Pola, Irene and their father in Frankfurt, Germany in 1960

Chapter 10
We Leave Poland for Israel

Eventually my parents decided they didn't want to stay in Poland any longer and would go to Israel. So we went to the border city of Klodzko to get the papers required to leave Poland. We ended up spending a year there waiting for permission to leave. We never did receive the papers so we returned to Legnica, where we finally got the papers to go to Israel.

During this time, Frania lived with us. We wanted to take Frania to Israel with us but she was afraid to go and decided to stay in Poland. We left everything for her: our apartment and furnishings. In the taxi Irene and I took Frania's wedding ring from her finger and replaced it with a much heavier and nicer ring of my parent's. They never knew we had done it. It was very hard to say goodbye to Frania: we didn't know if we would ever see her again. Our lives had been so entangled together.

We all cried as we said goodbye, never to see her again!

We traveled from Legnica to the port of Gdynia by train. When our train stopped in Breslau (Wroclaw), our luggage was thoroughly searched for twenty-four hours by secret police, who were once acquaintances of my father and who hoped to find some money. They did not and we finally left Poland.

Chapter 11
Our Life in Israel

We left Poland for Israel on an old dilapidated boat. The journey lasted six weeks, during which we were all very seasick—my mother the worst of all. It was a long, hard journey in barely adequate conditions. There was no privacy at all. There were many people on the boat and sanitary conditions were almost non-existent. Everyone slept and ate together. We sailed through the Baltic Sea, the English Channel, the Atlantic Ocean, the Straits of Gibraltar, and into the Mediterranean Sea and finally arrived at Haifa in Israel.

Upon arrival in the port of Haifa all of us were shocked. Everything and everyone was Jewish! The people, the soldiers, everyone! The longshoremen who unloaded the boat were Jews from Salonika, Greece. When we disembarked from the boat, we all went into a small shop and we were introduced to *Leben*, a drink similar to yogurt but which is prepared dif-

ferently. To celebrate our arrival, my father bought everyone a drink.

All the people from the boat were transferred onto trucks. After a short trip in the dark we stopped in an unknown place. We unloaded our things in the dark and sat on our luggage. In the morning, we discovered that we were in a tent without walls. Later, the refugees were assigned to barracks in a refugee camp called *Shar Aliyah* that was located in a suburb of Haifa.

My family was assigned a barrack with three other families. Each family got one corner of their own. There was a shower, but the water was cold. The food was served in shifts in a central area of the camp at long tables and people of different cultures sat together at the same table. Big tureens of soup were placed on the tables. One woman, a Yemeni, took the whole tureen and began to eat it all herself because she didn't know otherwise.

The camp was a transition step before we were divided into different settlements or other camps. We had few possessions. Many people had no shoes, and when it rained the husbands carried the women on

their backs, like sacks of potatoes. Everyone was very polite but it was not an easy time.

The camp had a fence around it that was manned by special guards. One day, my sister and myself decided to leave the camp to see Haifa without telling our parents. We slid under the fence and boarded a bus. We didn't know the language or where to go. The bus driver asked us in Hebrew where we wanted to go. I said "*Zwei Przystankes*" ('two stops'). He realized that we had escaped from the camp, so he called the camp police and they retrieved us.

The camp police questioned Irene and me about our destination. The police were young men, one of whom was tall and blond, the other dark. The interrogation quickly changed into a pleasant conversation. They asked Irene and me if we would like to go out with them on a date. Since we were eager for a change of scenery,we agreed and they came to our barracks and took us out. We went to a very nice bar on Mt. Carmel where they bought us drinks and we danced. Then we returned. It was a pleasant experience.

We stayed at *Shar Aliyah* for a few weeks then my parents discovered that my mother's niece, the daugh-

ter of her oldest brother, Hershel, lived in a suburb of Tel Aviv with her husband and three children. They invited us to stay with them until we found a place of our own. After a few weeks my parents were able to rent an apartment on a street called *Yonah Hanavi* near Mugrabi, close to the center of Tel Aviv. We were ecstatic!

Tel Aviv was bursting with life, full of excitement. We called it a 'small Paris.' Our lives started to normalize. My sister got a job in a bookstore and I started working in a pharmacy, although I did not know how to speak Hebrew. Irene eventually went to *Ulpan* to learn Hebrew and later she was drafted into the Israeli army. After six weeks of boot camp she was assigned to the headquarters of General Yitzak Rabin, the future prime minister of Israel.

My mother was devastated when my sister entered the army. A woman in the army! My sister loved chocolate cake so my mother made her a cake. Her method of delivery was unorthodox: she stopped all military men she found in the streets of Tel Aviv and asked in Yiddish whether he was in the same camp with my sister. Eventually, she found one officer who was based at Irene's camp and he delivered the cake to her.

Irene in the Israeli army in the early 1950s

My father had a very hard time adjusting to life in Israel, largely because of his inability to make a living. Furs were not needed in Israel and there was no market for luxury goods. He got very depressed and decided to return to Germany. My Uncle Mano had also returned to Germany after the war as had a few of the surviving relatives of my mother. My father made contact with a man named Mr. Fisher, who helped him to re-establish himself in Germany. My father got a very nice apartment and settled down again.

Meantime, I decided to return to school at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. My knowledge of Hebrew was very limited, so Irene, who was fluent in the language, journeyed to Jerusalem and pretended to be me when speaking to the administration. I was accepted and shortly thereafter I started in the Department of Medical Science. At this time my mother and Irene went to visit my father in Germany.

The professors at Hebrew University were very kind and patient with their students who came from all over the world and spoke many different languages. Irene spoke Hebrew much better than me because she had been to *Ulpan* (a school for learning the Hebrew

language) and had a talent for languages. During my first exam in chemistry, I couldn't remember some Hebrew words so I used Polish words. Two days later Dr. Kaczalsky (who later changed his name to 'Kazir' and became President of Israel) called me in and informed me that I was very lucky he understood Polish.

During my first days in Jerusalem, I met two girls from Poland: Paula and Maryla, with whom I shared rooms and food. We lived, ate, and studied together until graduation. Sometimes, when we had only enough money to invest in either a meal or a movie, we chose the movie. Afterwards, we were hungry so we crashed weddings where we ate very well. No one ever asked us who we were.

Another friend in Jerusalem was Dov, who was a medical student. Of his entire family, he alone had survived the war and had come to Israel. While he was in medical school he lived in a hotel and worked there as a night watchman in exchange for his room. To sustain himself he delivered newspapers for pocket change at six in the morning. He was so skinny that his ears stuck out—the *sabras* called him "Dov with Big Ears." Later, he got a job in the medical school

itself. He lived not far from us and when we came from Tel Aviv with packages of food, we always called him and asked him to eat with us. Dov finished and became very successful.

My advisor was Professor Olitzki. He was from Germany and was head of the department. As part of the university studies, each student had to give a seminar on a certain subject. I knew the subjects, but I had a limited knowledge of Hebrew and English. Some people in my department helped me. They translated my work from English to Hebrew. One read it to me aloud and I wrote it phonetically in Latin letters. I wrote from left to right unlike in Hebrew, which goes from right to left. My advisor, Professor Olitzki, suspected something was not right because of the way I turned the pages and while I was talking he began to edge toward me. I closed my notes so he could not see them. After the seminar, Professor Olitzki called me to his office and asked me what was really going on and I admitted what I had done. I graduated from Hebrew University in 1957 with a master's degree in Medical Science with an emphasis on microbiology and biochemistry.

Pola with her diploma from Hebrew University.

Pola at her graduation ceremony from Hebrew University. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, is sitting in the far left corner.

Professor Olitzki went with me to my first job interview. Few people had cars in those days so we went by bus from Jerusalem to Tel Hashomer Hospital. The journey required two buses from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and then from Tel Aviv to Tel Hashomer Hospital where he introduced me as his student. I will never forget how he treated me. As a wedding present, he gave me a week off and assigned other people to continue my experiment.

One day in Tel Aviv I was sitting with my mother in the coffeehouse on Mugrabi Square when two young men came in. I knew one of them, Josef, from Poland and he waved to me from afar. Josef and his friend sat at another table with their coffees. Evidently, the other young man asked Josef to introduce him to me but both were too shy to stop at our table. They lived in Haifa and were mechanical engineers.

They wrote me a letter informing me that Josef would be in Tel Aviv next Saturday and he would like to meet me near the pharmacy where I used to work. However, their plan was that Josef would not come to the meeting, pleading sickness and instead the other man would come. What Josef didn't know was that I was living in Jerusalem where I was attending Hebrew Uni-

Sam in an Israeli commando unit.

Sam at work at the Vulcan plant. He is standing in front of a radial drill press.

Pola and Sam's wedding picture.

versity and the letter didn't reach me. The other man was Sam Arbiser, my future husband.

Sam kept the appointment as planned and nobody came. But he was persistent. Next week both of them came to my house in Tel Aviv. My mother was in Germany at this time and Irene and I were cleaning the apartment. We stopped cleaning, changed our clothes, and made some food. Sam, when offered a sandwich, refused because he was shy. However, after watching us eat for awhile, he asked if he could have one too.

Sam and I dated for one year. I wrote to my parents that I had met someone and wished to get married. Two days later my mother showed up in Tel Aviv in a bit of a panic. Sam and I were married in a small wedding at a rabbi's house with just my parents, Sam's brother, Nathan (who had survived the war with Sam in Siberia), Nathan's wife, Frieda, and Sam's aunt were in attendance. Sam's parents, sister, and brother and entire family had been murdered in the death camp of Treblinka outside Warsaw. To our sorrow, Frania, living in Poland, was unable to attend.

