

The Dub - Grossman Families (by Stanley M. Dub)

I. Louis Dub

Louis Dub, was born in 1912, in Bychkiv, Carpathian Ruthenia. The region became the easternmost part of the newly created country of Czechoslovakia after World War I. Today the area is located east of the Slovak Republic, and is part of Ukraine.

Typical of the communities of the region, each town had multiple names in different languages. Bychkiv was the Yiddish name but the town was also called Velkiy Bychkiv, Velky Bockov, Bicskof and Nagybocho. The Yizkor Book for the Marmures region has an entry on the town which can be found at: www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/maramures/mar278.html

The name Dub has an interesting history. The word translates as oak in the Czech language. According to the Encyclopedia Judaica (entry on Hussites), the name can be traced to an incident in about 1620 when a group of Bohemian Brethren were faced with conversion to Catholicism or expulsion, following their defeat at the battle of White Mountain. Somehow they avoided these fates and were permitted to remain in the region by converting to Judaism. This is where the surnames of Kafka, Kuranda, Jellinek, Brod and Dub got their start as Jewish names.

Louis was the 5th of six boys born to Leopold (Chaim Leib) and Rosa Dub. Bychkiv was a very poor town. Menachem Begin, later Prime Minister of Israel, visited Bychkiv in 1936 as a representative of Betar, an early Zionist group. He described the visit in his introduction to A History of Betar in Czechoslovakia [by Yehoshua Halevi] (Tel Aviv, 5721/1960):

“A bridge connects large and small Bicskof. Both were little and the bridge that separated and joined them was not very large. I do not recall the name of the river or stream that flowed beneath. But I remember well the flow of life from both sides. The Bicskof Jews were very poor; it is hard to imagine how poor and even harder to describe the depth of that poverty...but there was a great richness in spite of that poverty. I am not referring to the few in Bicskof who were considered wealthy. In both parts, even those considered wealthy were poor. The wealth of the leadership of

both parts of the divided city, was of a different nature. Its name 'belief.' From the days of my youth, I have been among believing Jews but the faith of the Jews I had an encounter with [who lived] crowded in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, what can be compared to it? I had an encounter, not necessarily pleasant, with the intensity of their belief. I came to them as a representative of Betar in 1936...but they, that is some of them, were not at all willing to listen...the meeting called in the synagogue in one of the two parts of the town, never took place. It was ended immediately after it started. Certainly, then I was bitterly disappointed and now my soul mourns for them. However, it is impossible not to nod one's head before their deep faith..."

Finding little opportunity in the town, Louis left home at age 16, and traveled to Brno, the second largest city in Czechoslovakia. The picture of Louis and his family was taken in about 1928, shortly before Louis departed for the big city. He worked as a laborer and carpenter and was later a sergeant in the Czech army's horse drawn artillery. After military service he returned to Brno and bought a food stall on the town square. Business boomed after he began to serve ice cream. By the time the nazis marched into Brno in 1939, Louis was a prosperous business owner "with rings on every finger". But the nazis confiscated his money and property and sent him back to Bychkiv. Like the rest of Carpathian Ruthenia, Bychkiv had come under Hungarian rule in 1939, when Hungary joined the Axis.

Starting in about 1940, men from Carpathian Ruthenia were forced into labor gangs under Hungarian control and forced to do bitter and very dangerous work with little food and no protective clothing. The work was done in a variety of places ranging from the Russian front, to Romania, and even to Yugoslavia. Men were shot for the slightest reason and sometimes for no reason. Serious injuries, disease, and exposure to harsh weather were common, and many died. Louis' brother Otzuk attempted to avoid the labor gangs by posing as a non-Jew and enlisting in the Hungarian army. However, he was betrayed by another soldier who knew him from Bychkiv. Once accused, there was no defense for a Jewish man because only Jews were circumcised. Otzuk was reportedly shot on the spot.

Those men who survived a two-year term in labor camp were often permitted to return home before being forced to join a new labor camp. After returning to Bychkiv in about 1942, Louis met and married his first wife, the former Yla (pronounced ee-la) Solomon. Louis worked during this period by logging in the nearby heavy forests. He and Yla had a daughter, Sophie. Then in about 1944, the nazis came in to the region, and all the remaining Jews of Carpathian Ruthenia were rounded up and collected in a dozen or so ghettos. As with the Jews living in other parts of Hungary, they were transported to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, the old people and women with children were

immediately selected for death, while others were selected instead for slave labor. Leopold and Rosa Dub were gassed upon arrival at Auschwitz on May 24, 1944. Yla and Sophie suffered the same fate, possibly on the same day.

