

YONA SOKOL
1880 - 1978

By Zina Sokol Hirsh

About my Father. He came from a town called Boyerker. I don't know what his father, Velvel, did for a living. He died a young man from some disease. His mother, Zisl, then married her husband's uncle (Yosef) who was a widower with two daughters. At that time my father and his brother Evedi were young boys. He and his brother served in the Russian army. After the war, his brother was listed as missing. His body was never found.

My father married (as was told to me) the most beautiful girl from the nearby village. They had a little boy. At that time he worked in an iron and steel business as a buyer of ore. One day he was sent to a distant city on business. While he was away, his little shtetl had a terrible tragedy. There was a pogrom. His stepfather Yosef and his mother Zisl and many others were marched to a lake and shot. Others were herded into the town synagogue which was set on fire. All perished.

Upon my father's return from his business trip, he found out that his wife and child had been stabbed to death. This was told to him by a cousin who had hidden in the woods and then had found them after the pogrom.

Not long afterwards, my father left his hometown on a long and difficult journey across Europe to come to America. When he arrived, he followed his "landsleit" friends from Boyerker to start his own fruit and vegetable store with their assistance. He met my mother through mutual relatives and married her sometime around 1923. They had us - myself and a my 14 month younger brother Albert.

My father's life was not an easy one. His store had no heat and no cooling devices, and no place to sit either. He worked from before dawn, when he went to the big market to buy the produce for the store. He took a nap in the afternoon (we lived across the street from the store) and he stayed up late to do the bills. I never heard him complain. He retired about the age of 80. Not long after that he got a job as a "runner" on Wall Street! He had remarried two years after my mother died to Esther (Zaslovsky). Her daughter got him that job.

All in all, my father was an amazing man.