

Visiting Stavishche with Mom

Written and submitted by
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My name is Elka Caplan and my mother came here from Stavishche in 1921 at the age of eleven. She just passed away last July at 97. Her name was Rose Lessure Mayers (nee Raizel Lechtzer). She went to Covington, KY with her family and after she was married, in 1937, lived the rest of her life in Cincinnati. I visited Stavishche with her in 1990 and again in 1994. We stayed in Kiev and were driven there. It took us about an hour and a half or two to get there. It was a thrilling trip for both of us. My mom slipped into "memory mode" and had lots of stories for me. The first time, she even met a 90 yr. old woman who knew her family!

Our guide took us to the cemetery and the Count's estate. My Mom told me that the Jews used to walk there on Shabbat as the Count opened the grounds to them. The guide also took us to the fairgrounds. There was a "yarid" or fair once a week where her mom took her when she did her shopping. It is still standing and being used. There is also a small government office that has limited records.

There was no hotel in Stavishche so one trip we went early in the morning and stayed most of the day. The second time, our driver found a hotel in Bila Tserkva and we stayed over a second day. Bila Tserkva is the closest big town, maybe even a city. It's where my mom and the other Jews walked for 24 hours to get away from a pogrom they heard was coming. It was a relatively short ride by car.

One day is sufficient to visit Stavishche because it is a small place; at least the area where the Jews once lived. Be sure to make time to see the lake. My mom told me that that's where the water carrier filled up the barrels to bring to the homes, that's where they washed clothes in the warm weather and, whispering, told me that a young boy committed suicide in the lake. She spoke to me in a little girl's voice when she was recalling memories. She spoke Yiddish fluently and in Stavishche her Yiddish became very different. It had more Russian words and a different accent. Sometimes I didn't understand what she was saying!