

Yankel Berznitskiy With His Daughter Liza And Charna Berznitskaya



This is my wife Charna Berznitskaya (in the back), my brother Yankel Berznitskiy and his daughter Liza. The photograph was taken in Vilnius in the early 1950s in Yankel's apartment.

My eldest brother Yankel was the only survivor out of our entire kin. He was also in Kaunas ghetto. A couple of months before the end of the war he was taken to one of the concentration camps in Germany. Yankel managed to escape during the transfer from one camp to another. He jumped from the car in the darkness, landed in a pit filled with water and remained unnoticed. When there was no peril, he knocked on the door of a remote house on a farmstead. The hostess of that house was a German lady, whose husband was killed in action. She sheltered Yankel either out of pity or out of being aware that her action would do her good, when the approaching Soviet troops arrived. Upon the arrival of the Soviet troops Yankel was interrogated by the KGB for a couple of months. Strange as it may be, they believed him and let him go. He came to Vilnius in late 1945. After a while Yankel got married again. His second wife was a Jew from Poland. At that time our relatives in the USA, Uncle Mihl and Aunt Esther, started looking for our relatives who had survived the war. Mihl found Yankel, processed a visa for him, and soon Yankel and his wife left for the USA. His daughter Liza also joined him in the early 1950s. Yankel had another daughter in America. She was named Rohl. Yankel lived a long life and died in the 1980s. His daughters are still living in America.

After the war I found a job with a state supply company, Gossnab, in Lithuania, where I worked all my life. I had to think of my personal life as well. I liked some Jewish girls. I also had pals, with whom I spent time. None of my temporary girlfriends aroused such deep feelings or affections as I

felt for my brother Isroel's widow, Charna. In the postwar years we lived in one apartment and Charna treated me like a brother. She also had suitors. I liked my nephew Aaron, Charna's son. I didn't want Charna and Aaron to leave our family, so I proposed to her. My action corresponded to Jewish traditions: the younger brother should marry the widow of the elder brother. Charna agreed and in the late 1940s our marriage was registered. Charna was two years younger than me. She was from the Lithuanian town of Moletai.