

THE

VOGELMANN

FAMILY

OF

KEŽMAROK

BS”D

THE VOGELMANN FAMILY-A REMEMBRANCE

INTRODUCTION

My name is Thomas (Yehuda) Vogelmann. To my knowledge, I am the only living namesake of the Vogelmann family. I therefore felt it my responsibility as a remembrance, to put down in words and pictures, the pre-war information that I have gathered about my family over many years, including what happened to them in the Holocaust.

Most of the information and pictures presented here were from my Uncle Alex (Shiye) Vogelmann A”H. For some background: after obsessively reading many books on the Holocaust in the early '80's, I very much wanted to know about my father's family and what happened to them during the Holocaust. My father was no longer alive, so in 1986 I wrote a letter to my Uncle Alex who was living in Santiago, Chile, asking him all about our family. His response was an invitation to come visit him in Santiago when he would tell me everything. I accepted his invitation and in July of that year I flew to Santiago. I sat down with him and he told me all about our family and what happened to each of them during the war. I recorded our conversations. He also had pictures of most of the family members.

A few years ago, I posted a family tree including photos etc., on the “My Heritage” website. The purpose of this journal is to give the background and story behind the pictures. It is the “glue”, so to speak, that brings everything together.

The Vogelmann family lived in the town of Kezmarok, Slovakia before the war.



The following is a compilation of the information that I gathered about Kezmarok and the Vogelmann family.

Thomas (Yehuda) Vogelmann
August 19, 2018

My Father, Samuel (Avrohom Shmuel) was born July 28, 1909 to Moishe ben Meir Yisroel Vogelmann (1875- Holocaust) and Yehudis bas Yitzchok Eizik (nee Kestenbaum) (1879-1938) in Kezmarok, Slovakia. They had a total of 13 children. They were:

Berta Lorber 1898-1943
Frieda Stegman 1900-1944
Yosef Arye 1902-1927 (Buried in Kezmarok)
Heinrich (Yecheskel) 1903-(Holocaust)
Pepy & Yakov (twins) 1905-1907
Julius (Isaiah) 1908- (Holocaust)
Samuel (Avrohom Shmuel, Mundi) 1909 - 1974
Armin (Herschel) 1911-(Holocaust)
Ignatz (Isaac) 1914- (Holocaust)
Roza (Roszi) 1916-1988
Alexander (Yehoshua, Shiye) 1918-2013
Salamon (Shuli) 1920- (Holocaust)

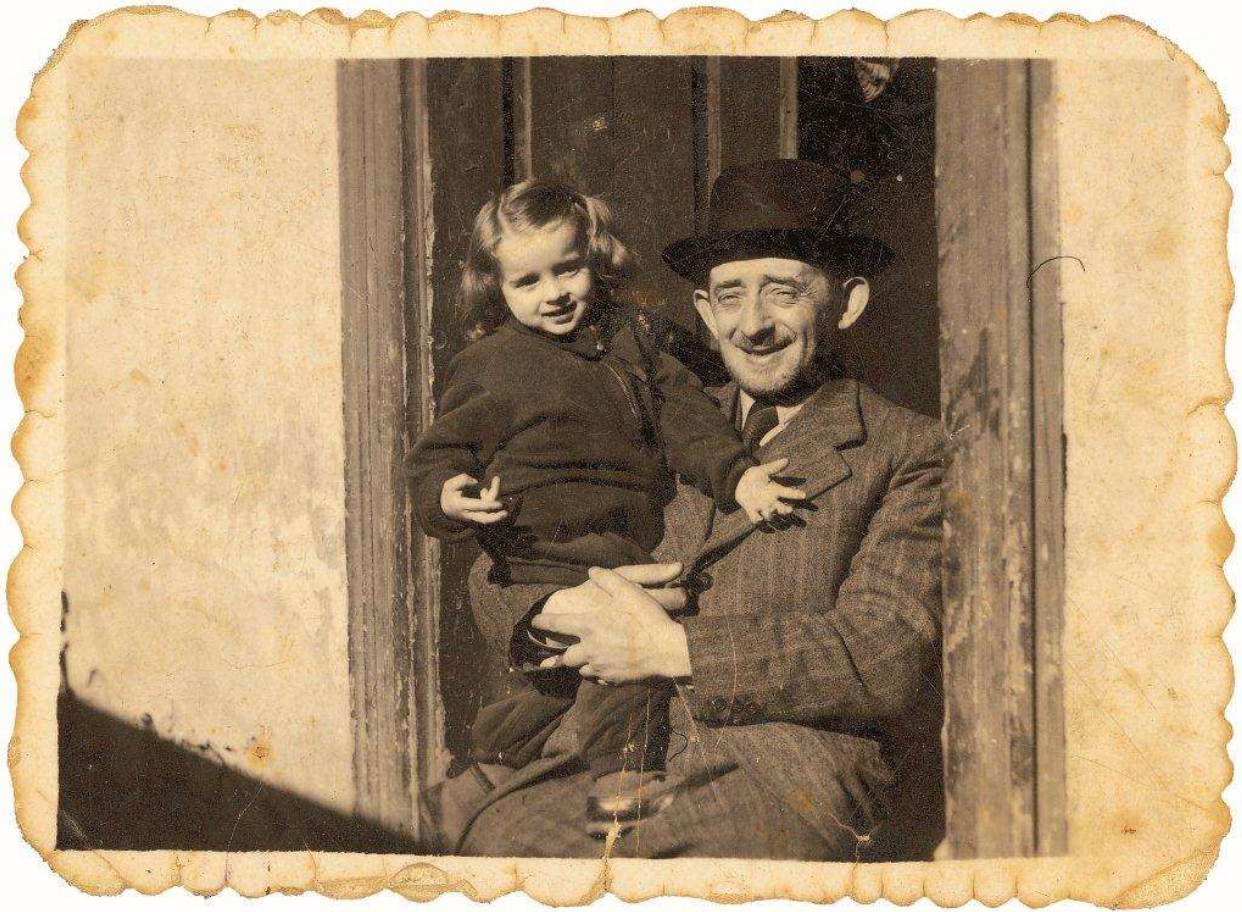
At the time the war broke out, there were 10 siblings alive (the twins Pepy and Yakov died as infants and Yosef Arye died in 1927 of an illness). Of the 10 who were alive, 7 perished in the Holocaust, including my Grandfather HY" D. The 3 survivors were my father A"H, my uncle Shiye and my aunt Roza.