Louis was selected for slave labor at Auschwitz, along with his brothers, Martin and Irving. They worked at a German munitions factory until early 1945, when the factory was closed. Louis was reluctant to speak about his wartime experiences, apart from a few specific recollections. He repeated often how he paid the nazi foreman at his munitions factory to take on his older brother, Martin. As payment, Louis pulled out his brother's teeth with a pair of pliers for the gold fillings. When the factory closed as the war was ending, Louis and his two brothers were marched west across Germany over a period of several weeks, with very little food. The guards routinely shot prisoners who became too weak to march, but the three Dub brothers survived. They arrived at Dachau in April, 1945, just one week before the camp was liberated by Americans.

II. Helen (Grossman) Dub

Helen Grossman was born in 1920, in Vinif, about 20 miles from Bychkiv. Vinif is the Yiddish name for the town, which was also called Vonihovo (Czech), Vonigovo (Ukrainian) and Vajmag (Hungarian). The Yizkor Book for the town can be found at www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/maramures/mar357.html

Helen was the third of nine children, eight girls and one boy. Two older sisters were married. Helen's parents were Asher Zelig Grossman, born in Vinif, and the former Sarah Greenberger, originally from nearby Neresnitsa. Zelig was a butcher and sold meat from his house in Vinif. Sarah helped in the business, and the daughters shared the various household duties. Helen was an accomplished dressmaker, having apprenticed and then operated her own shop as a teenager along with a friend in the nearby town of Rachov.

The Grossman family had lived in Vinif for more than sixty years. The Yizkor book for Vinif identifies three prominent Jewish residents of the town in 1877 by name. One is Tzvi (Hersh) Grossman, father of Asher Zelig Grossman and grandfather of Helen. However, Tzvi was known to have been born in a different town just outside of Chust, about ten miles from Vinif. Tzvi died when Helen was about five, but his wife, Hendel, was still living when the family was deported in 1941.

Deportation from Vinif (August, 1941)

A decree was issued by Hungary in early 1941, ordering the deportation of anyone who could not prove their family had lived in Hungarian lands for at least

the prior 90 years. It was necessary to show documentary evidence of this residence, and to use these documents to obtain a Hungarian residency permit. In practice, the decree was applied only against Jews, and even in some cases where Jews obtained the documents, Hungarian clerks allowed the papers to pile up without action until after the families had been deported.

Jews of the region did not fully comprehend the danger posed by this decree, and most could not track down documents because they were fully occupied in the daily tasks of scraping out a living. Few actually attempted to obtain these papers. Helen was 20 at this time, and her parents sent her to Chust to try to locate documents showing that Tzvi Grossman had been born there and had paid taxes to Hungary. She found an old man who was willing to testify about her grandfather's residency, and then she returned home with this news. She arrived home on a Thursday, but the deportations were carried out without warning on the next day, Friday, August 1, 1941.

On the fateful day, the town mayor went around from house to house accompanied by soldiers and a Hungarian official with a list of those to be deported. Many members of the extended Grossman family were on the list, but Helen's father was not on the list. "Never mind", the Hungarian official told him, "you come along too". Most of the 250 or so Jews of Vinif were included in the deportation order. They were told to assemble in thirty minutes in the town center, with only the possessions they could carry. Families whose men were serving in forced labor were exempt, and some families fled to the woods to avoid deportation.

The twenty-one members of the Grossman family included in the deportation consisted of Helen and her parents and her six younger siblings; Helen's older sister Rosie Davidovits with husband and infant son; three uncles and three aunts, and three of Helen's first cousins. Rosie was pregnant and gave birth to a girl a few months later.

They rushed around gathering a few of their belongings and putting on multiple layers of clothing despite the August heat. Then they walked the two miles to Bistina, the closest town with a railroad station. Asher Zelig was forced to abandon his house, his business, and his livestock.

The Jews from Vinif were loaded onto cattle cars in Bistina, and taken to Korosmezo, at the border with Galicia (a region of eastern Poland). There they were housed for a few weeks in a large barn. Thousands of Jews were being held there and every day more came, and some were transported out.

Similar scenes of mass deportation occurred all across Subcarpathian Ruthenia. A prominent British Rabbi, Hugo Gryn, was then a child living in

Berehovo, one of the bigger towns of the region. Many families from Berehovo were deported, but Gryn's family obtained the necessary paperwork to avoid deportation. Gryn wrote a memoir which was published after his death. In the book, Gryn recalls attending the movies a short time after the deportations.

