times, we always endured antisemitic prejudice and antisemitic discrimination in hiring and college-admissions (in addition to all religious expression being punishable by expulsion from school and job). Many Jews changed their first and last names so as to hide their Jewish identity, and any child born of a mixed marriage (Jew and gentile) would ALWAYS identify in citizenship papers as gentile.

However, antisemitic hate speech was suppressed during Soviet times. In contrast, after the fall of the Soviet Union, antisemitic hate speech was expressed openly. For example, signs were posted that said “Jews go to Israel” and “We (i.e., Ukrainians) will drown the Russians in a river of Jews’ blood” and conspiracy theories were spread that blamed Jews for public problems. As another example, when Svetlana applied for jobs as a computer programmer, despite having excelled in college, she encountered anti-Jewish discrimination in hiring, and one admission officer even frankly told her she was being turned down for a job because of her religion.

We applied to the Soviet government for permission to emigrate in 1987, during the waning years of the Soviet Union. Of all the countries to flee to, we chose the US because my cousin **Sofa nee-Snyder Rubenstein** already lived in New York and encouraged us to choose the US.

It took 6 years from the time we applied for permission to leave the Soviet Union to the time we were finally able to leave. 2 years into our 6-year wait, the Soviet Union disintegrated. We left **Ukraine** in 1993. Each of us took \$500 in cash, which was the maximum allowed by the Ukrainian government. Before leaving, we gifted essentially all of our belongings to friends. We could not sell our apartment, because it belonged to the government.

We were to be sponsored by the **Jewish Federation of Cleveland (JFC)** and to be assisted by the **Jewish Family Service (JFS)** agency which was part of the **JFC**.

In 1993, 8 of us (my parents & brother & me & grandmother **SimaAlta** & uncle **Vladimir** & his wife **Znaida** & his son **Artur**) boarded a plane in Kiev. After a 2-day flight, with a brief stopover in New York, the 8 of us arrived in **Cleveland Hopkins Airport** on the evening of 7/28/1993. We were picked up from the airport by **JFC** volunteer who dropped us off at 2 apartments (one apartment for **Vladimir** & his wife & son & **SimaAlta**, and the other apartment for my parents & **Genya** & me) that the **JFC** had obtained for us. Both apartments were in a single apartment building that was in a 5-story 90-year-old apartment building on the south side of Mayfield Rd, about 200 feet east of Coventry Rd.

The **JFC** volunteer told us that the next morning, the 8 of us should walk 1 mile up Mayfield Rd to the lobby of the **JFS** office located in the MayLee Bldg at the corner

of Mayfield Rd and Lee Rd. So, the next morning, on 7/29/1993, as instructed, we walked up Mayfield Rd to the MayLee Bldg and waited in the main lobby on the ground floor. After waiting there for over an hour, an American (**Mitchell Rose**) approached us. He had noticed that we had been waiting in the ground floor lobby for a very long time, and asked why we were there. We explained that we were waiting in the lobby of the **JFS** as instructed. He replied that we were waiting in the wrong lobby, and then he led us to the **JFS** office’s lobby located on the building’s 2nd floor.345345

1993-today – My life in Cleveland

During my first year in Cleveland, I had a hard time communicating in English despite my having learned English in school in **Ukraine**. I planned to work as a doctor in the US, but found that path too hard to pursue on. I (who had been a pediatrician in **Ukraine**) at first worked as a Russian translator for the Cleveland Clinic and later as a nanny for a religious family. **Edward** (who had been a lead engineer in **Ukraine**) worked as a landscape worker. **Vladimir** (who was a physics professor in **Ukraine**) worked at McDonalds. Svetlana worked as a stockperson and cashier at **Medical Drugstore**. **Vladimir**’s wife Znaida (who was a Communism teacher in **Ukraine**) worked in Ungers Bakery. **Artur** (who was a ??? in **Ukraine** worked as a technician in a company that custom-built computers. My mom **SimaAlta** (due to her age) and **Genya** (due to his cerebral palsy) were enrolled in SSI.

Edward stopped working as a landscape worker when he had a heart attack and received stents. That is also when I stopped working as a nanny.

My mom **SimaAlta** died in 1999 at age 90. She never learned English.