To give you an idea of the extent of the Holocaust's devastating effect on my family, my uncle Shiye once calculated that out of a total of 104-105 people in the entire family before the war, only 8 survived. Besides the 3 siblings just mentioned, the 5 others were:

Branchu Vogelmann (nee Schwimmer)-Wife of Bernat (Hersh Ber) Vogelmann (my father's cousin)



1(L to R) Branchu & Judith (her daughter)



2- (L to R) Judith & Hersh Ber Vogelmann (her father)

Judith Masad (nee Vogelmann)- Bernat's Daughter (She is living today in Kibbutz K'far Masaryk, Israel)

Edith Ackerman (nee Lorber)- my father's niece (Berta's daughter)

Libu Moskowitz (nee Lorber)- "

Harry Kestenbaum- Cousin- related to my Grandmother. After the war he lived in Prague and he died there.



3-Harry Kestenbaum

However, a few years ago I became aware of four additional sibling survivors of our family living in Israel, Yisrael Wiesel, Yakov Wiesel and Tzipi Senderovich. A fourth sibling, Moshe Wiesel, survived the Holocaust, but was tragically killed in 1967 in the Six-day War. They were all children of "Pirushka" Wiesel (nee Vogelmann), my father's first cousin.

My grandmother Yehudis A"H died in 1938 of natural causes and is buried in Kezmarok along with her son, Yosef Arye, who also died of natural causes in 1927.

EARLIER HISTORY

This section covers family members starting with my grandparents who are the earliest members of my family that I have learned about.

MY PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS

REB MOISHE VOGELMANN HY"D



My grandfather R' Moïshe, was born in Munkacs on Feb. 8, 1875 and was a Munkacher Chasid. He married my grandmother Yehudis (Jolana) Kestenbaum (born Jan. 27, 1879) on the 7th of Adar 5655 (3 March 1895) in Munkacs. Munkacs, once known as that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, is now known as Mukachevo, Ukraine.

At some point my grandparents moved to Kezmarok, I assume for livelihood reasons. They ran, as best as I understand, a successful wholesale produce business importing and selling all kinds of produce and fish (one record that I read has my grandfather's occupation as "fishmonger"). According to my cousin, Libu Moskowitz (nee Lorber) the store supplied the hotels in the nearby Tatra mountains with fruits, vegetables and fish imported from Italy.



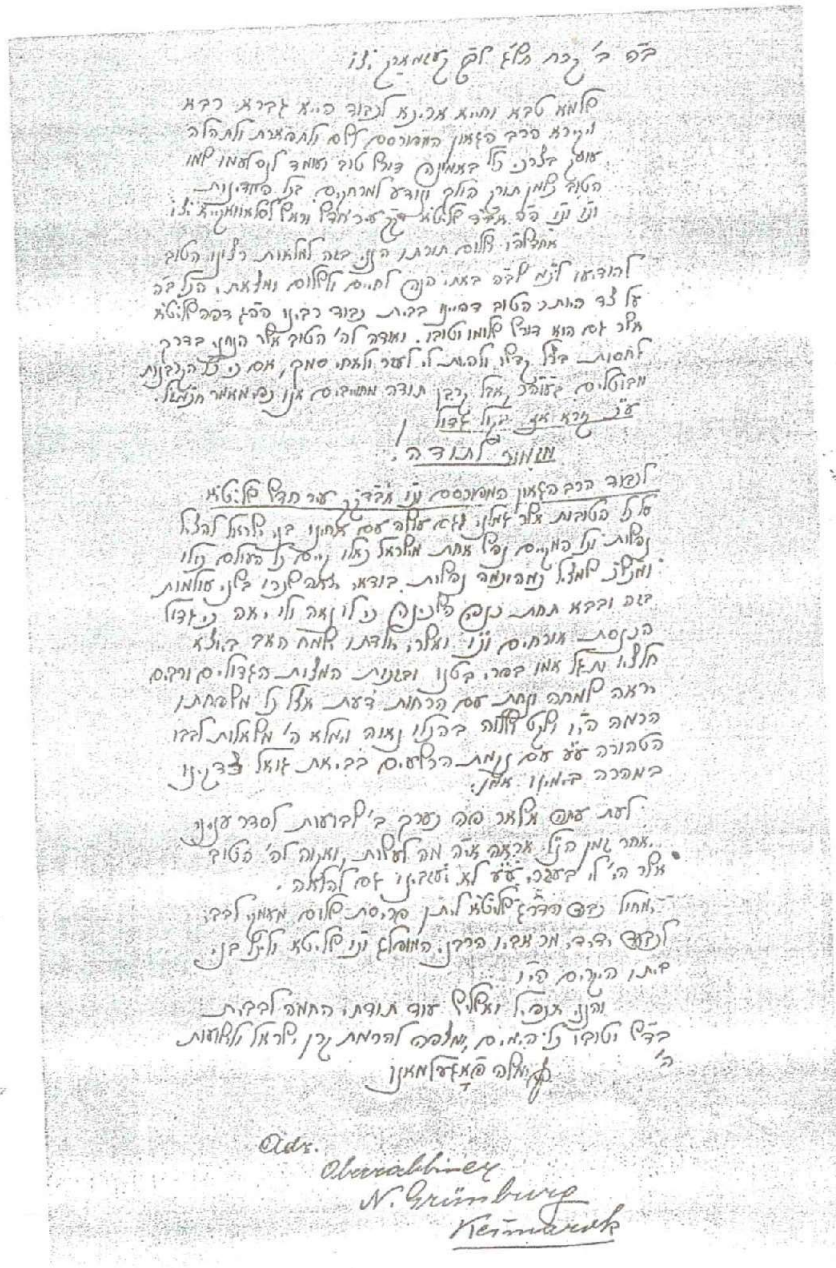
4 Picture of Store (Left)

In the postcard, you can see the Vogelmann shop at left is in a building with two floors. They had a big house (the business was downstairs and the living quarters upstairs). Libu also recounted how beautiful Pesach was when the whole family came to Zeide Moishe's house. Also, in the house there was a separate table for guests to eat. They joked that they competed with the hotels in the Tatra mountains for guests.