“Before the feature film came on, there was a newsreel. It showed the victorious Hungarian army moving east. Tanks and trucks loaded with soldiers alternated with horse-drawn field guns and smiling warriors waving at cameras. My eyes, however, were drawn to the side of the muddy road with long lines of civilians. They were all carrying bundles and many of the men and women were holding their children's hands. Their slow movement and the weary, dejected look on their faces made a dreadful contrast with the cheerful marching music in the background and the grating voice of the commentator. These Jews, he explained in a rapid aside, would now have to put behind them their comfortable, parasitic lives and work hard to achieve victory for the Axis forces. Suddenly I recognized many of our neighbors. There was one family who sat near us in the synagogue, another who ran a small grocery” (*Chasing Shadows*, by Hugo Gryn with Naomi Gryn; Viking Press, London, 2000, at p. 103)

Eventually the Grossman family members were loaded onto a truck, and driven with a few other trucks into Galicia. They drove all day, stopping at each town to ask if they had arrived at their destination. However, when evening came and the destination had not yet been reached, the head of the convoy ordered everyone out of the trucks in a grassy field. The guards then robbed everyone at gunpoint and drove away, abandoning Helen and the entire group of perhaps 150 Jews.

The group made its way to a nearby town, which was called Mielnitsa Podolsk (Mielnica). Only later did they learn that most of the Carpathian Jews had been taken to Kamenets-Podolsk, about 20 miles farther east, and that some 24,000 Jews were murdered there by German soldiers with machine guns on August 27-28.

Another survivor wrote about the passage of Carpathian Jews through her Galician town at this time. Fanya Gottesfeld Heller was a teenager in the nearby town of Skala. She described their passage through Skala as follows:

“For hours and hours one day, 3,000 weary, hungry Hungarian [i.e., Carpathian] Jews of all ages stumbled through Skala, dressed in their best clothes and laden down with bundles.

I felt helpless when I saw a guard beat an old woman with a club until she bled --- it would have been suicidal to try to help her. Another guard stood there swigging from a bottle and pointing his rifle at her. Finally, two passing men dragged her along with them.

The Jews of Skala collected food and clothing for the Hungarian Jews and bribed the soldiers to allow them a brief rest in town. They brought hot food for everyone, and medicine for those beaten by the guards and Ukrainian peasants, and rented wagons to take the Jews the rest of the twenty or thirty kilometers to the Ukrainian border.

[A few weeks later] three Hungarian Jewish boys, the last survivors of the unfortunates who had been herded through town and turned up in Skala. They reported that the three thousand Hungarian Jews had been held by the Germans at Orynin [near Kamienets Podolsk]. The Germans told them they would be sent home, but then took them to a field and mowed them down with machine guns. The Ukrainian militia had assisted the Germans and were in the front rank of the looters. The Hungarian boys had wormed their way out from under layers of bodies to escape." (*Love in a World of Sorrow*, by Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, Devora Publishing Company, Israel, 2005, at pp. 58-59,72-73.)

Mielnitsa Podolsk (August, 1941 to October, 1942)

The Yizkor book for Mielnitsa Podolsk (also called Mielnica) can be found at www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Pinkas_poland/pol2_00320.html The book records the arrival of Helen's group as follows:

"The Hungarians brought to Mielnica several truckloads of Jewish refugees from Carpataros. These refugees were starved and weak, shoeless and threadbare, and had been robbed and beaten on the way by the Ukrainians. The Jews of the town aided the refugees as much as their means allowed, inviting them into their homes, feeding them, and collecting clothing for them."

The Grossman family remained in this town, suffering the same fate as the local Jews. Jews were forced to wear a yellow star and were forbidden to walk in the town center. Men were forced into hard labor and food was scarce. The scarcity of living accommodations forced the Grossmans to split up into small groups. Helen and her sister Ethel did dressmaking work for the locals during the day to earn a little food.

According to the Yizkor book:

“The German border guards enjoyed getting drunk, rioting through the town and harassing Jews whom they happened to encounter in the streets. They broke into houses at night and raped young girls. Many Jews never undressed for the night or simply slept out of their houses until dawn. Gestapo men from Czortkov would often fan out over Mielnica, demanding money and merchandise in exchange for false promises to protect Jews from new edicts.

Impressments of young Jewish men to labor camps began in November, 1941. Some time later, however, when the Germans demanded 70 more men, no one came forward because the terrible conditions at the labor camps had become known. This time the German and Ukranian police launched a manhunt in the houses and streets. The third dispatch of people to the labor camps included 50 women who had until then worked at the neighboring tobacco plantations. They were abducted and transported by the Germans to an unknown work site.

A small number of Mielnica Jews succeeded in escaping from the town and hiding in the forests or familiar farmhouses. Most of them were killed as a result of denunciation by the Ukranian residents, or were discovered by the police. Some local Jews and some who were refugees from Hungary attempted to cross the border into Bukovina with the aid of Ukranian smugglers in exchange for large sums of money ... however, most were caught and handed over to the Germans, who murdered them on the spot.”