I had to finish my studies so I stayed in Jerusalem while Sam stayed in Haifa were he was the head of

the machine building department at Vulcan, the largest foundry in the Middle East. He also served in the reserves. Everyone in Israel, male and female, had to serve either in the regular or reserve army. We met on the weekends in Tel Aviv at my mother's apartment. This continued for two years. My friends, Paula and Maryla, also married at approximately the same time as did Sam and me and our husbands became good friends. We didn't have much money, but in the evenings we went out to dinner or to the movies. Once a week, each couple had the others over to their home for coffee and conversation.

My father helped Sam and I get and furnish a beautiful apartment near *Kikar Dizengof*, a square in Tel Aviv. My mother alternated between living with us in Israel and in Germany with my father. My mother and Sam had a very nice relationship. He always brought her chocolates and took her to coffee-houses. Once, when he went to Germany to visit my mother who was very sick, Sam asked me what she would like him to bring her. My mother wanted a watermelon, so Sam carried a watermelon on the airplane all the way from Tel Aviv to Frankfurt, Germany.

In 1956, my mother became ill. She had diabetes and had also never really recovered from the death of my brother, Ludwik. Irene wrote me a letter about my mother's condition. I immediately took a leave of absence from my work in the hospital after explaining why, and went to Frankfurt. When I arrived, my mother looked terrible. She was 58 years old but she looked like she was 80. I stayed with her in Frankfurt, hoping she would improve.

Sara Bienstock at age 57 or 58.

One day Irene and I took my mother for a checkup at the hospital at Heidelberg University, where Irene attended medical school. Irene brought my mother a book to read, *Bonjour Tristesse* by Francois Sagan. The next day, around six in the morning, I got a call from the hospital. I was told that my mother was unconscious. My father, my mother's sister, Tosia, and myself drove to Heidelberg. My mother had had a stroke and after a few hours she passed away.

According to the clinic's rules, you had to donate your body to the University for research, but this was against our Jewish beliefs. My father commandeered an ambulance and we smuggled my mother's body out of the hospital. With my deceased mother's body in the back we drove to Frankfurt. It was Friday morning and the funeral had to be the same day (before Sabbath) according to Jewish law. We called from Heidelberg and made arrangements ahead of time, so the *chevra kaddisha* (burial society) was waiting for us. We buried my mother in the Frankfurt cemetery on May 13, 1957.

Sam also visited my mother in Frankfurt during her illness, but he could not stay indefinitely as he had a job in Israel in the factory of Hamat, where he was a chief engineer. He had achieved the highest position possible in his field at an early age.

After my mother's death I returned to Israel. I thought my job as a bacteriologist at Tel Hashomer Hospital was secure because when I left for Germany to be with my mother my boss had promised me he would keep my job for me. Unfortunately, in the meantime, an American physician's wife had been given my job. I was very upset and immediately began

to look for another job. It wasn't easy as there were many educated people in Israel. Sometimes jobs didn't open up until someone retired or died.

After returning from Germany, I was very lonely and grieving the loss of my mother. With nothing to do, I just stayed in my room. I needed to be occupied as all my life I had either studied or worked.I was desperate to get a job. One day I applied at a research institute called the Professor Felix Institute in Abu Kabir, a suburb of Tel Aviv, that was headed by Dr. Ilan. During the interview, he said they had an opening but no money for a salary. I said I would start the next day and he could pay me when he could. He agreed. At the end of the month, I got my first paycheck and it was very generous.

My life in Israel had a very important influence on my self esteem. I regained my self assurance which I lost during the German occupation and by the antisemitic experiences during the war.

While we were in Israel, we were continuously in touch with Frania. We sent her packages and money so she wouldn't have to work. What we did was nothing special—she had risked her life for us. When I

wrote her that I was getting married, she wrote me a very unusual letter. She replied: "Your husband, doesn't know me, and he doesn't have the same feelings towards me, so he may object to you sending me money. If this is the case, please stop sending it. I don't want you to have any problems." But Sam never objected, in fact, he sometimes reminded me when it was time to do so.

Chapter 12
We Emigrate to the United States

We had been in Israel for ten years, but Sam was restless and wanted to see the world. I, on the other hand, loved Israel and my friends. When Sam was invited by a company in Chicago in the United States to work for them, I was very upset but agreed to go with him. We got our papers in six weeks because his profession had preference in the United States. We sold our beautiful furniture and gave up our wonderful apartment, which was the first place we had lived together. When the movers came to pick up the furniture, I locked myself in the bathroom and cried inconsolably.

Before leaving Israel we sold most of our possessions and transferred the money to my father in Frankfurt am Main. Sam and I left Israel by boat from Haifa. Sam's brother, Nathan, and his wife, Frieda, gave us a ride in their car to the port and waited until the boat departed. In Naples, we landed

with just a few dollars in our possession. My father wired us some money so we could pay the zero star hotel, the *Pensione Azura*.

Prior to getting the money from my father we went out to dinner. We sought out a restaurant off the tourist path. We checked out which streets had cobblestones and went down one of those. We found a little restaurant that was situated on both sides of the street. One side had the kitchen and the other was the dining room. They brought the food across the street. We had a five-course dinner for one dollar each. As we ate, a street peddler came by and tried to sell us some jewelry. The owner of the restaurant cautioned us with his finger in a "No, no!" gesture not to deal with him.

Finally, in December 1960, we took the liner *S.S. United States*, the finest ship in the world, from Bremerhaven, Germany to the United States. The weather was stormy and I was terribly seasick again as were most of the passengers on the boat. Only Sam was not sick—he sat alone in the restaurant having a good time. Fortunately, it took us only four days to cross the Atlantic. On the boat, we met several Jewish couples returning from Israel to the United

States and we tried to discover as much as possible about life in the United States.

We arrived in New York in December 1960. Sam had relatives in the United States—cousins on his father's side—and they came to meet us at the boat. Another cousin from Atlanta also came to New York to greet us at the pier.

We had to go through customs. We had in our possession a typewriter, on which we were not sure if we owed duty. The customs agent, who was heavily-built and blond, looked disagreeable. Sam wanted to avoid him but he could not. He looked over our passports and saw that we were coming from Israel. He became very friendly to us. He asked us if we knew his cousin in Tel Aviv, Mr. Rozensweig. He told us we had nothing to declare and waved us through.

We stayed with another cousin of Sam's who lived in New Jersey for a few days. Then Sam went to Chicago to settle down, find an apartment and buy a car. I was invited by my husband's cousin in Atlanta to come and stay with them for a few days. I arrived in Atlanta in December where it was still green and warm. The people were very polite and kind. As I

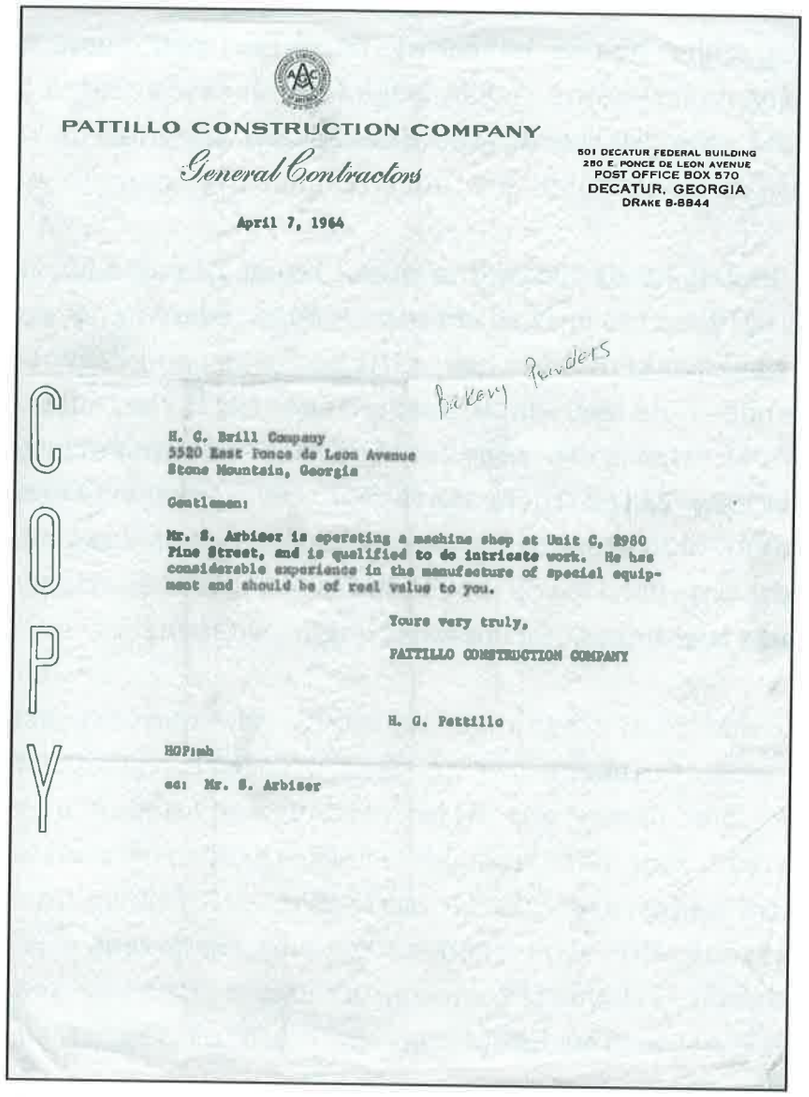
walked along the road, several people stopped their cars and asked me if I wanted a ride. A policeman even asked me as I walked whether I needed any help. I loved Atlanta immediately and the southern people stole my heart.