There are conflicting accounts of what happened at the end of Zeide Moshe's life. According to Uncle Shiye, here is what happened to my Grandfather: During the war, he and my father put him in a nursing home in Novaky (Slovakia) to keep him from being deported. When things got bad in Slovakia, they transferred him to a nursing home in Budapest. Grandfather, however, got homesick and wanted to go to Munkacs, where he was originally from and where his daughter Frieda lived. Tragically, from there he was deported to Bratislava, from where he was put on a march to Vienna. On the way, he got tired and was shot. Uncle Shiye found this out from another survivor who said that grandpa was buried in a Gentile cemetery, but he didn't know where. However, according to a document I found in my father's papers, grandfather was deported to Auschwitz in March of 1944. In addition, according to a death record that Miki Liptak (see page 27) sent to me, it indicates my Grandfather's date of death as 12/31/1942. This is also questionable since I know that my father observed my Grandfather's *yahrzeit* on the 2nd day of Shavuot.

My cousin, Libu (nee Lorber) in her recorded testimony said that after the war she went back to Kezmarok but didn't find any surviving family there. She was told that grandpa was there until late but that they put him in a nursing home in Nova Mesto to save him. In the spring of 1943, grandpa wrote a letter thanking Rabbi Abba Avraham Frieder, rabbi of the Nova Mesto

community who was active in Hatzalah, for putting him there. Rav Frieder was a "Neolog" Rabbi who was part of the Working Group along with Rav Michael Ber Weissmandl, Gisi Fleischmann and others who worked tirelessly to save Jews during the Holocaust. Rav Frieder's son wrote a book titled "L'hatzil Nafshom" about his father's rescue work. A copy of the letter my Grandfather wrote is in that book. A Granddaughter of Libu Moskowitz (Lorber) gave me a copy of it a few years ago. Here is a copy of the letter he sent, that written in the spring of 1943, is yet another indication of when he was still alive:



מכתב תודה של משה פוגלמן לרב פרידר על סיועו בהצלתו, אביב תשי"ג

5-Grandfather's letter to Rav Frieder

I present here first the letter in Hebrew print (with the help of Rabbi Mitchell Orlan of Yeshiva University) followed by the English translation:

ב"ה ב' קרח תש"ג ל"ק קעזמארק יצ"ו

שלמא טבא וחייא אריכא לכבוד הייא גברא רבא ויקירא הרב הגאון המפורסם לשם ולתפארת ולתהילה עוסק בצרכי כלל באמונה דורש טוב ועומד לנס לעמו שמו הטוב פשמן תורק הולך ונודע למרחקים בכל המדינות וכ"ו וכו"ו הי"ה אב"ד שליט"א דק"ק עיר חדש וראש לסלאוואקייא יצ"ו אחרדשה"ט ושלוש תורתו הנני בזה למלאות רצונו הטוב להודיעו לפ"מ שב"ה באתי הנה לחיים ולשלום ומצאתי הפל ב"ה על צד היותר הטוב דהיינו בבית כבוד רבינו הה"ג דפה שליט"א אשר גם הוא דורש שלומו וטובו. ואודה לה' הטוב אשר הנחני בדרך לחסות בצל קדשו ולהיות לי לעזר ולאחיסמך, אם כי כל הקרבנות מבוטלים בעוה"ר, אבל קרבן תודה מחוייבים אנו כפי מאמר חכמז"ל, ע"פ קורא אני בקול גדול

מזמור לתודה

לכבוד הרב הגאון המפורסם ונ"י אב"ד ק"ק עיר חדש שליט"א על כל הטובות אשר גמלנו וגם עושה עם אחינו בני ישראל להציל נפשות וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל פאלו קיים כל העולם פולו ומפל שכן שמציל כמה וכמה נפשות בודאי יראה שכרו בשני עולמות בזה ובבא תחת נפני השכינה פי לו נאה ולו יאה פי גדול הכנסת אורחים וכ"ו ואשרי יולדתו ישמח האב ביוצא חלציו ותגל אמו בפרי בטנו ובזכות המצות הגדולים ורבים יראה שמחה ונחת עם הרחנת הדעת אצל כל משפחתו הרמה הי"ו (ה' יחיהו וישמרהו) ושקט ושלום בהיכלו נאה וימלא ה' משאלות לבבו הטהורה ע"ע (עד עולם) עם נקמת הרשעים בביאת גואל צדקינו במהרה בימינו אמן

לעת עתה אשאר פה כערך ב' שבועות לסדר עניני. אחר זמן הנ"ל אראה אי"ה מה לעשות, ואקוה לה' הטוב אשר היה לי בעזרי ע"ע (עד עתה) לא יעזבני גם להלאה.

ימחול כבוד הדר"ג (הדרת גאון) שליט"א ליתן פריסת שלום מעמקי לבבי לכבוד ידידי מר אביו הרבני המופלג וכ"ו שליט"א ולכל בני ביתו היקרים הי"ו

והנני אכפיל ואשליש עוד תודתי החמה לבבית בד"ש (בדרישת שלום) וטובו כל הימים, ומצפה להרמת קרן ישראל ולישועות ה'

ר' משה פאגעלמאנן

English translation:

B" H Monday Parshat Korach 703 (1943) Kezmarok, YZ"V (Zion and Jerusalem should be rebuilt)

Good peace and long life in honor of this great and precious man, great and famous Rabbi in name and grandeur and praise, he toils in the needs of the community with faith, seeks good and stands out as a banner for his nation, his good name is like the finest oil that goes and is known far in all the countries, and his candle burns bright, Rabbi and Gaon, head Beis Din Shlit"a of the holy congregation New City (Nova Mesto?) and head in Slovakia YZ"V.