Frida Grossman, wife of Moshe Grossman, disappeared suddenly one day. She went out to try to buy some food and never returned. Perhaps she was one of those abducted by the Germans for unknown labor.

Moshe Grossman, now mourning the loss of his wife, determined to escape. Along with Helen's brother-in-law, Elya David Davidovits, they took to the woods. Possibly they were among the ones who were caught attempting to cross the border. They were never heard from again.

Chaim Leib Grossman and wife Frida were the oldest of the group of Grossmans, probably in their mid 60's. Most of their children had avoided the deportation because they were grown and no longer living in Vinif. One son, Sruly, had been taken for a Hungarian labor gang, and his parents worried

greatly about him. In August, 1942, a letter arrived from Vinif, which told them that their son had returned and was well. Helen remembered her Aunt saying that now she could die in peace. She did, soon after receiving the letter. A few weeks later her husband followed her in death. Their deaths proved to be a blessing of sorts, because they would not have lived much longer in any case.

“On September 26 1942, the first day of Sukkot, a liquidation action took place in the town. German and Ukrainian police surrounded the town and began shooting. People were abducted from the houses in the streets, brought to the marketplace, and made to sit with their hands on their necks. During the action the sick, the weak, the handicapped, and those who had hidden out were summarily murdered. The police also shot those who attempted to escape. Some 100 to 300 persons were killed. The Ukrainian rabble looked at the murders and aided in the hunt for those in hiding. Those who were concentrated in the marketplace were brought to the railroad station in the village of Ivania-Pusta, 4 kilometers from the town. Some wagons transported those who could not walk fast. From this station they departed for the annihilation camp at Belzec.” [About 2,000 Jews were transported to Belzec]” (from the Yizkor book).

One of those shot trying to escape was Helen's cousin, Leah Grossman, daughter of Chaim Leib and Frida. Helen and her sister Ethel avoided the roundup because they were working in the home of a Ukrainian when it was carried out. They returned to their house to find their father and brother weeping and praying. They had escaped by hiding on the roof, but the rest of Helen's family had been swept up in the action and sent to Belzec. Included in the transport to Belzec were Helen's mother, Sarah, Helen's older sister Rosie Davidovits, with her two little children, and Helen's younger sisters, Tzivia, Blanka, Pepe and Ruth.

The Belzec camp was strictly an extermination camp, and everyone transported there was gassed upon arrival.

After this liquidation action several hundred Jews remained in the town. Some were not discovered in hiding and others were permitted to remain, including the Jewish council, police and burial society. However, the German authorities declared that in two weeks the town was to be *Judenrein* (rid of Jews), and any Jew discovered there afterward would be shot on sight. All remaining Jews were to move to the ghetto at Borszczow.

Borszczow Ghetto (October, 1942 to June, 1943)

In October, 1942, Helen walked the ten miles to the Borszczow ghetto, along with her father, brother, and her one remaining sister, Ethel.

Accompanying them were Helen's uncle and aunt, Meyer Kahn and Pessel Kahn, and their daughters, Leah Kahn and Chaika Kahn.

About the same time, the Jews of Fanya Gottesfeld Heller's town, Skala, were also ordered to relocate to the Borszczow ghetto. Her family fled instead to the forest, and her unlikely tale of survival is the subject of her book, *Love in a World of Sorrow*.

The Yizkor book for Borszczow can be found at

www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Pinkas_poland/pol2_00102.html

The book states as follows:

"The ghetto of Borszczow was created on April 1st, 1942. It enclosed a number of overpopulated streets with rundown houses. In time, it had to absorb also Jews from Mielnica, Skala, Ozeryany, Korolevka and Krzywczce Gorne as well as Jews from Zloczow and Czortkow. The ghetto was not closed but it was forbidden to leave it without a permit. Hunger and typhus killed many.

In April of 1942 some of the Jews of Borszczow were murdered but the first big *aktsia* took place on September 26, 1942. About 100 people B mainly sick and old B were killed on the spot. 800 Jews were sent by train to Belzec for extermination. A group of youths were sent to Janowska in Lvov, where they died later on. By the same time there were *aktsias* in nearby towns. The survivors of those communities (Mielnica, Skala and Korolevka) were taken over to the Borszczow ghetto. Together with the local Jews they suffered hunger and epidemics during the winter of 1942-1943, and were prey to murders. During those months, the Jews started to prepare hiding places inside the ghetto and in the surrounding forests. From time to time, families or small groups would disappear and hide away in those bunkers. Some of the hiding places were discovered and their occupants killed...