Meantime, Sam went to his new job in Chicago. It was very, very cold. Sam's English was extremely limited and he had trouble with the public transportation system. Luckily, some Polish women were on the same bus with him and they helped him determine when to get off the bus. The owner of the foundry where Sam had to work showed Sam around his impressive plant. They agreed that Sam would start work next week so that he had time to rent an apartment and buy a car.

We had friends who lived in Chicago. They had come to the United States a year or two ahead of us. I had gone to Hebrew University with the woman who, like me, was a microbiologist. Her husband had finished medical school in Jerusalem. In Chicago, they rented a small apartment and had a baby boy. The apartment was not very nice and it was necessary to climb many stairs to get to it. They had lived better in Israel where their apartment had been beautiful, sunny and large. What Sam saw now was very depressing. To make

matters worse, they told him that another friend, Marek, who was a chemical engineer had even worse living conditions. Sam began to worry about living conditions in the United States and whether he would be able to afford any decent housing.

Sam began to despair and questioned his wisdom about coming to the United States. One evening I called Sam and asked him how Chicago was and about our friends. He couldn't speak truthfully because they were in the same room with him. He answered they were like 'Alex in Frankfurt.' Alex was a perpetual student who lived in very poor circumstances. I said "Why don't you come and see Atlanta, it's very beautiful here." Sam was eager to come.



PATTILLO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

General Contractors

501 DECATUR FEDERAL BUILDING
280 E. PONCE DE LEON AVENUE
POST OFFICE BOX 570
DECATUR, GEORGIA
DRAKE 8-8844

April 7, 1964

Pickery Powders

H. C. Brill Company
5520 East Ponce de Leon Avenue
Stone Mountain, Georgia

Gentlemen:

Mr. S. Arbiser is operating a machine shop at Unit C, 2980 Pine Street, and is qualified to do intricate work. He has considerable experience in the manufacture of special equipment and should be of real value to you.

Yours very truly,

PATTILLO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

H. G. Pattillo

HGP:mh

cc: Mr. S. Arbiser

COPY

A copy of the letter Mr. Patillo sent out on behalf of Sam's fledgling machine-building business in 1964.

Chapter 13
Life in Atlanta

Sam liked Atlanta too. My cousin, Helen, drove him to the Chamber of Commerce where he explained his situation. They asked if the company in Chicago had paid for his coming here. Sam said "No, we paid it ourselves." Thus it was determined that Sam did not have any contract with them. They said he didn't have to work for them and arranged a meeting with the owner of a company that built textile machinery, Meadows Manufacturing Company in Atlanta. Sam talked to his employer in Chicago and he was released from his agreement. Sam went to work for Meadows Manufacturing Company. He was the second salaried man after the owner. They liked him very much. Because of Sam's limited knowledge of English and Mr. Meadow's basic knowledge of drawing, Sam had to create models made of play doh that his boss liked very much.

I also started to look for work. Originally, I applied to Lays Potato Chips for a position as a

chemist in their lab. When I arrived for the interview a man checked my credentials, which were probably better than his, and told me that they had a position open. However, the other employees were all men and he felt that a woman would create an unhealthy situation. I argued with him that I had come from a country where both men and women served in the army and I would not create any problems but it did no good. He also inferred that Sam would be jealous because they routinely scheduled meetings in the evenings. I told him, "If I wanted to have an affair I wouldn't have it here in your lab."

I wanted to work for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) but it is a federal agency and the first question on the application is "Are you a citizen of the United States?" I wasn't so I applied to Emory University since it is a private institution and had no such rules. I was interviewed by Dr. Tom Sellers whose specialty is infectious diseases. The interview was very simple because of language difficulties but he accepted me. However, I had to take a pay cut. At the CDC I would have made five times as much.

When I started to work at Emory University, Dr. Sellers gave me my own lab. I asked for one week to

get the lab in order. I cleaned it from the floor to the ceiling. Then I gave him a list of needed equipment, which I got and we started a project which was connected with infectious diseases at Grady Hospital. Dr. Sellers needed grants to support his project, so he wrote to Washington, D.C. and a commission came to see what we were doing. When the gentleman arrived, Dr. Seller's asked me, "Pola, please explain what we are doing." I tried very hard, but I was worried about the future of the project because my English was poor. After he left, Dr. Seller's told me that the man from Washington had liked both the project and my English!

As I said before, southern people were very warmhearted. We could not afford a car and one friend of ours, Ron Stephens, who worked at the same company as Sam, drove us both to work early each morning.

Dr. Seller's suggested that I read trashy paperback books to familiarize myself with English, but for which I would not have to check the dictionary all the time. I started reading a book called *The Apartment* and found that I understood most of it. Then I came upon a Russian name, which confused me because this was an American novel and had no Russian char-

acters. I asked many people about the unfamiliar word. Dr. Seller's finally asked me to show him the word in the book. The word was an American profanity, which I taken to be a Russian proper name. When I showed it to him he exploded into laughter. In your native language, you learn bad words as a child, but I didn't know them in English.

Elizabeth Bauer, who had fled Germany before Hitler came to power, helped me as well. She explained things to me in German whenever I got in a bind. She showed me where to shop and accepted me as a friend. Together we went to the Atlanta Municipal Mart and my colleagues often took me home with my packages. My later experiences with other people were not always as pleasant.

In the first weeks in Atlanta, Sam passed his driver's test and we bought a new Chevrolet Impala for $2,415 in cash. This was a very important event in our lives. I had had to learn about American money. At first I didn't know the difference between a nickel and a dime and we knew nothing about credit and credit cards. According to our background, if you didn't have money you didn't buy it. We were told that paying cash was not smart because we would

never get a credit history. This was not the only secret that we learned about American life.

Later, we discovered life insurance and social security. Three months after I started work, I was called into the office at Emory University and they advised me to buy life insurance. I was still young and inexperienced and asked them why I needed it. They explained that funerals in the United States were very expensive and if I loved my husband, I should buy life insurance. My answer was, "If I die now, let him pay." I did buy life insurance later.

We rented an apartment on Briarcliff Road, which was very convenient to Emory University. In the evenings we walked to Emory for English courses for foreign professionals. By that time, we had one car and Sam dropped me off one hour before starting time at my lab so he could get to work across town on time himself.

I worked for Dr. Sellers for over a year. I phage-typed staph infections in Grady Hospital. On the material I collected from the patients there was the notation "stump." I thought it was a last name and I wrote "Stump 1, Stump 2, Stump 3." I commented to

Dr. Seller's on how popular the name 'Stump' was in the United States. He laughed and explained that it meant the part of the limb left after amputation.

Atlanta was beautiful and my place of work was not far from downtown. I often went downtown by Davisons and watched the people pass by. It was a peculiar feeling because I felt like a stranger: I knew no one. After one year of working for Dr. Sellers, I applied for a Ph.D. program at Emory University. I was accepted with a full scholarship and they gave me $200 a month for books. My English was still not good and I made friends with medical students who were taking similar subjects. At this time, there were only two other females in the class. One of my professors, Dr. Brinkley, who was a professor of biochemistry, was quite a character. Sometimes in the evening instead of lecturing he would announce, "How about having a beer. I don't care to lecture now." Whenever that happened I called my husband and sister (who was visiting) and they came and we went and had a beer.

Once we had a test on which there was a question about methods. The question used the word 'enable' and I thought it meant 'unable' and I wrote the answer in that mode. My advisor, Dr. Tiger, called

me to his office and asked me "Do you know what 'enable' means?" "Yes," I answered, "It means unable." He said no, it means "able." This is how I learned the English language—it was an adventure.

While I was studying at Emory University, we decided to buy a house and we found one in the area. We didn't know what we were doing but as my mother said, "The Good Lord goes with stupid people." We found a wonderful house in an area with good schools in the vicinity of Emory University. We still live there today.

When I was pregnant with Jack, the wife of my pediatrician, Dr. Herbert Alperin, who was my husband's cousin, gave me a baby shower. I didn't know about baby showers until I came to America and was working at Emory University, where there were many showers. I got all dressed up and arrived at the shower. Everybody was wearing shorts, so next time I wore shorts and everybody was dressed formally. Someone explained to me that before you go you have to ask what kind of shower it is.

Jack, my son, was born in 1962. When Jack was one year old, Sam opened an engineering business of his

own, the Arbiser Machine Building Company. For years, Sam had dreamed of having his own business. While he was working for Meadows, from our savings we bought several machines from government auctions which we installed in our carport. Working in his free time, Sam got a few customers and saved a small amount of money. One day Sam came home and said, "I quit my job." We had $600 to keep us alive.

We rented a space from Patillo Construction Company. The space was small and there was a small office attached. Mr. Patillo brought us the lease and told Sam that since he was just starting, he would reduce the monthly payments for the first three months. I came to the office everyday with Jack. There was no furniture, so we sat on the floor on a blanket. The only thing in the office was a telephone. Nevertheless, it was a very exciting time for both of us.