After inquiring of his well-being and the well-being of his Torah, I want to fulfill his goodwill request to inform him that B"H I arrived here (Kezmarok) alive and in peace and I found everything B"H in the best order in the home of our Honorable Rabbi, the Rabbi and Gaon here, Shlit"a, (the Kezmarker Rav) and he too inquires about his well-being and good. And I thank the good G-D who guided me on the path to protection in His holy shade, and to be a help and support for me. Although all the temple sacrifices have ceased because of our sins, but we are

obligated to bring the Sacrifice of Thanks according to the saying of our Sages of blessed memory. I, therefore, proclaim in a loud voice:

PSALM OF THANKS!

In honor of the famous Rabbi and Gaon (his candle burns bright), Head Beis Din of the New City (Nova Mesto?) Shlit" a,

For all the good he has done for me and also does for our Jewish brethren in saving souls, "and whosoever keeps alive one soul of Israel, is as if he kept alive the whole world" , and definitely one who saves many souls, he will certainly be rewarded in both worlds, this world and the world to come under the wings of the Divine Presence, because "to Him it is pleasing and will be pleasing". For great is (one) engaging in hospitality etc., and happy is his birth. His father should be happy with his offspring and his mother should rejoice in fruit of her womb. And in the merit of his great and many mitzvos, he should see happiness and pride in a generous spirit from all his exalted family, and quiet and tranquility should reside in his palace. And G-d should fulfill all the requests of his pure heart forever, with revenge on the wicked ones, with the coming of our righteous Redeemer, very soon in our days, Amen.

For now, I will stay here (Kezmarok) for about two weeks to arrange my affairs. Afterwards, I will see, G-d Willing, what to do, and I hope to the good G-d who supported me until now, (that) he will not forsake me in the future.

Forgive my request, Honorable Grand Gaon Shlit" a , to give regards from the depths of my heart to my honorable friend, the outstanding Rabbi and father Shlit" a, and to all of his precious family.

I express twice and three times again my warm heartfelt thanks with regards and good wishes for all days, with hope for the raising of the Pride of Israel and for G-d's salvations,
R' Moishe Vogelmann

Address Grand Rabbi N. Gruenburg
Kezmarok

Based on the above information from my uncle and Libu Lorber regarding the chronology of my grandfather's whereabouts during the war, it appears from this letter that he came back to Kezmarok from Nova Mesto and from there was put in a nursing home in Budapest etc., as indicated above.

Indeed, in the book Toldos Yehudei Kezmarok, the author gives the following chronology of events regarding my grandfathers whereabouts during the war: He writes that most probably Rav Frieder saved him from the deportations in Kezmarok that occurred June 1942 or Yom Kippur of that year, by placing him in the old age home "Ohel David" in Nova Mesto where Rav Frieder was the rabbi. But by June 1943, with renewed threats of deportations, it was decided that it would be best for my grandfather to escape to Budapest. He went back to Kezmarok and hid in the house of the Kezmarker Rav, Reb Simcha Nussen Greenberg for two weeks, to arrange for his escape to Budapest through the efforts of the Working Group. It is at this time that he wrote the above letter to Rav Frieder, while in hiding in the Kezmarker Rav's house. From there, he did escape to Budapest. In Budapest, as written above, per Uncle Shiye, he was put in a nursing home but ultimately went to Munkacs and perished. HY"D

The Kezmarker Rav, Reb Meir Gruenberg z”l, whom I interviewed in 1986, told me that in Kezmarok there had been two shuls- an Ashkenaz shul and a Chasidic Shtiebel. My grandfather davened in the Ashkenaz shul. On Friday nights, all the fund-raisers who came to Kezmarok to raise funds and who needed a place to eat, would stand in the back of the Shul and grandfather would assign them places to eat at various people’s homes. All those that he could not place, he would take to his house for the meal.

Grandpa was also in the Chevra Kadisha (the ritual burial society) in Kezmarok. My Uncle Shiye was an administrator of the Chevra Kadisha in Santiago. He once told me that as a child grandpa would take him along when he went to perform “Taharos” (ritual purification before burial). That is why he continued that tradition when he moved to Chile.

The following is an excerpt from the Kezmarok chapter of “Pinkas Hakehillot Slovakia”, which makes reference to my grandfather:

“There were some 1,200 Jews in Kezmarok in 1940. In 1942 **Moshe Fogelman** (Vogelmann) was chosen to head the community. From 1940 on, Kezmarok served as a major station on the escape route of Jews from Polish Ghettos to Hungary; approximately 2,200 Jewish refugees passed through and received assistance from a special agency the Jews of the city set up to help the refugees in transit.”

Yehudis Vogelmann (nee Kestenbaum) Z”L



6-right-Grandmother Yehudis

My grandmother, Yehudis was born Jan. 27, 1879 probably in Munkacs to Eizik Kestenbaum and Deborah Feldinger. She was very active in the family business (according to uncle Shiye, she was the "Neshama" of the business). She got sick with diphtheria and died before the war on Nov. 2, 1938 (8 Cheshvan). At her levaya, a Dr. Neugroschel said that "this woman didn't have to die had she been given the proper medical treatment". She is buried in the Kezmarok Jewish cemetery. Uncle Shiye related to me that during the Shiva for my grandmother, on Friday, Catholics came into Kezmarok and kidnapped some Jewish families including the Vogelmann family and took them to a village called "Rushnova". A few days later they were allowed to come back to Kezmarok. Interestingly, in his book "Toldos Yehudei Kezmarok", the author, Professor Samuel Gottesman, corroborates this and also gives some background to the incident. On page 101 he writes that on Nov. 3, 1938 Germany ordered that territories in Slovakia that contained Hungarian speaking people, be torn away and given to Hungary. This disturbed the Slovaks, so naturally they blamed the Jews. They said that it was the Jews who introduced the Hungarian language to parts of Slovakia and were therefore to blame for the German edict to tear away those territories from Slovakia and give it to Hungary. So, on Nov. 5, 1938 (Shabbos Parshas Lech-Lecha), a group of Slovak militias from the "Hlinka Guard" stormed into Kezmarok and abducted 30 Jewish families and transported them to the Slovak/Hungarian border. They spent two weeks under the open sky and exposed to the fall rains. With much difficulty, they allowed some Jewish congregations to give food and shelter to the abductees. After much effort, the abducted Jews were permitted to go back home. The returnees found their homes ransacked and some were not even allowed to go back to their original homes.