On March 13, 1943, close to 400 people were sent away to Belzec....

On the eve of Pesach, April 19, 1943, a roundup of the German and Ukrainian police gathered 800 Jews, took them to the cemetery and killed them the following day.

The Yizkor book for Borszczow contains a remarkable account of this Pesach Massacre by Yaacov Schwartz, which is reprinted below:

“Erev Pesach, 1943, was on a Monday. There was a major fair (market) on that date in the shtetl. There was anxiety amongst the remaining Jews who were not yet taken away to the extermination camp at Belzec or to the labor camps at Barki and Kamyonke. Everyone was aware that there was going to be an aktion (a deportation) but they did not know the exact date of the forthcoming murders.

I and my son Shmulik, who was born in 1937, always stuck together, but not in the center of town. My wife and two young daughters and young son were deported on Succot, together with my sister and children and another hundred Jews, relatives, and friends. I had a brother-in-law, Dovid Folkenflick; he hid in the street behind the shul where people felt a little more secure. I had a brother-in-law, Sonya Katz, who was shot on Purim, 1943, by the leader of the Chortkiev Gestapo. That erev Pesach, sitting outside at my brother-in-law's place with more Jews, we observed how the goyim were gathering for the market day. We encountered a goy from Mishkitovitz that we knew, carrying a few dozen eggs that he brought for sale. We snuck him into the house, we bought the eggs and divided them amongst ourselves. After all it's erev Pesach! The eggs, I carried away to my sister-in-law, Zeizel, that is to say, Sonya Katz' wife. They lived behind the red church. I didn't take five minutes and my sister-in-law shouted to me, Run away! People are running for some reason!

It was exactly twelve o'clock midday. I went out of the house. It's impossible to describe the great panic of thousands of people. Shots were heard and people were running.

The peasants were running, chasing Jews with their horses and wagons. I ran with my six year old son in the direction of the shul so that I would be able to run into the field as quickly as possible but there it was impossible to get through. [There were] two Gestapo men, with their guns in their hands, so we turned around. We started to run in another direction. There was only one possibility: to Menachem Zonenclar's courtyard. There, there was terrible confusion. More families were living there. All of them had bunkers and people were running in that direction. I and my child didn't have anybody to find refuge [with] so we continued running. The courtyard of Zelencroy bordered the courtyard of Mannes Kavalik and on the other side, the Christian, Boguski. There, also, it wasn't so simple. At the entrance stood Maltzia Folkenflick and she was wildly shouting, Folks,

there's no more room in the bunker. She was the last one who got in there.

I didn't know what to do. I went, with my son, into an empty house. There was no corner there in which to hide but a miracle happened. I saw a ladder standing in the house and not thinking, we went up to the garret and dragged the ladder along with us. In the garret there were scattered pieces of old furniture and clothes. The roof was broken. There were only two small windows on the east side and in the distance it was dark so I started to think about in which corner to hide. Both of us decided, I and my son, that we will hide in the better lit corner and not where it was dark. We covered ourselves up with an old blanket that we found there and on our feet we put a sack with shmatahs [old clothes]. From a distance we heard shouts mingled with song from Boguski's side. There in the garden, Christian girls worked and sang Polish and Ukrainian songs.

The hours seemed like an eternity. The city clock carried out its work very well and rang every half hour. At half past three we heard a voice in Polish, Is there a way out of here? It was the Gestapo man asking the Christian girls. Soon we heard a terrible knocking and search for the bunker. From the Ordinance-diner [storehouse keeper] Ebner they commanded kerosene to set everything on fire. It wasn't necessary, however. They soon found the bunker and pulled out several dozen people from there. I heard the cries and pleas of women, girls and children. Ruchele Manesses was crying and pleading that she wants to work so that they should let her live. The militia man, Lubkia, answered her in Ukrainian, 'Jews don't need to live'.

This is how things continued. The assembly point was not far from the building of the Kehilla near Feldshus' courtyard. All day long and throughout the night cries were heard from there.

Around five in the morning, the first day of Pesach, a few hundred Jews, men, women and children, were taken away to the cemetery and with machine guns they were all shot.

I and my son were lying under the tin roof, without water, without bread. Around ten o'clock I decided to crawl down because the child already had blue lips and was dehydrated. But I heard a noise in the house below and a conversation in Polish. It was the maid-servant of the German police who [was talking] with the German gendarme, Lange, who the Jewish partisans shot afterwards beneath the train bridge at Djilintz. The maid-servant and Lange figured that there should be a lot of supplies here

because a few Jewish families had lived here. When they didn't find anything the maid-servant understood that it must be in the garret. Right away I heard a table being pushed over and the knock of a chair on the table and the door of the garret opened and Lange was already in the garret with a night lamp. I immediately moved to the dark corner. As I was moving this way he came right to our feet. As soon as he saw the sack with the shmatahs, he spilled the contents out. He found a piece of leather there over which he rejoiced and immediately went down.