Episode About My Student Prevented from Graduating Due To Religious Beliefs

In the 1980s, I was a professor of pediatrics in what was called **Vinnitsa Medical College**.

New students would enter the College upon completing 8th-grade. The College provided a 4-year program that culminated in a bachelor’s degree in a medical field, such as a bachelor’s degree to be a nurse practitioner.

In about 1985, I had a 19-year-old female student who was nearing the end her 4th (and last) year of college. She had maintained straight-As for all 4 years that she had attended college. And the only requirement she had left to fulfill for graduation was to take oral exams in 4 subjects – surgery, family medicine, pediatrics, and atheism. In each respective oral exam, the student would be given a paper with 3 questions relating to the particular subject, and the student would orally answer those 3 questions in front of a professor who taught that particular subject. The professor for the oral exam on pediatrics was me (**Sofia Lekhter**).

The professor for the oral exam on atheism was Professor Rita Sokiryanskaya, who (like me) was Jewish.

Prior to the student's oral exams, an administrator of the college's communist party organization contacted me. He told me that government officials had been informed that this particular female student believed in Christianity and that she had even, recently, been wed in a church. The student probably assumed that officials in **Vinnitsa** would not know that her wedding was in a church, since her wedding was held in a small village far from **Vinnitsa**. The official told me that since this student believed in religion, she must be prevented from graduating, and asked that I give this student a failing grade in the oral exam that I administered. I refused the official's request. I assumed that he would then ask each of the other professors to give the student a failing grade.

The day arrived for the student's oral exam on atheism. The student stood before **Professor Sokiryanskaya** with the written exam-questions in her hand. **Professor Sokiryanskaya** preceded the exam by informally asking the student "Do you believe that God exists?" The student responded "Yes". **Professor Sokiryanskaya** replied something like "Then you automatically fail this exam, and there is no reason for you to bother answering the exam-questions." Upon hearing **Professor Sokiryanskaya's** words, the student instantly realized that her medical career was destroyed, since failing an oral exam meant flunking out of college with nothing to show for her 4 years of courses. And the student broke down crying.

The next day, the student's mother came to the college and asked the administration if her daughter could salvage her college program by retaking the atheism course next year. But the college administration said no.

I heard a rumor that (1) the mother petitioned the Ukrainian Ministry of Education in Kiev to allow her daughter to take the same oral next year, and that (2) the Ukrainian Ministry of Education agreed. But I know that the student never returned to our college and never received a diploma from our college. And I never heard about her again. And I do not know if she ever succeeded in salvaging her college career.

Episode About My Being Warned By a Student Not to Criticize the Government

In the 1970s, I was a professor of nursing in **Vinnitsa** Medical Institute (aka Zablony Memorial Institute). It provided a 4-year college program, leading to degrees in nursing and midwifery. Most of its students entered this institute after 8th grade, so most of its students were ages 15-20, but some students (who completed army first) were in their young 20s. When teaching nursing class, I would sometimes entertain my students with a joke. One day, my joke poked fun of a government policy. After class, one of my male students privately approached me

after class and told me "You should be very careful not to say a joke that might be considered critical of the government, because there is at least one government spy in each class."

Children Being Taught in School to Report Others to the Government

Young students were taught in grade school that the Soviet government is leading its citizens to a brighter future. And that it is an evil crime against society to say anything critical of the government or to withhold information or valuables from the government or to even be associated with people outside the Soviet Union. Students were taught to report, to government authorities, on anyone who had done such un-Soviet activities. To give an example of what a good child should do, students were taught the story the 13-year-old Pavlik Marozov, who was declared a hero for reporting to the government that his father concealed grain from the authorities, for which his father was executed. Since children were taught to report on their parents to the government, and parents could be imprisoned or executed for even innocent infractions, parents in the Soviet Union learned not to disclose their opinions or actions to their children.

Episode About Receiving a Package from America

My father **Emma** misplaced lost his 1st citizenship ID during the war, and so he obtained a 2nd citizenship ID. His name on the 2nd ID was different than his name on the 1st ID. He later found his 1st ID, which resulted in him having 2 different IDs, with 2 different names for him.