Matzeiva- Yehudis Vogelmann

BERTA LORBER



Figure 7-Itche & Berta Lorber

Berta was the first child of my grandparents. She was born in 1898. She married Itche Lorber from Stropkov. After their marriage, they moved to Kosice. There they had difficulties making a living so they moved to Kezmarok upon the advice of my grandfather. Itche had a gentile friend from childhood in Stropkov. Later he became an official in Kezmarok. He told the Lorber's daughter, Libu, to warn her father, Itche, to take the family and get out of Kezmarok quickly because if not they would be taken to Auschwitz.

They had 5 children:

Marcus (1921-1943 (Holocaust))
Ari (1926-1943 (Holocaust))
Israel (1929-1943 (Holocaust))
Katarina (Libu) Moskowitz (1924-2010)
Edith Ackerman (1923-1983)



8- Berta & daughters (l to r) Edith & Libu and Sons

Tragically, Berta, Itche and their 3 sons were killed in the Holocaust. Itche was known to say that people will come to his grave and say that the Nazis were defeated, but for him it will be too late.

Libu related the following about her deportation: She had to report to the authorities on Pesach. The family accompanied her. Zeide's last words to her were "never forget from what house you come". She was sent to Auschwitz, where she would be for 6 months. From there she was sent to Birkenau.

The two girls, Katarina (Libu) and Edith survived. (See below under Samuel Vogelmann, how Edith survived the war). Katarina settled in Israel and had 2 daughters, Chava and Dorit. Edith settled in Vienna and had three children, Judith, Iczu, Niki.

FRIEDA STEGMAN



Frieda, the second child, married Shloime Stegman from Munkacs, where they lived. They had four children, Eizik, Alter, Israel and Vera. Tragically, Frieda, Shloime and three of their children were killed in the war. Eizik survived the war, but having heard that his family didn't survive, he jumped off the roof and was killed. Uncle Shiye told me that Vera was once kidnapped for ransom before the war but was returned.



*Figure 9 FRIEDA STEGMAN AND CHILDREN-
ALTER, EIZIK, VERA, ISRAEL*



10-Vera Stegman

YOSEF ARYE

Yosef Arye, born in 1902 and died in 1927 from illness. He is buried in the cemetery in Kezmarok.



11-Matzeiva of Yosef Arye

HEINRICH (YECHESKEL)



Yecheskel was born Sept. 27, 1903. He and his wife perished in the holocaust.

PEPY AND YAKOV

Pepy and Yakov were twins born in 1905 and died two days apart on 24 and 26 February 1907, respectively, of illness.

JULIUS (ISAIAH) VOGELMANN



Julius (Isaiah) Vogelmann was born in 1908. He married Esther Eckhaus. They had one son named Ernest. Tragically, all of them perished in the Holocaust. In 1992, on my first trip to Kezmarok, I met Mr. Leo Kovacs and his wife, the last jews living there. He knew most of the Vogelmann family and said that he heard that Julius had at some point gone to Poland, but when the Germans invaded Poland, he went to Russia and while there the Russians forced him on a march and he died along the way.

I recently came into contact with a niece of Esther Eckhaus. Margita Eckhaus, a niece of Esther's read about the 2013 memorial in Kezmarok (see page 29) and saw that a Thomas Vogelmann was one of the attendees. She contacted the organizer, Miki Liptak, to say that her aunt Esther had been married to a Vogelmann and she would like to speak to me. Miki put her in touch with me and we exchanged pictures and information. She told me that her father, Samuel, was the only survivor of the Eckhaus family. Uncle Shiye once told me that he recalls an Eckhaus coming to Kezmarok after the war to ask if they had any personal belongings of their sister that they could have to keep as a remembrance of her. Very sad!

My uncle also told me that the Zeide loved their son Ernest very much, probably because he was the first Vogelmann grandson to be born (later Isaac Vogelmann also had a son who also perished in the Holocaust.)

SAMUEL (AVROHOM SHMUEL, MUNDI) VOGELMANN



Figure 12-MY Parents- SAMUEL and FRIEDA

My father, Samuel (Mundi) Vogelmann, was born July 28, 1909. He told me that he learned in a number of Yeshivos. He learned in Munkacs for one year. He also learned in Galante, Golnicz and Hunczdorf (now known as Huncovce), all in Slovakia. In 2013, when I attended the Memorial in Kezmarok (see page 29), I asked to be driven there. It is about a 10-minute drive from Kezmarok. I saw the building that was formerly the shul which is now a warehouse. The yeshiva building, in another location, is now used for offices.



Figure 13- HUNCZDORF-FORMER SHUL BUILDING

At some point before the war my father went in to help in the business as did all of his brothers. At some point, he ran it, probably after his mother died in 1938 and my grandfather was ailing and could not run it. When the war came, the Nazis took over Jewish businesses by installing a gentile “Arizator”/Manager. Since the Arizator was not familiar with the business, they would keep one of the original principals, to help him run it. The name of the Arizator they placed in charge of the Vogelmann store, was Humenik. Interestingly, in a picture of the business that Margita Eckhaus sent me (below), the business next door has a sign above it with the name Humenik. Perhaps for convenience they installed someone who was right next door. The woman in the window above the Vogelmann store, is almost positively my mother A”H.