In the courtyard of Zonenclar he saw a bunker. There were many Jews there. It took a few minutes and we heard shots. The Jews, naturally, paid with their lives. Lange immediately turned around and told the maid-servant joyfully, "I shot five Jews!" He didn't search any more. Both of them went away to the police station building in Dr. Burdovitch's house. I saw that the situation was bad for my child. He was ready to faint. I went down from the garret with him into the courtyard of Zonenclar. There, I met three of the local police. They looked at their watch and asked where I was. I replied that I was in the field. They said that it's already after twelve and I can now go. I gave my child some water and headed for my father-in-law, Dovid.

It was dreadful to see the masses of Jews, women and children who were lying shot dead and the walls splattered with innocent Jewish blood. At my father-in-law, Dovid's [house], I met the children of my sister-in-law, Zeisel. They were mourning their mother who didn't manage to escape."

This account shows the murderous but also capricious behavior of the Germans and their accomplices towards the Jews. One day they would be vicious and heartless murderers of men, women and small children, but then the appointed time for killing might pass, like hunting season for ducks, and the same people would put away their guns and behave as if nothing had happened.

Among those killed in this Pesach massacre were Helen's uncle and aunt and cousin, Meyer Kahn, Pessel Kahn and Leah Kahn. The rest of the Grossmans managed to survive for the moment, but by this time their number had dwindled to only five, Asher Zelig, son Hersh, daughters Helen and Ethel, and Helen's cousin Chaika Kahn.

All this time Helen and Ethel went out to work every morning as dressmakers. They were handed around from one prominent Ukranian to another. They would work at one person's house for a few days making clothes

from material given to them, and they would receive small amounts of food in return. Afterwards they would be told whose house to go to the next day. Clothing was in short supply, and their dressmaking talents were undoubtedly much in demand. One person they worked for often was the Ukrainian Chief of Police.

“On June 5, 1943, some 700 Jews were murdered at the Jewish cemetery. The massive wave of aktsias resulted in more attempts to flee from the ghetto. But the odds of finding refuge among the local population were limited.” (From the Yizkor book).

Asher Zelig Grossman and son, Hersh, now attempted to flee from the ghetto. They bribed a Ukrainian to hide them, but he handed them over instead to the Germans. They were forced to dig their own graves, and were shot. Hersh was about 16 at the time of his death.

“The aktsia that broke out on 9 June 1943 lasted 5 days. By the time it ended, 1,800 additional Jews were killed at the Borszczow cemetery. The town was officially declared Judenrein.” (From the Yizkor book.)

Helen and Ethel hid in the barn of a Ukrainian during this aktsia until the shooting stopped. Alone and without resources, they returned to the home of the Chief of Police, and asked him what they should do. They realized this was risky, and that he might even shoot them, but they were dazed and despairing, and could not think of any better alternative. He told them the Russian army was not far away, and that they should hide in the woods until the Russians got there. With no better alternative, they ran into the forest together. They had no money or valuables, little food, and no warm clothing. They had no shoes.

As they entered the forest, they came across their remaining cousin, Chaika Kahn. They told her they planned to hide in the forest until the Russians came. She agreed to join them, but she insisted on returning to the town one last time to get her shoes. She must have gotten caught, because they never saw her again.

Hiding in the Woods (June, 1943 to May, 1944)

Helen and Ethel wandered in the forest until they came to an isolated farmhouse. The farmhouse was home to a Ukrainian widow and her children. They hid in the yard but were quickly discovered by the woman's children. The woman told them they could not stay there, but she told her children to show them to a part of the forest where other Jews were hiding. In this way they came

upon a group of about 50 Jews. The group dug two large underground bunkers, separated by a few hundred yards. Helen and Ethel lived in one of the underground bunkers with about 25 others.

“The Germans used various ploys to discover the Jews in hiding. They proclaimed that those leaving their hideouts would be concentrated in a work camp and would come out unharmed. With this artifice, some 360 people were caught and executed on August 14, 1943. After that, every Jew discovered was shot on the spot. The Jew hunting continued until the last days of the Nazi occupation.” (From the Yizkor book.)