In 1946, **Emma** received a note from the post office to pick up a package that had arrived. **Emma** picked up the package from the post office and used his 1st ID for identification there. **Emma** found it was a care package from his brother **Zusia** who had emigrated to Argentina in 1914. Since the package's return address was **New York**, we concluded **Zusia** must have moved to **New York**. The package contained a letter from **Zusia**, and a photo of **Zusia**, and clothes for our family. Knowing that receiving a care package from the U.S. could get him in trouble, **Emma** threw away the ID that he had presented to the post office.

The post office reported **Emma** to KGB, and KGB agents visited our house. They interrogated **Emma** and accused him of concealing the fact that he has a relative in (or is associating with someone in) the U.S. – an accusation that could have resulted in imprisonment and/or execution. My father **Emma** denied having relatives in America. My father denied having relatives in America, and asserted that he never picked up a package from the post office, and showed the KGB agents his 2nd ID (which contained different data than ID he presented to the post office), and asserted that the person who picked up the package was someone else. The KGB agents accepts **Emma's** explanation and left. If **Emma** had not succeeded in

defending himself, the consequences for him and our whole family would have been terrible.

Episode About Edward Being Counted in a Minion

In 1959, we lived in a town called **Voronavitsa**, as described above. Edward worked as a teacher of physics in a high school for working adults. Edward and I rented a room in a cottage that was owned by a frum Jew named **Mr. Katz**. **Mr. Katz** and his wife and daughter lived in one room of the cottage, and Edward and I lived in the other room of the cottage.

The frum Jews in **Voronavitsa** used to hold a prayer service in secret being holding a **Mr. Katz's** house. All those in the minion were packed into Mr. Katz's single room. One day, when they had only 9 Jews, **Mr. Katz** asked Edward to open the door of our room so that Edward (while remaining in our room) would be counted as the 10th man of the minion. So Edward opened our room's door. While the other 9 men prayed, Edward remained in our room and donned a yarmulka that **Mr. Katz** gave him. Since Edward did not know Hebrew and did not know how to pray, he remained with me in our room and just listened to the others praying. The only people in the house that I was aware of were Mr. Katz and Edward and me and 8 other men.

2 days later, on Monday, Edward was called to the Soviet party's (**Ra'ikom** party's) regional headquarters. A director in the headquarters told Edward essentially that "We were informed (obviously from a Soviet informant) that you **Edward** participated in a prayer service. If you do that again, we will rescind your college teaching diploma and bar you from ever teaching others, because we cannot allow a person who practices religion from being a teacher, because religion is a poisonous ideology." Edward never participated in a prayer service again.

Episode of Edward's relatives being executed for being Totskyist and exiled for telling a joke

Sonya & Hirsh Itserlis lived in **Odessa**. They were socialist revolutionary activists for the overthrow of the czar. They bore **Mark (aka Marik)** born in 1919 and then twin sisters **Fannia & Genya** born in 1922.

After overthrow of the czar, the socialist party split between **Bolsheviks** who advocated for government ownership of all enterprises and **Mensheviks** who advocated to allow private enterprise. **Sonya** and **Hirsh** were Mensheviks.

The Bolsheviks executed many Mensheviks, including **Hirsh**. **Sonya** feared for her life. **Hirsh's** sister, who was a Bolshevik living in Moscow, recommended that **Sonya** flee from Ukraine and move to **Moscow**. So **Sonya** and her 3 children moved to **Moscow** to join **Hirsh's** sister.

In Moscow, **Sonya** worked as seamstress.

Sonya's son **Mark** grew up in Moscow and enrolled in **Moscow University** where he was an all-A

student. One day, in about 1939, when partying with friends, **Mark** cracked a joke that poked fun at the government. Someone at the party reported Mark to the government, and **Mark** was expelled from **Moscow University** and exiled to **Kazakhstan**. In **Kazakhstan**, **Mark** was put to work mining coal underground. He married a gentile Kazakh girl who bore him a son **Grisha**. During WWII, the government did not draft Mark into the army but instead kept him exiled in Kazakhstan, which likely spared him from being killed in the army.

When **Stalin** died in 1953, **Mark** was declared "rehabilitated", and was permitted to leave **Kazakhstan** and move anywhere in the Soviet Union (except for Moscow). **Mark** and his wife and son moved to Lithuania.