It was hard for Sam because he had no connections in the United States in his field. He worked until noon and then put on a tie and became a salesman, visiting different companies to solicit business. A few days after we opened the business, Mr. Patillo came to visit and he asked Sam how he was doing. Sam

replied, "Not bad, but I could use more work—I need connections." The next day Mr. Patillo mailed us copies of a stack of letters that he had sent to his tenants and friends in the business world. Mr. Patillo owned many industrial sites. Sam visited the ones that had gotten Mr. Patillo's letter and got work. Mr. Patillo was a kind man and expected nothing in return. He was our 'incidental meeting' in Atlanta.

Mr. Patillo was the first person to invite Sam and myself to dinner. He treated us wonderfully. He invited Sam to meetings at the Chamber of Commerce, where he introduced him and explained what he did. He recommended him highly. He also invited Sam to meetings with people in high positions in Atlanta city government and Georgia state government, where he praised him professionally and personally. These contacts created additional work for our company. We remain in touch with Mr. Patillo until today. We have dinners together and know his beautiful family.

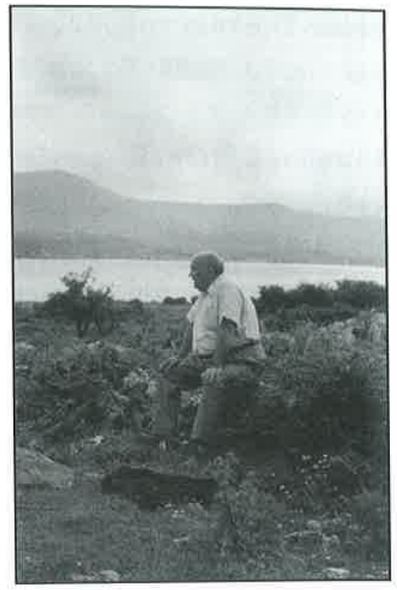
Whenever Sam needed advice he called Mr. Patillo and asked him. The business developed nicely and we decided to construct our own building but we had no experience in how to go about it. Mr. Patillo helped

us again. He offered to build it for us, without any papers at all—just on a handshake. Later, he helped us get a loan from the bank and he sold us the land.

Our daughter, Sherry, was born in 1964. I didn't know how to deal with the children. When Jack was a baby, he got the hiccups and I got very frightened. Dr. Alperin was very helpful. He always answered my naive questions without laughing at me.

By the time Sherry was born I had started working with Sam a little bit more, so I needed help at home. Maggie Reese, who had advertised in the paper, came to work for me. She worked for our family for over twenty years. She taught me many things about child rearing. She took extremely good care of my children. I am still in touch with Maggie today.

During this time, my father lived in Germany, but he frequently came to visit us in the United States. Eventually, he decided to move to the United States as well. He needed surgery, which he could receive here. My father loved fishing and he taught Sam this hobby. He stayed with us, but he was not very happy. He couldn't speak English to my children,



My father, Israel, fishing in Scotland.

Israel Bienstock with Sherry, Pola's daughter, during one of his visits to the United States.

read the newspaper, or watch television. In Europe he could walk to coffeehouses and meet his friends.

I was in school at Emory University at the time and every day I took him with me and left him by a lake in a park near the home of the President of Emory University. He fished all day and I came to see him for lunch. Most of the time he was alone, and he was not happy. He said "Take an old tree and transplant it, it will not catch." After awhile, he returned to Europe. While there he had a heart attack and passed away in Frankfurt. My husband and my sister went to Germany for the funeral and he is buried in Frankfurt next to my mother. I was very sad but felt I had to stay home with my children. When I was sitting *shivah* (mourning), Rabbi Feldman from Beth Jacob synagogue came to our house. We were new members of Beth Jacob, and I don't know how he found out about my father's death. I have always appreciated his *mitzvah*.

One time, Jack came home from kindergarten crying. He asked me, "How come all the children in my class have several grandparents, but I have only one?" My children never met any of their grandparents, except for my father. My mother had already passed

away before they were born and Sam's entire family with the exception of his brother, Nathan, had all perished in the Treblinka death camp. It was hard for me to explain to a five-year-old child why he was largely without grandparents. My father did come to visit us occasionally from Europe and he showed them the tatooed number from the camps on his arm. Sam and I are very grateful for our grandchildren. We thank God every day that our children live here in Atlanta because when we came here, we were often lonely, especially during the holidays.

When my children started elementary school, I studied the English language, American history, and geography with them, which helped me a great deal. I also volunteered at the school once a week. Both our children knew how to read and write when they started school. They also knew their multiplication tables because Sam played a game with them. While we ate dinner, we played a math game that involved multiplication. When we traveled we played games with them involving which state the cars on the road came from and this helped with their geography.

Once my son, Jack, came home from school (his fellow students called him "Brain") and announced that one

of his friends had gotten a demerit. I didn't know what that meant, so I said "Jack, you are a good student, why didn't you get one?" My son laughed and explained.

Once at home I got an obscene phone call. I didn't understand what the man was saying and asked him politely to repeat it. He did so but I still didn't understand. I asked him to repeat it again. He got mad at me and hung up! Later, my children told me what the man had been trying to tell me and collapsed laughing.

Sherry was a very artistic child and inherited many qualities from Sam. She always helped her father do things like repair the lawn mower while Jack hid behind a book. She was a very good tennis player, was captain of her tennis team in high school, and was a cheerleader.

Many people thought that because I had an accent or couldn't speak well that I was illiterate. One family on my street had a daughter the same age as Sherry. Sherry came home one night very upset: the parents of her friend had forbidden their child to play with her because they were afraid their child might pick up "bad language habits" from me.

My children, after finishing elementary school, went to a very good public high school. Most of the children who attended the school had parents who were associated with Emory University. They also had very good teachers, with whom we stayed in constant touch. We never missed a PTA meeting.

We were very pleased when Jack and Sherry decided to go to Emory University. Jack decided to take pre-med. Sam was not happy, because he wanted Jack to go to Georgia Tech and follow him in practicing engineering as had three generations before him. During summer vacations, Jack worked for his father who paid him double and tried to make the work pleasant, hoping he would change his mind. But it didn't work. Upon returning home from work with Sam, he read my chemistry books.

When Jack was ten, Sam took him to a customer for whom we were building equipment for a lab. As he passed one room, Jack glanced in the door and saw a man writing a formula on the board. He identified it as an alcohol. The amazed man called him in and asked him how he knew that. Jack explained and the man invited Jack to talk with him about chemistry. As a result, Jack left the company loaded with glass

flasks for his chemistry work. Jack wasn't interested in machinery building. Eventually, we accepted his decision and he began his pre-medical training. He loved chemistry and he finished his Bachelors and Masters degree in four years in chemistry at age twenty-one, *summa cum laude*.

Jack applied to several different medical schools. One day I received a notice that there was a registered letter waiting for him at the main post office in Decatur from the medical school in Augusta, Georgia. The next day, Jack was to go to Boston for an interview at Harvard University. It was just minutes before five in the evening when the post office closed for the day. Jack said he would feel so much better if he knew he had been accepted somewhere.

I was washing my hair, so I put a towel around my head and drove him to the post office in Decatur. The post office was already closed. Jack knocked on the door, and a man came and told him to come back tomorrow. So, I got out of the car, with the towel on my head and I said, "This is an emergency, open up!" I told him I needed the letter tonight. The man fetched the letter and when he looked at it he said "I understand why you wanted it." The letter

said that Jack had been accepted and Jack was pleased that when he went to interview at Harvard he was already accepted elsewhere.

Jack's interview at Harvard was conducted by two people: a psychologist and an academic. The academic interviewed him first about his scholarly achievements. His only question was, "Why do you have a 'B' in Badminton?" This was the only 'B' Jack had ever gotten. The psychologist asked him if he considered himself to be a modest person. Jack replied, "Whatever I will say will be against me, but my mother thinks that I am a nice guy." He was accepted to Harvard and he went to medical school there.

Sherry started at Emory University three years after Jack. She majored in psychology. She was a very sweet, very pretty child. We called her "goody goody." Sherry finished her first four years at Emory University and went on to study art where she got a degree in Interior Design. She is very successful.

Jack had hobbies that helped him in school: collecting coins and an interest in minerals. Also we got interested in this hobby and devoted many weekends

traveling to North Georgia and the Carolinas equipped with the proper tools for digging and panning. Sometimes we were successful finding gold dust or precious rocks. Jack's interest in minerals helped him in chemistry. Collecting coins helped him as well in his knowledge in geography and history: you had to know where the coin came from and the rulers at the time. Even today, as a married man with three children, Jack still collects rocks, minerals, and coins.

My children often came home with their friends and invited them to Jewish holidays at our home. Our children married six months apart. First, Sherry married Lee Bagel, a lawyer, and they have four beautiful children. Then Jack married a young lady, Zoya, whom he met in Boston. She attended Wellesley College. Jack called and said he was bringing a friend for the Passover. I asked who it was and he said it was a girl. Then I knew it was serious. We had been planning to go to our friends for Passover, but when I explained to them that Jack was bringing a girl home, we decided to hold it at our home. Zoya, his wife, is very nice young woman and is also a physician. Zoya was a student at Boston University Medical School and she did her

residency at Emory University Hospital. She practices here in Atlanta as a pathologist.

Jack graduated from Harvard University with both a MD and Ph.D. He joined the staff of the Dermatology Department at Emory University and conducts research in the field of cancer.

Frania with Pola and Sam during her visit to the United States.