Ten miles away, in Skala, Fanya Gottesfeld's family was also forced to take to the forest. She described the scene as follows:

“We came to a sudden clearing....a figure approached. A scout for hidden Jews, he had been tracking us, but had waited until he could be sure we had not been followed. He led us to an enclave of earthen dugouts -- some protruding into contoured rises, some level with the forest floor, all camouflaged with branches and leaves. About 150 Jews from Skala and shtetls in the area had fled to the forest, one or two at a time, after the aktsia and the liquidation of the Borszczow ghetto. These bunkers were their last hope of shelter...

[The Jews] spent their daytime hours in the underground bunkers. After dark, some of the men and boys would venture out, one by one, to beg or steal a little food from the peasants. This was dangerous, but it was a matter of life or death to scrounge for food. Many of these volunteers never returned. The Jews were all starving; many had already died of hunger and exposure.

The Ukranian peasants knew where the Jews were hiding. Individual peasants and German units had periodically invaded the forest to ferret them out...” (*Love in a World of Sorrow*, by Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, Devora Press, Israel, 2005, at pp. 162-3).

Helen and Ethel spent all that fall and winter living in this bunker in the forest. The winter was unusually cold, and there was a great deal of snow. Mostly they stayed in the bunker. The group suffered from hunger, frostbite, lice and typhus and other diseases. Somehow Helen and Ethel made it through the winter.

In spring, German soldiers discovered the neighboring bunker and shot all of its occupants. One young boy escaped, and made his way undetected to Helen's bunker. There was no room for anyone else, so they were forced to dig to expand the bunker to take him in.

Several days later, during heavy spring rains, the bunker collapsed in the middle of the night, burying 20 of its occupants. Among the dead was Helen's sister, Ethel Grossman.

Helen dragged herself out of the collapsed bunker and staggered back to the home of the Ukrainian widow. She hid under straw in the barn but was quickly discovered. Helen was barely conscious; she was filthy, lice-ridden, starving and suffering from typhus. By now it was clear that the Russian army was getting closer, and the Ukrainians were afraid of retribution by the Russians, because the Ukrainians had sided with the Germans when Germany attacked Russia. Sheltering a Jew was now regarded as a way to establish that you had opposed the Germans. Whether out of charity or fear of the Russians, the woman took Helen into her house and began to nurse her back to health.

A few days later the Russians arrived and Helen's chances for survival seemingly improved. Still, Helen was very sick, and the Ukrainian woman continued to nurse her.

Three days later everything changed. The Germans counter-attacked and the Russians retreated. All over the region the Germans returned, and some Jews who had come out of hiding were now discovered and killed. Helen was still very sick, but it was no longer safe for the Ukrainian woman to keep her in the house. She was moved back into the barn, and covered with straw. Then a group of German soldiers arrived, looking for food and shelter. Once again Helen was discovered. She pretended to be Ukrainian, and the soldiers believed her, and urged the Ukrainian woman to take her in. In this way, Helen passed the remaining few weeks until the Russians regrouped and pushed the Germans out for good. Borszczow was liberated by the Russians on July 21, 1944.

Liberation; Afterward

Ten months remained before Germany surrendered. Helen had now escaped the Germans, but she had no friends or surviving relatives, no documents proving who she was, and nowhere to go. After a few days, the Ukrainian woman told her she had to leave. She was taken in by a young Jewish couple who had recently been liberated from a labor camp. They had a few

scraps of food to eat and an abandoned house to live in, but they had nothing to spare for Helen. For two nights she stayed with them and slept on a bed frame with no mattress or blanket. Then a Jewish trader told her he knew of a Czech unit of the Russian army operating in Romania, and that he would take her there in his wagon. After two days, they arrived near the place, but the trader wanted to avoid the Russian troops, so he dropped her off to fend for herself. Attempting to reach the Czech unit, she was stopped by a Russian officer. He was collecting unattached women to be sent to Russia as laborers. Luckily he was distracted by some other women and she ran into the woods. She ran for hours without stopping, afraid that she was being chased. Eventually she came to the place where the Czech unit was billeted and she asked an officer for help. But with no papers, and no one to vouch for her, they turned her away. She wandered around the area for two days and eventually met some other Jews who believed her story. One of them knew a Czech officer and he was persuaded to talk to her. Miraculously, he had once visited her town, and he remembered the sign on her house advertising her father's butcher shop! He took her back to the officer in charge and vouched for her. They put her to work as a seamstress, sewing patches and emblems on uniforms and mending clothing. They gave her a uniform, and a place to stay with the others in the Czech military unit. For the next 10 months she stayed with this military unit as they gradually moved westward through Romania and Czechoslovakia.