Figure 14-HUMENIK AND VOGELMANN STORES

Uncle Shiye told me that Mr. Humenik was a decent person and that he gave back the business to our family after the war. Interestingly, at the Kezmarok memorial in 2013 (See P.29), Miki Liptak told me that Mr. Humenik's son publishes a newspaper and said that he would like to do a story on the memorial. For some reason, he didn't come to the memorial. Perhaps he may have felt uncomfortable meeting me since his father was forcibly installed in our family's business, even though he ultimately returned it after the war.

Regarding how my father survived the war, the following is according to uncle Shiye: In Kezmarok, there were two deportations—one that began in March 1942 and one in August 1944. My father was exempt from the first deportation because he was considered essential to the economy since he ran the family business. This type of exemption also exempted a person's wife. Since my father was single at the time, and in order to save a female in the family, it was decided that my father would "marry" his niece Edith Lorber. This saved her. Later, in 1944, when Edith wanted to marry Yidu Ackerman in Romania, my father "divorced" her.

For the second deportation, however, no one was exempted. By then, they had heard what happened to those first deportees. My father decided that he would escape to Budapest. He was one of several in a group of friends and acquaintances from Kezmarok, who made it into Budapest. These friends helped each other in various ways, with warnings when it was most dangerous to be on the street, meeting in restaurants, not divulging others when they were captured, jailed, and beaten. According to Uncle Shiye, he printed up papers for my father that he was a gentile named Josef Nalek and so escaped to Budapest. Because he spoke German, he disguised himself as "schvab"—a type of ethnic German. He wore a special style of hat with a feather. He rented a room on Aradi Utca from an old blind gentile lady. He told her that he was Josef Nalek and that he worked in Budapest. In fact, since it was dangerous for Jews to be on the street, he would tell the landlady that he was going to work in the morning. He would open and close the door to make it sound as if he was going to work, but in fact would stay inside near the door, until he "came" home and opened the door.

In 2015, I obtained a copy from ITS (International Tracing Service) through the Holocaust Museum of Washington D.C., of an "Application for Assistance" claim that my father submitted. In it he accounts for his whereabouts during the war as follows:

- 3/3-6/42-Helped his father in the business
- 6/42-10/42- In hiding in Kezmarok
- 10/42-11/43- In Budapest -Arrested?
- 11/43-12/43 - ' ' -Jailed
- 12/43- ' ' -2 days in hospital
- 12/43-1/45- ' ' - with false identity
- 1/45-12/45- ' ' - casual work
- 12/45-10/49- Kežmarok
- 10/49-4/1/53- Vienna

According to this document, my father went into hiding in Kezmarok in 6/42 and escaped to Budapest in 10/42. Indeed, my cousin Libu told me that in '42 or '43 while in Auschwitz, she received a letter from my father sent from Budapest. In *Toldos Yehudei Kezmarok* (P. 214), the author writes that during the deportations in the summer and fall of 1942, even some Jews who had "documents of protection" were also rounded up and deported to fill quotas, extort ransom, eliminate Jewish business competition, or just for pure brutality. It appears that is why my father, although possessing a document of protection from deportation nevertheless went into hiding while in Kezmarok and escaped to Budapest in October 1942.

The document also indicates that they interviewed him on Aug. 23, 1950. This is what they write:

"General Impression: Good; type of orthodox Jew

In '42 applicants left Kezmarok because he was warned by (bribed) captain of gendarmerie that deportation order had arrived. In '49 (when under Russian control) he left again for the following reason: He had on 2 occasions failed to decorate his house with bunting in honor of some political celebration-the first time because it has been on a sabbath, which he always observed, the second time because he had been severely reprimanded for his previous omission and wished to prove to himself that he was not afraid of the communist tyrants. The next day the party secretary called on applicant, told him that he had proved himself to be a dirty old Jew, an orthodox swine who would not be permitted to play around much longer, observing sabbath and idling in synagogues. Applicant was afraid of renewed racial persecution and fled."

While in Budapest, the Russians had come in. They would round up people off the street and put them in a holding area and ship them off to Siberia. My father was also rounded up and put in the holding area, but someone came over to him and asked him if he was Jewish. When he said yes, he told him to go into a nearby room. This saved him from the Russian deportation.

Apparently, after the war he stayed in Budapest until Dec. 1945. In December he returned to Kezmarok and re-started the family business with his brother, Shiye. On Feb. 25, 1947 he married my mother, Frieda Wald from Miskolc, Hungary. They stayed in Kezmarok until October 1949. When they heard that the Russians were going to take over Slovakia, they sold the house and left for Vienna. Vienna was a transit point from where people would move to permanent destinations. I was born in Vienna on May 12, 1951.



15- My parents and me

In April 1953 we moved to the United States.

(The following paragraph is based on Libu Lorber's testimony)

As I said earlier, no one was exempt from the second deportation. So, Edith (Lorber) Ackerman, who was exempted from the first deportation by being "married" to my father, to avoid the second deportation, went to Ungvar to her Great Uncle, Raphael Stern, who was a prominent leader in the community. (Interestingly, Raphael Stern is related to me from both sides of my family: Father's side- Raphael Stern's sister, Devora married Moshe Lorber, Itche Lorber's father. Mother's (Frieda Wald) side-My Mother's mother's father, Reb Yehoshua Heschel Friedman and Raphael Stern married two Hipshman sisters.) When things got bad in Ungvar, Edith and Raphael's daughter went to Hungary. They got on a train dressed in black and wearing crosses. There was an inspection on the train by soldiers. Raphael's daughter was told to get off. Meanwhile, a Hungarian officer sat down next to Edith. When the inspectors came to her the officer said "she is with me" and left her alone. Mrs. Stern's husband was also on the train in a different car. They were supposed to meet when they arrived in Miskolc to go to relatives, perhaps to my mother's (Wald) family who lived in Miskolc, Hungary. Edith ultimately

escaped to Budapest and lived there as a gentile named Kovacs. She met once a week somewhere with my father. She worked in a factory. At some point she was suspected to be a Jew, so she escaped to Bucharest. There she met Yidu Ackerman and they got married. Libu Lorber also came to Budapest after the war and met my father, who told her that her sister Edith and Uncle Shiye were in Bucharest. So, she went there and met Edith, who introduced her to some relatives named Hoffner. They were very rich and they served them a lavish feast with waiters and all. In Bucharest you couldn't tell there was a war. Then Libu went to see Uncle Shiye, but the landlady told her that he had left the day before (to Budapest?)