Sonya's twin daughter **Fannia** grew up in Moscow and studied medicine in **Moscow University** and became doctor. During **Fannia's** medical career, the Doctor's Plot affair, which lasted from 1949-1952, led to many Jewish doctors being fired and/or executed. During that affair, **Fannia** escaped oppression only because of her esteemed medical reputation. However, when the **Doctor's Plot affair** reached its climax in 1952, she was fired from her job and remained jobless at home. Upon **Stalin's** death on 3/5/53, **Fannia** was declared "rehabilitated" and rehired.

Sonya's twin daughter **Genya** grew up in **Moscow**. **Genya** worked as a television-design engineer until she retired at 55 years old in 1967.

APPENDIX 1 A FRIEND'S DESCRIPTION OF ISAAC MAGARAS

(The following is an English-translation of a Russian-language article in ZEMLYAKI magazine No.481 May 2019, pages 12-13, entitled "My Friend Magaras". The article's author is Lev Strelchin, writing about his friend Isak Aronovich Magaras. Each horizontal line in the following English-translation represents an column-brake in the original Russian article. In this English translation, the name Isak is pronounced Eetsak, and is equivalently spelled Isak and Isak. The name Mira is pronounced Meera.)

I am 94 years old, and during my long life I was lucky to become a witness or participant in many wonderful events and meet many outstanding people. I want to tell you about a wonderful person, with whom I have been friends for over 40 years. At the beginning of January 1950, I, a young history teacher from the provincial town of **Mogilev-Podolsky**, came to **Vinnitsa** to take part in the men's chess championship of the **Vinnitsa** region for the first time. The championship was held in the Teacher's House. I arrived early, half an hour before the tournament, and met a tall, broad-shouldered guy with thick glasses who arrived even before me. We started talking. He said that his name was **Isak Magaras**, and he was a mathematics teacher at the women's gymnasium number two in **Vinnitsa**. We were immediately drawn to each other; maybe because we were both school teachers and we both had vision problems, he has -12, I have -18. Somehow it turned out that every day we came to the next tour before everyone else, and talked for a long time. We discussed who had what glasses, methods of treating eye diseases, tournament position and our chess games. I want to note right away that, participating with **Magaras** in many tournaments, I have always admired his sense of responsibility and serious attitude to competitions of any rank. He was never late, and usually arrived long before the start of the 2nd round's queue. At the beginning of our acquaintance, **Isak Aronovich** was very shy. I remember well one incident that happened in the first days of our

acquaintance. Before the start of the next round, **Isak Aronovich** was approached by two beautiful girls, students of the mathematical faculty of the **Pedagogical Institute**, who were in practice at his school. They wanted to chat, but he dryly replied that he would be glad to meet and talk with them after the winter break at school, and now he needed to concentrate before the game. The girls, embarrassed, left. When I asked him in surprise why he, a bachelor, rejected such

score. And all this - with a somewhat strange facial expression due to very poorly seeing eyes, hidden behind thick glasses with complex optics, and with an obvious Jewish-parochial reprimand. Even in high school, he surprised everyone with his mathematical abilities. He studied according to university textbooks and solved the most difficult problems. As his school friend **Abram Sandler** recalled in **The Lives of Remarkable People of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics** (2009), "at one fine moment they decided to check whether the teacher himself understood the formulas that he forced to memorize. And now, at the next lesson, **Isak Magaras** says that, while reading additional material in preparation for the lesson, he found a more accurate value of the formula that the teacher gave, and, having written this formula, he multiplied it by a trigonometric unit. Those who have studied a little at school will understand that the formula has not changed at all. The teacher was delighted, and the students continued like that." After leaving school, **Isak Magaras** entered the Faculty of Mathematics of the Vitebsk Pedagogical Institute. When the war began, he was evacuated to Stalingrad, where he worked at the Tractor (tank) plant. As the newspapers of that time wrote, "production was carried out even in the period after the Germans broke through to Stalingrad on August 23, 1942, and an attempt to capture the city "on the fly" with a strike along the river from the north was repulsed with the participation of a brigade of a workers' militia

