

Wacek Kornblum's Relatives In Israel



They are my distant relatives - the Hermelin family from Israel. This is Benjamin and Sara and their sons, Zeev and Josef. Sara's maiden name was Kornblum, too. She was my father's cousin, they had common grandparents. Her brother was aunt Chawcia's husband, Benjamin.

This picture was made in Israel, but after World War II. Probably in the 1950s. Neither him, the uncle, nor her, Sara, are alive anymore. The sons are still alive; they both live in Israel. They are retired. Josef has two daughters. Zeev is very religious. He married an Hungarian Jewish girl from a very religious home and they have a lot of children, plenty of grandchildren and all of them live in the vicinity of Jerusalem or on the Western Bank, on the Palestinian territory, where the colonisation is. They are very patriotic... nationalist, I'd say.

Sara's brother was Benjamin, my aunt Chawcia's husband. She was my father's youngest sister, the favourite one, who he always used to help. They had two sons. One was Icchak, the other one Kuba Akiwa. Icchak was three-four years older than me, and Kuba was my age, my best friend who kept getting me in trouble. They lived in Warsaw, on 17 Panska Street. It wasn't a religious family, but a traditional one, they had a kosher kitchen. Aunt's husband was very active in Zionism. Kuba used to go to a Hebrew school, and probably belonged to Betar. They had a piggy-bank for Karen Kayemet at home and his father, whenever he could, would give money. My father didn't like it, Mom even less. Izaak was very talented. He used to play the violin, paint. He used to go to the Pilsudski School of Lithography on Konwiktorska Street in Warsaw. He also sang in a choir, in the Large Synagogue on Tlomackie, and whenever he had shows, the entire family tried to get there. I remember that synagogue as a large palace, staircase going up, lights. I felt strange there, a bit uneasy.

When the war started and the bombings begun, we went to Aunt Dobcia, another sister of Dad's, on Panska, she had a large apartment. There were lots of foreign people who didn't live in those buildings, but who, like us, were running away from other parts of the city, but nobody asked any questions. We all went to the basement, because they announced a bombing, and a bomb fell

on that house. I know I lost consciousness. Everything went dark, it must have taken a while, when I woke up the basement was full of black dust, and people were pushing their way towards the exit to the stairway, I instinctively got out, and then heard some woman scream: 'Vu iz mayn man un mayne kinder?' [Yiddish: Where is my husband and my children?']. And it was my mom. Then Dad showed up and Borus and Estusia, and it also turned out that in the same house there was Aunt Chawcia with her husband, Kuba and Izaak. And when we met at the gate, it turned out Izaak wasn't able to walk. Aunt Chawcia said there was a wooden exit door, and it hit him in the head. And when we all got outside to the street, Aunt Chawcia decided to go to Aunt Frania's on Wielka Street, and Dad and Mom decided to go back to Niska. We parted and from later stories we know that Izaak died two days later.