ARMIN (HERSCHEL) VOGELMANN



Figure 16-HERSCHEL VOGELMANN

Herschel Vogelmann was born in 1911. According to Uncle Shiye, during the war somehow, he wound up in Siberia and died there. He was not married.

IGNATZ (ISAAC) VOGELMANN



17- Isaac and his wife, Berta

Isaac VOGELMANN was born in 1914. He married Berta Zupnick. I believe she was from Stropkov, Slovakia. They had a son, Israel. They all perished in the Holocaust.

ROZA BRINNER



Figure 18-LEFT ROZA

Roza was born in 1916. During the war, she was deported to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, she met and befriended Lilly Svarc who later married Uncle Shiye. Roza survived the war and afterwards married Shloime Brinner. The wedding was held in Kezmarok in the backyard of the Vogelmann house/business.



Figure 19-L to R-Samuel, Roza, Shloime, Shiye

They moved to Israel and first lived in Petach Tikva, then moved to Bnai Brak. They had three children- Miriam A”H, Moishe and Natan. Today, Moishe lives in London and Miriam’s husband, Yitzchok Tikuchinski and Natan live in Jerusalem. Roza died in 1988.

YEHOSHUA (ALEXANDER)



Figure 20 Uncle Shiye and Aunt Lilly

Shiye, as he was called, was born in 1918. He was one of the three siblings who survived the Holocaust. As I wrote earlier, most of the information and pictures in this journal are from him. As a boy, my Zeide sent him to learn in Munkacs for one year. He wound up being there for 7 years (semesters). While he was in Munkacs he stayed at his aunt, my Zeide's sister. Her last name was Firestein. He related to me that when the deportations began in Slovakia in 1942, he escaped to Bucharest. He obtained the use of a printing press and printed up papers that he was a "graf" or prince. As mentioned before, he also printed up papers for my father that he was a gentile named Joseph Nalek. My uncle said that when the Germans wanted to deport the Jews they would tell them that they would be going to a place with better accommodations than they had at home. He, however, knew better. In 1940, he had gone into a "Wirtzhaus" (Tavern) in Kezmarok. The Jewish owner came over to him and pointed to a Polish gentile in the tavern. He said that the man had just come from Poland (Kezmarok was about 15 kilometers from the Polish border) where he had seen about 15 Jews in the forest that were half naked and malnourished. The Jews gave the Pole a piece of paper with the words "Sh'ma Yisroel" written on it in blood, and told him to show it to any Jew he sees and ask them for help. My uncle was very

shaken when he saw the paper. He took it and showed it to two people who were in a position to help, Mr. Oestreicher and Mr. Mendel Berger. They put together a package of clothes and rations to take to the Jews and also promised the Pole money for each Jew that he saves. Then, my Uncle and Mr. Oestreicher went with the Pole to the forest to give the clothing and rations to the Jews. When they got there, however, it was too late. The Jews were gone, and there was blood on the trees and around the area. They found out later that these Jews had originally escaped from a camp and were later caught by the Germans and either returned or killed. This was his first exposure to the atrocities that were being perpetrated by the Germans. As a result, if the Germans said to go here, he would go the opposite way. This is how he saved himself. Eventually, things became difficult for Jews in Bucharest, so he escaped to Budapest, Hungary, not knowing that my father was already there. Then one day, someone recognized him and came over to him and asked, "Are you Shiye Vogelmann?" When he answered in the affirmative, the man told him that your brother (Mundi) Samuel is here and you can meet him at a certain restaurant where the local Jews would meet every day. He did so and met my father there. My uncle said that this was "min hashamayim".

After the war my Uncle married Lilly Svarcz who was from Kosice, Slovakia. Recall that Lilly and my aunt Roza met and became friends when they were in Auschwitz together. Roza told Lilly, that she has a single brother who she thinks would be a good match for her, and that if they survive the war, she would set them up. And so it was. They survived the war and Roza introduced Lilly to Shiye and they got married.

Like my father, Shiye went back to Kezmarok after the war and joined my father in re-starting the family business. But when they heard the Russians were going to be taking over Slovakia, they left Europe around 1948 and went to live in Santiago, Chile. Why Chile? Uncle Shiye told me that he took out a map and asked himself, where in the world will the Russians not come? He felt that Chile would be safe, so they moved there. He died in March 2013 at the age of 95. My Aunt Lilly is still alive and living in Chile as of this writing (August 2018).

Sadly, they had no children and I didn't know why until 2014, when I went to Chile for the unveiling of my Uncle Shiye's matzeiva. The Chabad rabbi there, Menashe Perman told me that my Aunt's niece and nephew who had recently visited there from Israel, told him that Mengele YM"Sh experimented on my aunt when she was in Auschwitz and could therefore have no children!

Uncle Shiye related that there was a gentile named Luchs in Kezmarok, who grew up among the Jews there and could even speak Yiddish (he worked at a lumber mill owned by the Alexanders) and could even learn a little. Days before the end of the war, he shot and killed 42 Jews. Among them was the Kezmarker Rav. Luchs ran away to either Levoce or Huncovce where he had a sister. The Russian partisans found him and hanged him. They also wanted to kill his sister-but didn't.

Aunt Lilly had a younger brother who was killed in Mauthausen. Before the war, his father hired a "houz bachur" (tutor) to learn with him. In the summer they went to the mountains. The houz bachur complained to the father that the son didn't want to learn and be religious, and

he had to chase him around in the mountains. But in Mauthausen, she was told, her brother gave up his bread to get a siddur!

SALAMON (SHULI) 1920-? HOLOCAUST

Shuli was the youngest child in the family. In the book "Toldos Yehudei Kezmarok", the author writes that Shuli was a follower of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and the Betar movement. Mr. Jabotinsky sensed that disaster would soon befall European Jewry and that it was imperative for all European Jews to urgently go to Israel. Shuli didn't survive the war, but we don't know specifically what happened to him.