Stalingrad Tractor Plant. Production was finally stopped only on September

13, 1942, when the fighting was already taking place directly on the territory of the plant." On the same days, **Isak Magaras** was evacuated across the Volga. He managed to get to the working settlement of **Aramil** near **Sverdlovsk**, where at that time his older brother lived with his family. After the war, he went to the **Vitebsk** region, but did not find any of his relatives there. And in **Vinnitsa** his own aunt, **Magaras Mira Isakovna**, collected surviving relatives. She lived in her own two-story brick house in the city center, which was built by her husband, a well-known doctor in the city, before the war. He died at the front. Her son also died at the front. She herself was a military doctor during the war, and after the war she held a high position - she was the head of the medical and sanitary department of the region. **Isak Magaras** settled with her and got a job as a high school mathematics teacher at the women's gymnasium number 2 in the city center, where many children of the city and regional authorities studied. The high school girls took their studies very seriously and were preparing to enter universities. Such a teacher as **Isak Aronovich** was just a godsend for them. They listened to him, as they say, opening their mouths, trying not to miss a single word. He selected the material so that average and below average students learned it immediately during the lesson. For his lessons, he prepared tasks of different levels of complexity, depending on the preparation of students. Moreover, in order to enliven the course of the lesson, for one or two minutes he found interesting statements about mathematics by scientists, writers, and artists. **Isak Aronovich** was a man of the highest erudition. His knowledge was deep and versatile. In his free time from lessons, he led a mathematical circle, in which

attended by the most capable students. There they solved problems at the rate of higher educational institutions. He prepared his students for mathematical regional and republican Olympiads. In the summer, he studied with students from other schools in the city and the region, who were going to participate in mathematics Olympiads. He took the winners of the Republican Olympiads

to Moscow for the All-Union Mathematical Olympiads. "Super Teacher" "a legend of education" - that's how they talked about him in **Vinnitsa**. But **Isak Aronovich** himself was a very modest person and never boasted of his achievements. He always helped other teachers at school, including financially. I learned about all this from the head teacher of the already mixed **School Number 2 Abram Artsis**, with whom we met at regional meetings of directors and head teachers of regional schools. At this school, **Isak** met his future wife **Lena**, who taught mathematics in elementary grades. Knowing about the extraordinary shyness of **Isak Aronovich**, his desire to help people and his love for mathematics, she specifically sought out the most difficult mathematical problems and asked **Isak Aronovich** to help with them. So step by step, a friendship began to grow between them, which soon grew into something more. They married. **Vinnitsa** residents still remember them: "I remember **Magaras**: wearing thick glasses, always with a book in his hand, he taught mathematics. I also remember his wife, a pleasant fair-haired woman. They gave the impression of a very harmonious couple." (**Dmitry Yakirevich**) **Lena** was a wonderful hostess. She cooked well and watched how her husband was dressed. According to **Victoria Aliseiko** (May 18, 2012), whose mother studied with **Magaras**, "he looked like an American singer, all classically handsome, wearing glasses." And this was the merit of **Lenochka**. Many in the city knew **Isak Aronovich** well, not only as an outstanding teacher, but also as a chess player. In his book **Notes of a Chess Coach** (2015), the honored chess coach of Ukraine **Mykhailo Troshman** mentions the game of the candidate master **Borys a Naglis** with "the famous **Vinnitsa** first-rate player **Magaras**".

Magaras was one of the strongest chess players in **Vinnitsa** and **Vinnitsa** region for a long time, actively participated in chess championships and repeatedly became the champion of the city and region. He became the first candidate for the master of sports in chess in the **Vinnitsa** region, having