Chapter 14
Frania Comes to the United States

We remained in constant touch with Frania after we came to the United States. When the children were in elementary school, we invited her to visit us. She was very happy to come, but she was afraid we would not recognize her. She visited Irene in New Jersey first and stayed there six weeks. Then she came here and we immediately recognized each other. I was overjoyed to see her after so many years. When she saw me she smiled and we kissed and hugged each other. We brought her home and she played with my children the same way she played with us: making cookies with Sherry and washing Jack's hair. The children adored her.

Our roles had reversed. I served Frania breakfast in bed and we had a terrific time. When the children went to summer camp, Frania went with us. After we left the children at camp, we gave Frania a little tour of the United States. I don't think she

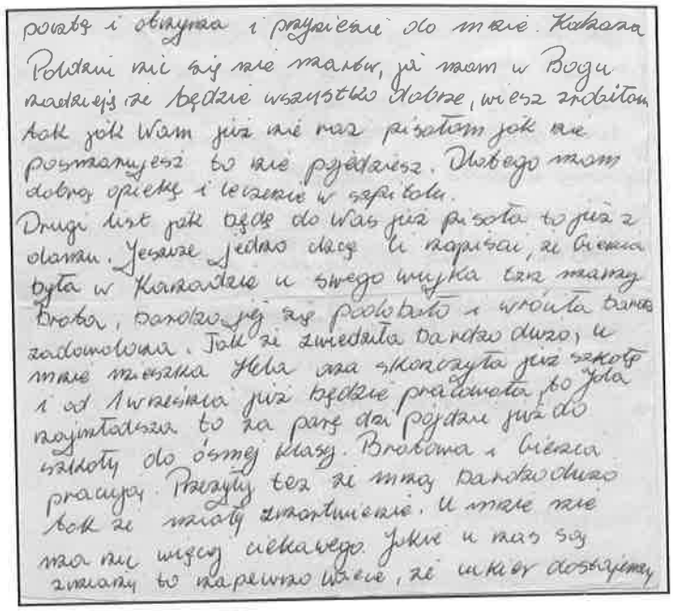
Pola and Frania in Atlanta.

told anyone in Poland that she had helped us and that she was visiting Jews in the United States. We asked her to stay in the United States with us but Frania declined because she couldn't speak English and we lived in the suburbs. In Poland, she lived in the city where she could walk to church every day and do her shopping and meet her friends. She didn't have to work because we willingly supported her.

Frania stayed with us for six weeks and then we took her to the airport. Before she left us, I gave her some money and we put it in her shoe. At the plane, they allowed me to go aboard with her and we sat together and cried. She told me that she would never see me again.

A year later Frania passed away. She became ill a few months after she returned with cancer of the

Frania's last letter to Pola. She dictated it to her niece, Genia. The letter relates that Frania is very ill.



powab i obsługa i przyjęcie do mnie. Kochana Poldani nie się nie martw, ja mam w Bogu nadzieję że będzie wszystko dobrze, wiesz zrobiłam tak jak Wam już nie raz pisałam jak nie pomagacie to nie pojadziesz. Dlatego mam dobrą opiekę i leczenie w szpitalu.
Drugi list jak będę do Was już pisała to już z domu. Jeszcze jedno chcę ci napisać, że Bronia była w Kanadzie u swego wujka teraz mamy drobne, dlatego jej się podobało i wróciła bardzo zadowolona. Jak się dowiedziała bardzo dużo o mnie mówiła Hela ma skończyła już szkołę i od 1 września już będzie pracowała bo Hela rozpoczęła to na pół dnia pojdzie już do szkoły do ósmej klasy. Bronka i Bieniu pracują. Piszą też że mają bardzo dużo bok że mieszkanie. U mnie nie ma nic więcej ciekawego jakie u nas są zwiazki to napewno wiesz, że wszyscy dostajemy na kartki obstajemy bony na które w sklepie można kupić 2 kg cukru na miesiąc na 1 osobę. Na tym będę kończyła teraz list. Serdeczne Was wszystkich pozdrawiam proszę uważaj na dzieci i siebie.
Serdeczne pozdrowienia od Bronki i dzieci. Proszę pisać na adres.

Genowefa Badecka
59-220 Legnica
ul. Złotoryjska 35/4
Frania

western union

Telegram

ICS IPMIIHA IISS
IISS FM WUI 16 1433 DUPLICATE OF TELEPHONE TELEGRAM
PMS DECATUR GA
UWB 4399 PWW283 134/C 340/LEGN
UWNX CO PLWX 012
LEGNICA 12 16 1500
POLA ARBISER
DECATUR GA 30033 -1036-VISTARIA cir. /USA
SDB KOWA FRANCISZKA ZMARLA 15 LUTY 1977 R
GIENIA
COL 1036 15 1977
NNN
NNNN

PA
16/DD/329P - MAIL

BF-1201 (R5-60)

The telegram sent by Genia to the Arbisers informing them that Frania had died on February 15, 1977.

Frania's funeral.

liver. We sent money for her hospital bills and medication. Her niece sent us a letter and a picture of her funeral. Frania is in our heart forever. We still correspond with and send pictures to her family and take care of her niece. A few months ago, my sister Irene went to Poland and met Frania's niece for the first time.

My younger sister, Irene, also came to the United States a few months after our arrival. She stayed for awhile with us in Atlanta and then decided to go to New York. There she met her future husband, Eugene Frisch. Eugene came from the city of Kolomya. Like Sam, he had survived the war in Russia. After liberation he returned to Poland to find that no one in his family had survived. He went to Italy where he attended university and got a Ph.D. in civil engineering. Then he came to New York. My sister and Eugene met and after a short courtship they were married and had two children.

Irene came to the United States after two years of medical school in Heidelberg, Germany. Soon after the birth of her children Irene was accepted at Columbia University, School of Library Science

Irene and Eugene Frisch's wedding picture.

where she got her Masters Degree. She became a medical librarian and had a long and successful career.

Meantime, her children finished school and went to college. Benjamin (Randy), her son, finished Wesleyan University and went to California to become a musician. Later, he finished his education at the Boston University Law School. He now owns and operates a music publishing company in New York City. Sharone, her daughter, studied at University of Pennsylvania and later attended George Washington University Law School. She divides her time between practicing law and being a wife to Paul Kornman and the mother of three children: Isabel, Jacob, and Joseph.

After my sister and her husband retired, they sold their house in Teaneck, New Jersey and moved to Fort Lee, New Jersey where they live in a high rise. Today, they are enjoying the success of their children.

While Irene lived in Teaneck she wrote many articles for a local newspapers which were nicely received. For *Mother's Day* she wrote an article called "Almost A Mother" about Frania for which she won a prize. Some of her articles were published in *Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul*.

ALMOST A MOTHER

Although my own mother has been dead for a long time, I remember her vividly, always with great love. Yet on this Mother's Day I am thinking about a woman who never had children of her own, a woman who touched my life with her strong and loving hand, a woman who risked her own life to save mine.

Our story began 65 years ago in our little city in Poland. My mother, a young housewife at the time, took her baby son for a walk in his stroller. Little did she know at the time that this would be the most important walk of her life. On her way to the park she was stopped by a teenaged peasant girl. "What a beautiful baby," the girl exclaimed. "Can I play with him?"

This was music to the ears of a young mother, who adored her chubby firstborn. "Surely," she responded. "And what is your name, and where are you from?" The girl was about 15 years old, blonde, with two long braids, smiling blue eyes, and a perky nose. She was barefoot, her only pair of

shoes tied together and hung over her shoulder (as shoes were to be saved and not worn.) In her hand she carried a colorful kerchief tied into a bundle, containing all of her possessions.

"My name is Frania," the girl replied. She had come to the city looking for a job in a household. While she spoke with my mother, she shook the rattle, made faces and cooed at the baby. It was obvious that she was quite smitten. My mother, who was generally not one to make hasty decisions, somehow made up her mind at that very instant.

"You have found a job right now," she said, and took the girl home with her. This was a time when hiring people was less complex than today. People trusted each other and small town life was easy, with no media to frighten anyone with reports of outrageous crimes. And so Frania became a member of our household.

Frania's father had died when she was five. Her mother, a poor farmer and widow, was left with

little land and many children. The children had all started working at an early age. Frania started her first job at age six, tending the geese of a wealthy farmer. Although her formal education ended at this point, she never ceased to learn. She was observant and gifted with both natural intelligence and a great deal of common sense. Although she was illiterate, she developed into a capable young woman who was well-equipped to deal with any situation she found herself in.

Frania was part of our household for 14 years, witnessing the arrival of my sister and then me. All that time she was extremely devoted to us and remained convinced that "our children" were the smartest and the most special. A devout Catholic, she instilled in us her faith and fear of G-d. In her own simple way, she taught us right and wrong. Her values were high and her code of ethics strong, supported by tales of her youth and by examples from village life. She gave us all the security in the world and would have easily won the approval of today's child psychologists.

During World War II she did not hesitate for one moment to save our lives, although it meant endangering her own, devising the most outlandish tactics in order to outsmart our persecutors. Many years later, already old, she was reluctant to accept our help, afraid that she might deprive us of something.

Today, dear Frania, I hope that you are in your much coveted and deserved paradise. I hope as you read this tribute, you are happily sharing it with your neighbors and saying "our children did it again," as proud of me now as you always were.

Irene Frisch

Chapter 15
Witness

Since my retirement, my life has changed—it is not as structured as it was before. Now that I have some free time on my hands, I decided to devote my time to volunteering at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. At the Museum I speak to groups of young adults who have come to tour the Holocaust Gallery and sometimes I talk at churches, synagogues, and schools. When I tell them about the survival of my mother, sister, and myself during the Holocaust, the hero of my account is Frania, the savior of my family. It is very important to me to tell as many people as I can what one person can do, even at the risk to her own life, to save other lives without any material reward.