21-Salamon Vogelmann

Here are additional pictures containing members of the Vogelmann family and others. If anyone recognizes any of these people, please notify me.



Figure 22- Top- from left-first-Berta, fourth-Isaac, Bottom-from left-first-Shiye, fourth-Yecheskel, fifth-his wife



Figure 23- Top- third from left- Samuel (my father), Bottom-first from right-Berta

KEZMARKER RAV- RAV MEIR GRUENBERG Z'L



Figure 24-Kezmarker Rav



Figure 24-Kezmarker Rav with Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rav Meir Gruenberg and my father were about the same age and grew up together in Kezmarok. The Rav would always tell me that he and my father played “fusbol” together and that he, the Rav, was a better player.

The following information is taken from my conversations with the Kezmarker Rav in 1986:

Rav Gruenberg first became Rav in Liptos Svaty Mikulas, Slovakia in May 1935, as his father was already the Rav in Kezmarok. Mikulas was known for making leather products. There were 10 leather factories there. Anyone who worked in these factories was saved from deportation, since the Nazis needed leather. Indeed, Rav Meir saved many Jews by getting them jobs in the leather factories. As a matter of fact, Chaskel Englander of Kezmarok, who was active in Hatzalah, brought my grandfather to Mikulas to save him. Unfortunately, he wanted to go to Munkacs from where he was ultimately deported.

On a positive note, the Rav said about Kezmarok, that the Jewish Community was a united one, with no hostile disputes among the community members. He also said that 60% of the Jews there were religious. Stores were not allowed to be open on Shabbos.

The Ancestral Town of Kezmarok, Slovakia

Since the Vogelmann family lived in the town of Kezmarok, Slovakia before the war, I was interested in finding out more about the town and the people who once lived there. During the early part of the 20th century, the population reached about 13,000. At most, pre-World War II, the Jews comprised about 10% of the population. Today, Kezmarok’s population numbers about 18,000, none of them Jewish.

These days, a non-Jewish man lives there, Mikulas “Miki” Liptak who became interested in the Jews who had once lived there. In 2003, Miki’s daughter belonged to a youth group and together with students from the Basic School, they counted 544 tombstones before the clean-up effort of the Jewish cemetery, not all of which had readable information. In 2004 the Astra Society cleaned up the cemetery of its overgrowth. With the newly cleaned Jewish cemetery in Kezmarok, Miki mapped and cataloged all the gravestones, with the help of Madeleine Isenberg of Beverly Hills, Calif. (Madeleine’s father, Henri Goldstein, was also from Kezmarok).

On my second trip to Kezmarok in 2012, I met him there, and unlike my first trip there in 1992, when I was unsuccessful in locating the graves of my grandmother Yehudis and an Uncle (Yosef Arye), Miki took me straight to them. He also took me to a mini-Jewish museum located within Kezmarok’s Thokoly Castle.

In 2013, Miki was instrumental in gaining the support of the town’s mayor and others, and with donations from descendants of former Jewish residents, had a memorial designed and erected on the site near where the synagogue once stood. The unveiling ceremony of the memorial was held 18th November 2013. In total, about 22 Jews from Israel and the U.S whose

ancestors were from Kezmarok attended, including me. The ceremony, which was preceded by a series of speakers that included historians and ministers and local elected officials, was very moving. For me, the event was surreal. In addition, over the years, Miki has provided me with information about Kezmarok and my family. I am truly grateful to him for all that he has done to preserve the Jewish cemetery and the memory of the Jewish community of Kezmarok.

(Link to video of Kezmarok memorial: <https://youtu.be/18yD2cFfhY4>)



Kezmarok memorial 1



Rabbi Baruch Meyers-Chief Rabbi of Bratislava



Me & Cousin Dorit Teperberg at Memorial

CONCLUSION

It appears that life was good for the Jews in Kezmarok until the winds of World War II began blowing. I have visited Kezmarok myself three times, and I have found it to be a charming town. With the Tatra mountains as a backdrop and the old Thokoly castle in the town, it has a natural and old-world charm. Unfortunately, many of the gentiles living there before the war were not so “charming” (as told to me by the Kezmarker Rav) and colluded with the Nazis in the deportation and extermination of the Jews.

The Holocaust was a tragedy of unprecedented and unfathomable historical proportions. For me, it is a part of my history which I can never forget. My hope and desire are that this journal will perpetuate the memory of those in my family who perished during the Holocaust HY”D, and the memory of the Jewish community of Kezmarok as a whole.

Finally, it is important to mention that there is a book written (in Hebrew) about the Jewish community of Kezmarok titled "Toldos Yehudei Kezmarok v'Hasviva" by Shmuel Dov Gvaryahu Gottesman. It is a thorough and detailed history of the Jewish community. Uncle Shiye told me that Mr. Gottesman was from a small village in Slovakia, and as a boy came to learn in Kezmarok. Anecdotally, my uncle also said that he ate "taig" (specific days for meals) at the Vogelmann home.

(Note: I plan to update this journal as I continue reviewing and researching old and new information.)

IN APPRECIATION

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the following people for spending many hours diligently reviewing and editing this journal:

Eva Birnbaum of Toronto, Canada. Eva was born in Kezmarok (1940). Her grandfather, Naftali Birnbaum z"l, printed and sold texts/seforim. Her father, Aaron David Birnbaum z"l, was a childhood friend of my father's z"l. They both fled to Budapest during the war, where they supported each other through many ordeals.

Madeleine Isenberg of Beverly Hills, Calif.- (Madeleine encouraged me to write this journal.) Madeleine's father, Henri Goldstein, was from Kezmarok. She co-authored a book with Mikulas Liptak titled "Jews in the SPIS Region, Vol. I, Kezmarok and its Surroundings". Also within JewishGen's website, she has translated several sections of the Yizkor (memorial) book for Slovakia, as well as creating three KehilaLinks sites for towns in Slovakia (Kezmarok, Huncovce, Kosice).