fulfilled the norm after participating in the final of the Ukrainian championship in **Dnepropetrovsk** in 1973, where he scored 50% of the points. As his son **Yuri** recalls, "He played chess all the time. If you do not take tournaments, then, basically, in the **Central Park of Culture and Recreation**. There was a chess pavilion and, if I'm not mistaken, the city's chess club. At home, in my memory, he probably played only with **Petrov** (candidate master of sports in chess, Chairman of the **Chess Federation of the Vinnitsa Region**. In 1957, he led the **Vinnitsa** region team at the Ukrainian team chess championship. - Author's note.) **Vladimir Andreevich** lived in Leningrad and sometimes came to **Vinnitsa**, where he served after the war and participated in the chess life of the city. So they played at home, as they saw each other very rarely and not at tournaments. Even at home, the luminaries **Efim Geller** and **Leonid Stein** visited us once, but they did not play, so - gatherings." In **Vinnitsa** in 1946-1949, before I met **Magaras**, he was the champion of the city and the region among men, showing promise as a young and talented first-class player. He won the right to participate in the **All-Union Championship** of the DSO "Bolshevik" among men, which was held in **Odessa** in August-September 1949. Among the 18 participants, the vast majority were grandmasters and international masters, among whom were **I. Boleslavsky, S. Flor, V. Makogonov, V. Panov, Yudovich, Chekhover**. In this tournament, **Magaras** drew with **Panov** and **Yudovich**, but lost to first place **Boleslavsky, Flor, Makogonov** and **Chekhover**. In the magazine "Chess in the USSR" (No. 11, 1949) they wrote about him: "First-rate **Magaras (Vinnitsa), Evseev (Kalinin), Nikonov (Vladivostok)** and **Vasiliev (Khabarovsk)** are still very young and have no experience in serious tournaments. **Magaras** defends well, but he has not yet

manages to systematically carry out attacks." At this tournament, **Magaras** met **IM Alexei Sokolsky, Boleslavsky's** coach and second since 1945. I also personally knew **Sokolsky**. In 1946, I played with **Sokolsky** in the same tournament and

even, as chairman of the **Chernivtsi** city chess section, was engaged in his employment when he wanted to move to **Chernivtsi**. But nothing came of it, because he did not like the proposed work. **Magaras** and I again met with **Sokolsky** during one of the chess tournaments of the regional championship of teachers, which were held by the trade union of teachers of the **Vinnitsa** region in the **Nemirovsky Rest House**. **Sokolsky** personally attended many tours, followed our play and even analyzed our games. We went to the park together, to the lake to go boating and to the movies. **Sokolsky** and **Magaras** were very fond of watching old films that they did not have time to watch at one time, because due to their work on the cinema they never had time. The **Nemirovsky Rest House** had a very good library, and they would sit there for hours looking for chess novelties. Like **Sokolsky, Isak Magaras** was a chess theorist. He applied his developments in playing openings in tournaments and stunned his opponents with them. He was the champion of the **Vinnitsa** region in chess among men in the tournaments of 1951 and 1952. I won the 1953 tournament. This tournament, which took place in early April, I especially remember. On this day, **Isak Aronovich** invited me and another participant in the tournament, **Isak Friedman**, to his home for dinner. **Friedman** and I went to the school behind **Magaras** and stood in the lobby, waiting for the call from the last lesson. At this time, another participant of the tournament, **David Leiferman** from **Vinnitsa**, came up to take home his fifth-grader daughter. In his hand he held the newspaper **Pravda**. When the last bell rang, he began to read aloud the editorial of the newspaper, which spoke of the release of all those arrested in the "**Doctors' Case**", their complete rehabilitation and restoration to their former positions. The head teacher of the school **Matveev**, teachers and students began to listen to his reading, who began to shout: "Hurrah, long live justice!". The head teacher could not allow such an unexpected spontaneous rally in the school building. He suggested to everyone