When the war ended in May, 1945, she was stationed in Prague. It was then that she learned the fate of her remaining sister, Bela Slomovits. Bela was in Bychkiv with her husband and three daughters when Helen's family was deported in 1941. Like the other Jews of Bychkiv, Bela and her family were transported to Auschwitz in May, 1944. At the selection point upon entry to Auschwitz, Bela's husband took the child of another woman because he wanted to stay with his wife and child anyway. As a result, the other woman was selected for labor. Eliezer Mordechai Slomovits went to his death upon arrival at Auschwitz along with his wife and three daughters.

Louis was liberated from Dachau in April, 1945, and also ended up in Prague. Louis and Helen were married in Teplice-Sanov, Czechoslovakia, in May, 1946. They emigrated to Canada in 1949, and came to the U.S. in 1953.

--Stanley M. Dub, January, 2010

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Epilogue

Before the killings began, Helen's immediate family consisted of herself, seven sisters, one brother and her parents. Her two older sisters were married and had husbands and they had five children between them. The entire group numbered 18 people, of whom only Helen survived.

Louis died in 2000, at age 87. Helen passed away in December, 2009, at age 88. Shortly before she died, I told her she looked beautiful in her wedding picture. She looked at the picture thoughtfully and then surprised me by telling me how she remembered feeling very sad on her wedding day. "I cried", she told me, "because I didn't have anyone left from my family who could attend the wedding."

Helen and Louis had three children. When she died, Helen had two surviving children, five grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

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Summary of the fate of the Grossman family members

A. Deported by Hungarians from Vinif on August 1, 1941

(** photo)

1. Frida Grossman (wife of Helen's uncle, Moshe Grossman). Disappeared from Mielnitze-Podolsk in early 1942. Presumed abducted by Germans for unspecified labor and subsequently killed.
2. Moshe Grossman (Helen's uncle). Attempted to flee Mielnitze-Podolsk in early 1942. Presumed caught and killed by Germans.
3. Elya David Davidovits ** (husband of Helen's sister, Rosie). Attempted to flee Mielnitze-Podolsk in early 1942. Presumed caught and killed by Germans.
4. Frida Grossman (wife of Helen's uncle, Chaim Leib Grossman). Died of natural causes in Mielnitze-Podolsk around August-September, 1942.

5. Chaim Leib Grossman (Helen's uncle). Died of natural causes in Mielnitze-Podolsk in early September, 1942.
6. Leah Grossman (daughter of Chaim Leib). Shot while attempting to avoid capture at Mielnitze-Podolsk, September 26, 1942.
7. Sarah Grossman (Helen's mother). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
8. Rosie Davidovits ** (Helen's older sister). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
9. Moshe Davidovits (son of Rosie). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
10. Baby girl Davidovits (daughter of Rosie). Born at Mielnitze-Podolsk. Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
11. Tzivia Grossman ** (sister of Helen). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
12. Blanka Grossman (sister of Helen). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
13. Pepe Grossman (sister of Helen). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.
14. Ruth Grossman ** (sister of Helen). Captured at Mielnitze-Podolsk and transported to Belzec. Perished at Belzec about September 30, 1942.

15. Pessel Kahn (Helen's aunt, sister of Helen's father). Shot in Pesach Massacre at Borszczow Ghetto, April 20, 1943.
16. Meyer Kahn (Helen's uncle, husband of Pessel). Shot in Pesach Massacre at Borszczow Ghetto, April 20, 1943.
17. Leah Kahn ** (Helen's cousin, daughter of Pessel and Meyer Kahn). Shot in Pesach Massacre at Borszczow Ghetto, April 20, 1943.
18. Asher Zelig Grossman (Helen's father). Shot at Borszczow Ghetto, June, 1943.
19. Hersh Grossman ** (Helen's brother). Shot at Borszczow Ghetto, June, 1943.
20. Chaika Kahn ** (Helen's cousin, daughter of Pessel and Meyer Kahn). Disappeared at Borszczow Ghetto, June, 1943, and presumed killed.
21. Ethel Grossman ** (Helen's sister). Died in cave-in of bunker outside Borszczow about May, 1944.
22. Helen (Grossman) Dub. Sole survivor. (various photos)

B. Not deported with Helen

23. Bela Slomovits ** (Helen's oldest sister). Perished at Auschwitz upon arrival about May 24, 1944.

24. Eliezer Mordechai Slomovits ** (husband of Helen's sister). Perished at Auschwitz upon arrival about May 24, 1944.

25. Daughter #1 of Bela and Eliezer Slomovits. Perished at Auschwitz upon arrival about May 24, 1944.

26. Daughter #2 of Bela and Eliezer Slomovits. Perished at Auschwitz upon arrival about May 24, 1944.

27. Daughter #3 of Bela and Eliezer Slomovits. Perished at Auschwitz upon arrival about May 24, 1944.