As I get older and have more time to reminisce, I realize what a tremendous deed Frania did. She not only saved my mother, sister and myself, but generations to come. Thanks to her, we have children and

The dedication of the Arbiser Family Theater at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in 1999.

The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum
would be pleased to have you join us as we honor
Sam and Pola Bienstock Arbiser
upon the dedication of
The Arbiser Family Theater
and the presentation by
the Government of Israel on behalf of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem,
naming Franciszka Sobkowa, rescuer of the Bienstock family,
'among the righteous'

Sunday, July 11, 1999
3:00 p.m.
The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum
1440 Spring Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

Reception to follow

Hosted by
Zoya and Jack Arbiser 404-486-9411
Sherry and Lee Bagel 770-698-0366

grandchildren. No one can give more than risking their life to save others.

At the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum pictures of Frania and my family are featured in the Holocaust Gallery. The theater in which I speak carries the name of the Arbiser family. On exhibit near the door of the theater is a medal and certificate from Yad Vashem in Israel honoring Frania as a "Righteous Gentile" for risking her life and in the process saving generations to come. Yad Vashem is very strict about the criteria for a "righteous gentile." One of the conditions is that the rescuer must not have accepted money in exchange for their help. It took many years, but I finally received a medal and Certificate of Honor formally designating Frania as a "Righteous Gentile." She is also listed on the 'Plaque of Honor' and has a tree in the 'Garden of Righteous Gentiles' at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The medal and Certificate of Honor are on display where the visitors, including many children, can see and appreciate her selfless sacrifices.

IRENE'S VISIT TO POLAND

Visiting Drohobycz and realizing my second dream was not so easy. Several years ago, I traveled to Europe and stopped in Poland. I stood in line at the Russian Consulate's office, hoping to gain a visa to visit Drohobycz. When my efforts failed, I left, disappointed.

Last year, in 2000, Genia invited me to her daughter's wedding. How time flies! I still remembered Genia's father, Frania's brother, as a dashing young soldier in 1939. Without thinking, I quickly wrote to congratulate Genia and to accept her invitation. I had an ulterior motive: The wedding would take place in Poland, not far from Drohobycz. Since Drohobycz now belonged to the Ukraine and unrestricted travel was possible, I saw before me an opportunity to visit my hometown.

I was excited, but also scared to return to Drohobycz. I remembered the Gentiles' cruelty and witnessed their hateful actions toward the Jews. And so, I asked that Genia or her husband accompany

me on my visit to Drohobycz. Genia's next letter included detailed plans for the wedding, photographs of the young couple and both sets of parents, and her promise that she or her husband would take me to Drohobycz.

The next morning I stood in line at the Ukrainian Consulate's office hoping to obtain a visa. I was surrounded by an assortment of people: there were Poles, Russians, Ukrainians who wished to visit their families, and there were Chasidic Jews who wished to visit the graves of important rabbis. The clerk who asked me the reason for my visit to Drohobycz was puzzled by my answer. I could not provide the name of any person I wish to visit. When I explained I had sentimental reasons, he repeated my story to a co-worker. They both stared at me as if I were crazy. Nonetheless, they accepted my visa application and sent me home to wait for my papers.

My passport and visa arrived two weeks later. My husband, after years of insisting he had no wish to travel to Poland (he is also from Poland and also

survived the war under horrific circumstances), suddenly decided to join me on the trip. He planned to attend the wedding and then tour Warsaw. But, he would not travel to Drohobycz. He had lost a large family during the war and claimed that going back would break his heart. We made hotel reservations in Warsaw, purchased plane tickets, packed gifts for our hosts, and awaited our date of departure.

Our first stop was in Warsaw—Varsovia—the capital city of Poland. The last time I was in Warsaw was 1949, just before my family moved to Israel. The city had been bombed and destroyed. One could walk for miles without seeing an intact building. Now, we looked out upon a beautiful, rebuilt city. As we toured the city, I recalled the exciting stories my parents had told me after each visit to Warsaw before the war, and the many stories I had read about Jewish artists and writers from Warsaw.

One day, while my husband and I strolled through the city, we spotted a man selling small, hand-carved wooden figurines. He was the proud artist. Physically, he was ugly. He had a fat nose, rheumy

eyes, a crooked mouth, a hunchback, and legs and arms that appeared twisted by arthritis or some other illness. As we approached his stand, we saw that his collection consisted of ugly caricatures of Jewish characters: a shoemaker, a baker, a tailor, and so on, all displaying long hooked noses, oversized ears, and large out-stretched greedy hands. This was exactly how the Germans had depicted the Jews in their propaganda paper, *Der Sturmer*.

I purchased a figurine of an ugly Jew holding a bag on which was printed a dollar sign. I then asked the man: "Where can one see a Jew like this?" I then added: "Look at my husband, he is Jewish." My husband is blond, blue-eyed, and has handsome classic features. In fact, he is the 'Aryan' prototype. The artist, without blinking an eye, answered: "Some Jews gave their family pictures to my parents to hide during the war, and never returned to claim them. I have looked at the pictures and this is how I saw the people." I saw no point in arguing.

After Warsaw, we boarded a train to our next destination, the wedding in Legnica. Genia's husband,

Peter, greeted us at the train station and took us directly to the church. I immediately recognized Genia. Genia and Peter were an attractive, nice couple with two beautiful daughters. They gave us a royal reception, including us in the wedding preparations and inviting us to numerous events. The ceremony took place in an old, beautiful church not far from where I completed high school in 1949.

After the ceremony, a caravan of cars left for a small town in the mountains. We took over an entire hotel for two days. No expense was spared. Guests celebrated late into the night and awoke, the next morning, to the smell of pigs roasting, the sound of vodka flowing, and a sunny day. Music played non-stop for two days. Although Genia (and probably some others) knew of my connection to Frania and the circumstances of my survival during the war, that subject—in fact, the entire war—never came up during our entire visit.

After the wedding, I began making preparations for my visit to Drohobycz. Genia's husband, Pe-

ter, and I would travel first by train, then by bus. I traveled lightly, removing my jewelry and attempting to blend in with the local crowd. We arrived in Drohobycz the second day of our trip, at about noon. After checking in at our hotel, which was shabby and dirty, and freshening up, we hailed a taxi and headed for my childhood home.

The taxi stopped in front of a house, only it did not look like my family's home. This house was painted a dark shade; our little garden was gone, replaced by weeds; our red fence was missing; our beautiful entrance was replaced with an ugly, plain door. When I went around to the back of this building, I saw two more doors, one with a terrace. The doors and terrace were not part of my family's home. In short, this house was not recognizable to me.

An older man and a little boy, his grandson, came out of the house. I told them in Ukrainian, that I had lived in this house as a child and would like to enter. He informed me that he had purchased the house from the city and now lived there with his

family. He was polite and admitted Peter and me into the house.

I saw the house was now subdivided into three apartments. The beautiful grand entrance hall that my father had been so proud of was now gone. Each room appeared different than the rooms in my memory. I entered the room where my brother, Ludwik, had died more than sixty years before. I was bewildered at my detachment, at the fact that I felt nothing.

As I walked from room to room, I continued to feel nothing. I walked out of the house. The taxi was still standing in front of the house and a small group of people waited outside. It is not everyday that a taxi appears on Zupna Street. Peter was talking to the neighbors, probably telling them my story. For me it was like a dream. I do not believe that I was functioning properly.I inquired about old-time neighbors—there was no one. The Russians have a way of relocating people and all the inhabitants came from different parts of the Ukraine in the 1950s.

At one time, many years ago there was a large courtyard with several houses. It all belonged to my grandfather, who lived in one multi-family house and I was born there. There was once a large well-kept garden, now overflowing with weeds. The house where I was born and lived until I was about three years old was now delapidated.

It was already afternoon. I had not eaten for about twenty hours and Peter and I inquired about a place to eat. The driver took us to a restaurant two or three blocks away. It was once an apartment house of two or three stories and was quite large for a small town. My father had friends there and spent many afternoons in a beautiful garden playing cards in a gazebo. I used to accompany him. The place was very familiar to me. Now only one sidewall was standing although it still had balconies. I do not understand how the wall was supported or what had happened to the rest of the building. Now there was a long hall attached with a terrace and it housed a restaurant that was very unusual and primitive.

After lunch we toured the city. Although more than half a century had passed since I had left, I found that I still knew the city by heart. I am known for my proverbial luck of orientation. Here I found places where we used to live: my school, my father's store, and finally—without any hesitation—the building were Frania lived and where we had hidden.

I went there at night. We left at night as Frania did not want her neighbors to know she was saving Jews. Somehow guided by a supernatural force, I found the house. It was not centrally located. I looked at the window, where for a long time I stood behind a curtain looking outside envying the rabbits, cats, and dogs their freedom. One of Frania's neighbors, an old maid at the time had a habit of shaking out every part of her wardrobe, including her underwear and shoes. As we had nothing else to do we observed from behind the curtain the habits of the neighbors. Secretly, we gave the woman the nickname "The Shaker." As I stood in front of the house, a window—the same window—opened and a hand with a white rug appeared and shook it out.

After this we drove to the outskirts of the town to the small forest where the Germans executed and buried many Jews. The place is called Bronica. My cousin one year older than I, who had the same first and last name, was killed and buried here with her mother. She was a lovely child of about eleven or twelve years of age at the time of her death. Many of my friends and neighbors were buried there as well. I said a silent prayer for them.