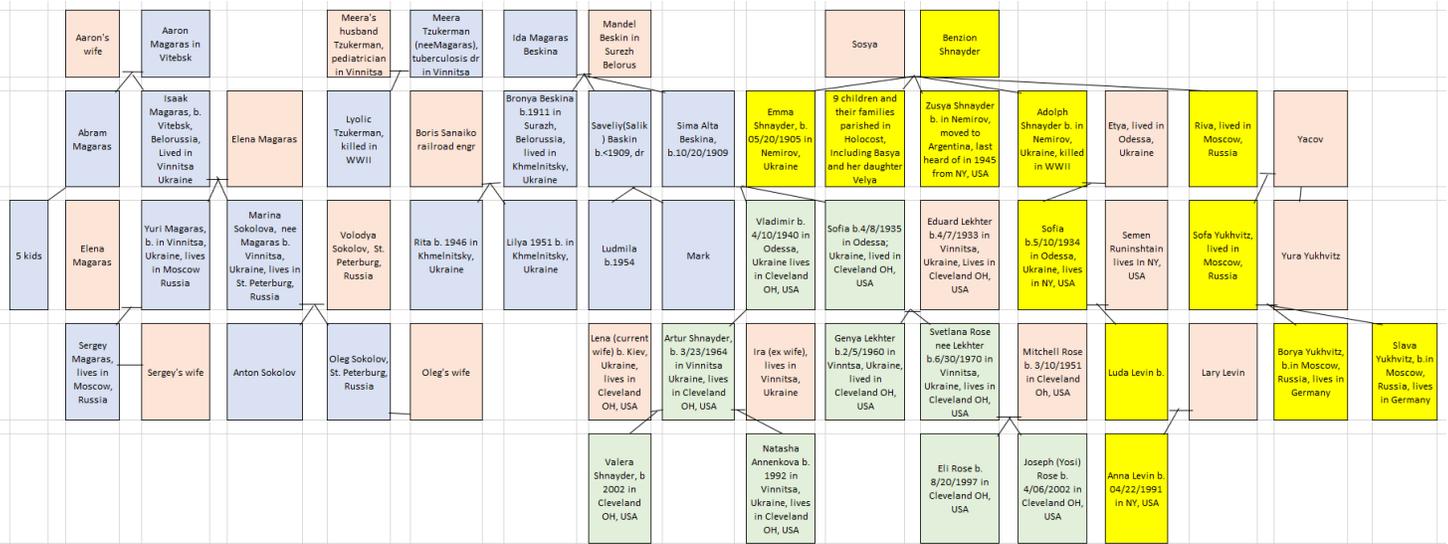
disperse, but no one listened to him. When **Magaras** came, we left the school and went to his house. This news inspired me so much that I won the tournament and for the first time became the champion of the **Vinnitsa** region in chess, having borrowed this title from **Isak**. In 1954 and in 1955, he again became the champion of the **Vinnitsa** region. In the mid-1960s, **Isak Aronovich** became interested in stamps, and his collection became one of the best in the city. Stamps from his collection were repeatedly exhibited at city and republican philatelic exhibitions with thematic expositions: "In the struggle for the chess crown", "With chess through centuries and countries", "The Soviet flag over the poles" and others. Hard work as a mathematics teacher worsened **Isak Aronovich's** eyesight. He went to eye clinics in Leningrad and Moscow for treatment, but his vision continued to deteriorate. At the end of 1980, after an electrical injury, he became completely blind, received a disability of Group 1, and was forced to retire. He had to forget about stamps, but **he** didn't give up chess. He became a member of the **Vinnitsa Association of the Blind** and successfully performed in the team of this association at regional and Once upon a time official

republican chess competitions. He never went outside alone. Every time I came to **Vinnitsa**, I went to see him, and we went for a walk in the city park. He once told me that in this park he once ran into and talked with the then **General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party** of Israel, **Samuil Mikunis**, who was walking there together with the **First Secretary of the Vinnitsa Regional Party Committee Pavel Panteleevich Kozyr** (**Mikunis** came to **Vinnitsa** after the end of the **XX Congress** of the **Communist Party** to visit his own sister, a professor at a medical institute). - Walking in the park, **Isak Aronovich** read poetry and, although he confidently called the names of poets, I suspect that many of these poems were his own composition. For me, a layman in poetry, these walks were very educational. **Isak Aronovich** was a wonderful conversationalist. He talked about everything in a very interesting way: about events in his life,

events in the world, about chess. On occasion, he enthusiastically quoted philosophers. His favorites were **Voltaire** and **Montesquieu**. Before I left for the **US**, I came to say goodbye. **Isak** was in a great mood and wished me well to settle in a new country. From him, I then learned that **Abram Artsis**, the former head teacher of School Number 2, also left, but to Canada. In 1992, while living in **Chicago**, I learned about the untimely death of my closest friend and was very worried. In my heart, he forever remained alive and will live until my last day.

FAMILY TREE OF SOFIA LEKHTER nee SHNAYDER

Magaras-Beskin bloodline shaded blue
 Shnayder-Beskin bloodline shaded yellow
 Beskina-Shnayder bloodline shaded green



FAMILY TREE OF SOFIA'S HUSBAND EDWARD LEKHTER

