

Vaysman family from Kishinev

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Mendel and Yekheved Vaysman. Leo Vaysman.

My father's ancestors with the surname Vaysman came to Bessarabia most likely from Germany and settled in Chisinau. I remember Grandfather Mendel, who was a strong and respectful man. He led the family clan, and the rest of the family too, including the poor, grouped around him.

Every Saturday, all of the family members sat together around the huge table and grandmother Yekheved, who was taller than grandfather, stood near him with a bottle of wine that grandpa Mendel drank after he did the prayers on the bread. After that he wiped his moustache and Shabbat began. I remember how the table was full of massive geese and turkeys, fish, and pastrami, all which was cooked by my Grandma and numerous relatives participating in the meal.

Grandpa Mendel was a merchant. He bought grain from Moldavian farmers and sold it to the mills. Grain was brought in on big wagons and left in a huge barn in the back yard. This yard was side by side with my mother's family's yard.

Grandpa Mendel established very good relationships with the farmers. When they brought grain, he fed them and treated them with wine. This granted him their love and respect. He was very religious and belonged to the synagogue, which was across the road.

My father, Lev Vaysman was the seventh child born to Mendel and Yekheved but the first surviving child. All of his previous siblings died soon after birth. After my father, David, Ita and Copel were born. Aunt Ita died young, leaving two children – Galya and Raya in the care of her husband Lazer Spiegel, who lived at Bulboki, near Chisinau.

My father graduated from Jewish school, which coincidentally was named after someone also with the last name Vaysman. He started to help Grandpa Mendel in his business. He brought and sold grain to the mills. At some point, Grandpa, wishing further his son's education, sent him to Vienna Polytechnic Institute, which my dad had not finished for an unknown reason. He returned to Kishinev, and continued working as a trader.

When time came to serve in the army, Grandpa Mendel took advantage of the rules in Romania, which allowed him to pay off his son's service. He gave the senior officer the money and a horse and my dad became a second lieutenant and was released home. However, this ridiculous episode later played an ill joke with my father, whom the Soviet authority later charged with espionage, based on his service in the Romanian army which actually did not happen.

David Weisman

My father had two younger brothers: David and Kopel. Uncle David participated in grandfather Mendel's business to a lesser extent than my father. As a handsome young man, he liked to be surrounded by beautiful girls, among which was his future wife Ester Brokhman. Ester and

David had a daughter Bima, my cousin, who lives in Israel with her family. The fate of my uncles was similar to the fate of my father: they were arrested by Soviets.

At the beginning of the World War 2, Uncle David was sent to Siberia for the so-called economic counter-revolution. After serving four years in exile, he was released for good behavior and by simple luck, and settled in Lvov, Ukraine, where his family lived by that time.

Let me turn to the memories of my cousin Bima: "My father was taken in 1941. He was arrested by the NKVD for Zionist activities. According to him, he was a "Makabbi" community activist. This Chisinau organization actively supported the return of the Jews to Israel, and he helped people move to Palestine with forged documents. He served in Siberia (Solikamsk, Komi ASSR), for more than 6 years. In the harsh conditions of survival, he froze his legs and suffered from this until the end of his life. He came back without the right to live closer than 101 km from large cities. (An interesting coincidence: my father was released and died on the World War II victory day). In 1999 he immigrated to Israel along with his wife. "

Copel Vaysman

Copel Vaysman was my father's youngest brother. He was not repressed by the Soviets. However, his personal life had been very dramatic. He was married three times. His first wife Rosa was from a wealthy family. Rosa and Copel lived near us on Pavlovskaya Street. I remember a comfortable mansion with beautiful furniture. At the beginning of the war, Rosa did not have time to evacuate and got into the ghetto with three-year old daughter Tanya. Tanya was subsequently murdered there. An elderly doctor helped Rosa to survive the ghetto. After the end of the war Rosa did not return to live with Copel and instead married that doctor as a sense of duty. The couple was soon deported to Siberia for surviving the ghetto, which seemed unreliable to the Soviets. There they had a boy, who died in infancy. After the war I saw Aunt Rosa only once, when she came to visit mother in Kishinev.

During the war, Kopel, unclearly how, got to serve in Iran, where Soviet troops occupying the northern part of the country, together with the British, carried out the transport corridor through the lend-lease. I remember him in an enviable American leather coat upon his return to Chisinau after the war. In 1944, Copel was able to find us in Northern Kazakhstan through Buguruslan's Office for the evacuated. Moreover he miraculously found the addresses of his brothers serving time in Siberia, and we, being in the Severokazakhstan's area, received a long awaited letter from my father. It was obviously fate that one of the brothers remained free and has brought together all the members of the Vaysman's family, who found themselves in different places during the war time.

During peacetime, Uncle Copel, together with my father, worked at the "Zagotzerno" firm. Working there he met his second wife Maria Goresht. Uncle Copel and Maria lived on Pirogov Street. Their daughter Eva graduated from Leningrad Medical School. Unfortunately, Maria who was severely ill, died on the eve of her daughter's wedding.

Kopel's third and final wife was Leah Sheinfeld. She worked as a salesperson in the prestigious supermarket on Lenin Street and supplied all the relatives with shopping goods. Copel also worked in a grocery store, which was on the Kostyuzhenskiy's highway. Leah was apparently one of our distant relatives. They lived on Inzov Street Smirnov where Pushkin Museum was located.

Leah had three sons from her first marriage. The younger son dated the Chisinau's Chief of police's daughter, and subsequently was killed under unclear circumstances. The two older brothers immigrated to the United States. After the death of Aunt Leah, Uncle Copel was left alone. He lived near my cousin Galya, who came to help him. In one of her regular visits nobody opened the door. His gypsy neighbors broke the door and found Kopel, seated in a chair near the TV. He was dead. His tragic death in solitude and complicated his life caused regrets and sympathy.

To finish the story on a high note I will tell you that the Vaysman brothers loved soccer and together with the children and even the wives they did not miss a single match at the Chisinau Stadium. Uncle David and I rooted for Tbilisi Dynamo, my brother Fima rooted for Moscow Dynamo and Uncle Copel for Spartak, and we all root for Chisinau Thunderbird.