About six years ago, survivors from my hometown made a pilgrimage there. They came from different parts of the world. Each of them had someone dear buried there and they put up a large monument. The mayor of the town gave a beautiful speech, a film was made, and I got a copy. Now the monument was desecrated, torn and filled with garbage. I was heartbroken. I did not want to linger anymore in Drohobycz. We hired another taxi and went back to Przemysl, at the Polish border.

* * * * *

During World War II, I witnessed and experienced many of the atrocities that came to be called the

"Holocaust": the murder of people dear to me, the cruelty of German soldiers, and the betrayal by good friends and neighbors. However, I also witnessed and experienced the kindness of a simple, uneducated woman who risked her life in order to save mine. Frania was a member of our household for fourteen years. She was devoted to us and was convinced that we—her substitute children—were the smartest and the most special. A devout Catholic, she instilled in us her faith and fear of G-d despite the fact that we did not share her precise faith. In her own simple way, she taught us right from wrong. Her values were high and her ethics strong, supported by tales of her youth, and more importantly, demonstrated by her selfless acts during the war.

The shelves of American libraries and bookstores are filled with book, movies, and articles about the Holocaust. There is no need for one more story of survival. Yet, the story of Frania—the simple, Catholic woman who saved our lives while risking her own—has not been written. Without this book, her story would surely be forgotten. Therefore, I

continue to admire Pola for the wisdom and fortitude she has shown during our pre-war years, our years in hiding, our years following the war, and her current persistence in telling Frania's story in this book.

Irene Frisch

Sam in Siberia during the war

SAM ARBISER'S STORY

"In your life, you may never see a real hero. But, you see that lady sitting there—she is a hero." These words were said by my cousin, Martin, to his 11-year-old son. He pointed to an ordinary woman of small build in her seventies with grey hair who was sitting on the sofa, speaking Polish with my wife. Her name was Frania Sobkowa. My wife, Pola, and her sister, Irene, are both here today because of Frania.

It took an immense amount of work to overcome the Communist Polish bureaucracy, but Irene and Pola were both determined to bring Frania to the United States. Frania flew to New York and spent the first six weeks of her visit to the United States with Irene and her family in Teaneck, New Jersey. Then she came to Atlanta to visit our family. Pola and I, in a high state of excitement, were waiting for her at the airport. Finally, after most of the people had gotten off the plane she appeared. After hugging, kissing, and many tears Pola introduced me to Frania. It was a great moment in my life.

But, in many ways, I felt that I already knew Frania from the multiple letters and pictures that had been sent back and forth between the United States and Poland for many years. The Bienstocks, as a family, were in continuous contact with Frania and together made it possible for Frania to have a very comfortable life in Poland.

Frania was overwhelmed by the United States. It was an entirely different world. Everything was open, available, with no long lines. There was the noise of traffic and, of course, the malls.

The summer of Frania's visit, our children, Jack and Sherry, were at the Blue Star summer camp in Hendersonville, North Carolina. When we went to pick them up we brought Frania with us. The children and Frania became instant friends.

In the evenings we sat with Frania and reminisced about the times—both good and bad—during their time in Poland and our miraculous survival. It was very hard for both Pola and Frania to separate again—this time probably forever.

I grew up in a middle-class family: my father, Jacob, was a Zionist; Pola, my beautiful mother; Nathan, a younger brother who also later fled Warsaw; Hela, my sister; and Israel, another brother. All perished in the Holocaust except Nathan and myself.

When I decided to escape from Warsaw in the weeks after Poland fell to the Germans, my mother, who did not look Jewish, bravely accompanied me to the border of Russian-occupied Poland. Many lost their lives attempting to do the same. The route from Warsaw to the River Bug which separated the German- and Russian-occupied parts of Poland was very dangerous. At any moment, a Pole could point and call a German SS man and say: "Look, a Jew!" What followed invariably finished tragically.

Sam's family about 1942: His mother (who was also named Pola) is on the left; his father, Jacob is on the right and his brother and sister, Israel and Hela, are in the middle. All were murdered at Treblinka death camp.

Sam's mother, Pola Arbiser, and his sister, Hela, in the Warsaw ghetto.

Sam's father, Jacob Arbiser, in 1918

My mother and I separated at the border. I was never to see her again. Before me was the River Bug which I had to cross. Because I had only a few *zlotys* in my pocket I could not afford to rent a boat from a local fisherman. However, I knew blacksmithing—a trade I learned at my grandfather's foundry during vacations—and I worked for two days for a fisherman who lived near the river. In exchange, one early morning he transferred me across the river to the Russian side with directions on how to reach the city of Brest.

I thanked him and was following his directions when two Russian cavalrymen captured me. They took me to the fortress in Brest from which, in the first of many miracles to come, I was able to sneak out. I ran to the railway station and boarded a train for Bialystok without a penny and no ticket. I made it by desperately avoiding the conductor for the entire journey.

Bialystok was overcrowded with Jewish refugees and there was no place to sleep, no food, and plenty of lice. I got a job repairing locomotives. Some days later my brother, Nathan, who had almost been shot by the Russians in his flight from Warsaw, arrived in Bialystok as well. I left Bialystok with my brother and other friends from Warsaw who had also arrived. We went to Krasnoyarsk in Siberia.

After four weeks in a cattle car we arrived in Siberia where bread and soap were hard to get. Nathan and I were lucky to be assigned to a machine shop. Machine building was and is our family tradition and has been the main source of income for several generations. In addition, the director of the local evening high school, Sophia Natanovna, visited our dormitory and

enrolled us in an evening high school which we attended after our workday was done.

I received a warm reception from my fellow students. Nadiezda, was the sister of the school's director. In a way, she was also a kind of Frania. She took me aside after we had been in school for several months and said: "I'm risking my life telling you this but you must stop talking about politics." We had been complaining bitterly about the lack of basic things. She told me that in every dormitory there were NKVD (the name of the Soviet espionage organization before it became the KGB) snitches. I told my brother and my best friend, Tadek. We all followed her advice. Two other men may have run afoul of these snitches in some way–one morning they were missing from our dormitory. We never found out what happened to them. I also met in Russia a pretty medical student whose name was Marinka. Her father was very nice to me, he sometimes gave me illegal ration coupons for bread. In another incident she also saved myself and my brother from the hands of of the NKVD. She now lives in the United States with her husband and family.

In early 1941, from the windows of our dormitory we saw Russian trains begin rolling from east to west day and night loaded with tanks and airplanes. It was obvious that there was going to be a war between Germany and Russia. Nathan and I were mobilized just one week before the outbreak of the war with Germany in June 1941. We were placed together into working units with the worst elements of Soviet society. While I was in the Russian *Stroy Bat* (Building Battalions), I loaded boulders into trucks from a

quarry near the River Tom. When they blasted the stone in the quarry, it was our job to retrieve those pieces of stone that had fallen into the river.

Then another miracle occurred. I was rescued from the murderous work of lifting rocks from the river by a Jewish "*nachalnik*" (boss) who assigned Nathan and me to manage the meager library. Was he a kind of Frania? Undoubtedly he did save both our lives but, unlike Frania, he didn't risk his own life. Working in the library enabled Nathan and me to continue our education and after four very hungry years we both got a masters degree in mechanical engineering.

When I said goodbye to the Director of the Institute, who was a devoted Communist, and shook his hand, he said to me in clear Hebrew: "*Beshana habaa b'Yerushalim*." ("Next year in Jerusalem.") I was pleasantly shocked.

In this way the years went by in Russia. One day I read in *Pravda* (a Russian newspaper) just one sentence: "The Americans have dropped an atomic bomb on Japan." Soon the war finished, after many celebrations my brother, his wife, and myself started thinking about returning to Poland and to our family. Luckily, the Soviets and new pro-communist government of Poland agreed that ex-Polish citizens could return to Poland.

The journey from Siberia back to Poland was very long and arduous. Finally, after five weeks of riding in cattle cars we arrived in the completely bombed-out city of Warsaw. When we returned to our family home on Mila Street we found that the entire area had been totally devastated. No build-

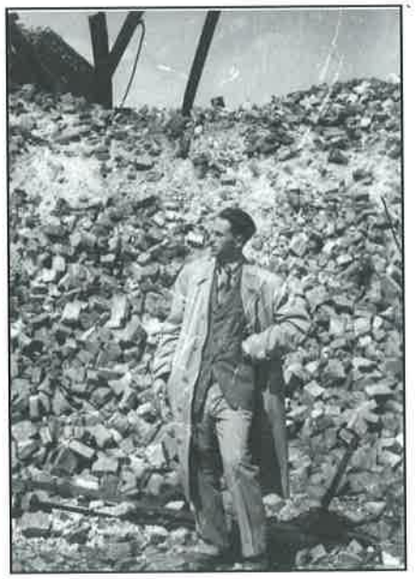
ings stood there. This was not surprising since it was on Mila Street that the Jewish resistance fighters of the ghetto made their stand during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. My parents, brother, and sister were gone. Later, a survivor told me he had seen them being loaded onto a train and that they had been taken to the Treblinka death camp where they were murdered.

The next four years in Poland under Communist rule were uneventful. Some of the events were pleasant, but mostly we spent our time trying to avoid the UB (Polish Secret Police) and our antisemitic Polish neighbors. I decided to leave Poland and immigrate to Israel.

In January 1950 Nathan and I landed in Haifa and were initially put into a DP camp along with the other new arrivals. As soon as I could, I took a bus to Vulcan, the largest foundry in Israel where I got a job and started over again from the beginning. I didn't even have the fare to get back to the camp from the foundry and had to borrow it from the director who interviewed and hired me.

In Haifa I had made few friends as I was mostly absorbed in my work, mechanical engineering. I climbed the ladder nicely and after three years I became the head of the machine building department in the largest machine building foundry in the Middle East.

As any young man in Israel I had to join the army. I was a member of a commando unit where they said: "You only make a mistake once in your life." Some time later I met a beautiful, smart, and intelligent girl. Her name was



Above: Sam in front of the ruins of his high school on Grzybowska Street in Warsaw (later in the Warsaw ghetto area) after the war.

Right: Sam in front of the ruins of his home on Mila Street in Warsaw (later in the Warsaw ghetto area) after the war.

Pola and one year later we married in a small ceremony attended by Pola's father and mother, my Aunt Frieda, my brother Nathan and his wife, and a few good friends. Since I still lived in Haifa because of my work and Pola was a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, we met once a week in Tel Aviv. Eventually I got a position closer to Tel Aviv.

From Pola I first learned about Frania, the woman who had saved her life during the war, and who was always in her thoughts. Both Pola and I and Frania wrote to each other continuously and we supported her and made it possible for Frania to live comfortably.

Then I got an offer from an American company to come to Chicago and work for them. I was ready to go but Pola was heartbroken, although she agreed to go. Nathan and his wife, Frieda, who were married in Siberia, took us to the ship and we departed for the United State via Europe.

We landed in New York in December 1959 and were picked up by relatives from my father's side of the family. I went to Chicago and Pola went to Atlanta with them. I eventually ended up in Atlanta as well where I landed a job in a machine building company.

Our children, now grown with families of their own, heard about Frania daily from the many stories told by Pola. For them, Frania's visit to Atlanta was very special. Years have passed since her visit and Frania has since died, but though Pola and myself reminisce about our parents very often—there is no day without Frania.

The Arbiser family:
Front row seated: Jordan Bagel, Pola Arbiser (holding Marlee Bagel), Ilan Arbiser (child), Adam (held by Zoya) and Ethan Arbiser (held by Jack)
Back row standing: Sherry Bagel, Sam Arbiser and Lee Bagel (Sherry's husband)

Above: Sherry Bagel, Sam and Pola Arbiser, Mr. and Mrs. Patillo, Jack and Zoya Arbiser

Above: Sam and Pola Arbiser, Nathan Arbiser (Sam's brother), Irene Frisch (sitting front), and Frieda Arbiser (Nathan's wife).

Pola Arbiser resides in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband, Sam, and two married children and grandchildren. Irene Frisch resides with her husband, Eugene, in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Their son, Benjamin (Randy) resides in New York and their daughter, Sharone, with her husband and children in Connecticut.

Pola speaks often at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Musuem to school children and adults about her experiences during the war and her family's savior, Franciszka Sobkowa.

In 1999, the Arbiser's endowed the Arbiser Family Theater at the Museum, which is dedicated to Frania, who has been honored as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. A medal and certificate in her name adorn the wall outside the theater.

The extended Arbiser and Frisch families are alive today because of the courage and selflessness of one simple Polish woman, who understood the true meaning of Christian charity and kindness. Their journey from hiding during the war, from Europe to Israel and then to the United States was made possible by one woman—who proved that one good person can change the world.

I would like to thank my husband, Sam, for his patience and support during the writing of this book. - Pola Arbiser

---

Jack Arbiser (Pola and Sam's son) and his family. Jack, Zoya, Adam (being held by Zoya), and Ethan Arbiser. Not shown is their newest child, Joseph, born in 2001.

JACK ARBISER
(Pola and Sam's son)

It is a common saying that acts of kindness create ripples, similar to that of a pebble thrown in the water. Similarly, the kindness of Franciszka Sobkowa has rippled throughout the generations. The generation of my mother, my generation, and the generation of our children wouldn't have existed without her.

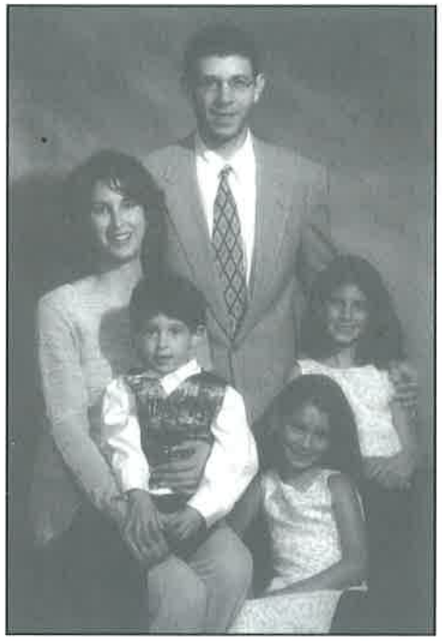
Our sages tell us that during the Passover *seder* (dinner), we should all consider that we personally were present at the Exodus from Egypt. This is an appropriate rule, because we owe our existence to an event beyond our control that occurred a generation before we were born. Similarly, our sages tell us that we must recount every year the story of our own redemption from Egypt. The goal of Egyptian slavery was to force us to lose our identity, while the goal of the Nazis was the physical extermination of the Jewish people. In both cases, we owe our redemption to Divine Intervention, not to our own strength and intelligence.

The story of my mother's upbringing has helped us put things in perspective. Whenever my sister or I had some problems in school and we complained, my mother would ask us two questions: (1) Are they shooting at you? (2) Are your classes being conducted in English? The answers to these questions was obvious and made us realize in retrospect that our problems are not so difficult. As long as you are healthy, virtually all problems have a solution. My mother's wartime experiences, along with her ten

years in Israel after the war, have helped instill a healthy self-confidence about her Jewish identity.

Her lifetime experiences have instilled the conviction that antisemites hate Jews not because of their behavior or actions, but because they exist. Again, this is a lesson described many centuries ago. When the Roman emperor Hadrian visited Jerusalem, a Jew saluted him. Hadrian said, "How dare a Jew salute me, off with his head." News of this action spread, and later that day, Hadrian passed in a parade, and a Jew did not salute him. Hadrian was angered and said, "How dare a Jew not salute me, off with his head." This lesson from Hadrian is also the lesson from Hitler. It is not Jewish behavior, whether it be assimilation or public religious observance that angers the antisemites, it is the fact that Jews exist, which provokes the antisemite. Thus concession or 'blame the victim' behavior will not yield any benefit.

From my mother's story, we have also learned that it is impossible to predict who will be your friend in times of trouble. Humans possess an endless capacity to rationalize their behaviors. Entire nations absolved themselves of responsibility during the Holocaust, citing that it was an internal German problem, or that the Jews brought the Holocaust on themselves. The actions of Franciszka Sobkowa, a decent individual who was able to save an entire family, surpassed the humanitarian actions of many nations during World War II. The purpose of this book is to illustrate the power of a single individual to bring good to the world.



Sherry and Lee Bagel and their children, Ilan (being held), Marlee (seated front), Jordan, standing. Not shown is Zoe who was born in 2000.

SHERRY BAGEL
(Pola and Sam's daughter)

Throughout my early childhood, I have heard stories about my mother's survival during the war and the key figure responsible for her survival, Frania.

I was not fortunate enough to meet my grandmothers. My father's entire family perished in the Warsaw ghetto and my maternal grandmother passed away after the war at an early age. Her name was Sara and I was named after both of my grandmothers, Sara and Yeffiay—which when translated means Sherry June.

The only grandparent that I was lucky enough to meet was my grandfather. He survived many concentration camps, including Auschwitz. He had a number on his arm. We had a special relationship and he passed away when I was ten.

When Frania came to visit, I was very young. I could not imagine that my mother would recognize her. My mother assured me that she would always

remember Frania's face. When they saw each other at the airport, I remember seeing tears and hugs between these two women. We shared some special moments during her visit, similar to those I imagine a granddaughter would have with a grandmother, among them cooking *pierogies* and other treats.

I felt that I knew Frania very well despite her short visit. She had been the subject of so many of my mother's childhood stories. Frania's visit was unforgettable. We are all here because of her. As a result of her kindness, two more generations of our family have continued. My young daughter was named in honor of Frania. I hope she will share some of the same qualities of her namesake, Frania.

The Frisch family: Eugene and Irene and their grandchildren (left to right): Isabel, Joseph, and Jacob.

EUGENE FRISCH
(Irene's husband)

I lost my entire family, including my younger brother, who was only 15, to the Holocaust. I miraculously survived by escaping to Russia, where I was drafted into a labor battalion and forced to dig trenches against advancing German tanks at Stalingrad. Being young and healthy, I survived the severe winters and starvation and returned to Poland after the war in 1945. Soon thereafter, I left illegally for Italy and settled in a displaced persons camp. I landed a job and resumed my studies in engineering, which I had begun in 1940 in Poland before the war. I graduated in 1951 with a doctorate in civil engineering and soon after emigrated to the United States, where I landed a job in New York City.

Irene arrived in America in 1960 and we met in New York in July, 1961. The heavens moved quickly to tie our destinies together. We shared similar backgrounds. We both grew up in southeastern Poland, spoke the same language, shared similar family customs, and had mutual feelings and outlooks as Holocaust survivors. We were married less than three months later on September 17, 1961.

Even before Frania came to visit us in New Jersey around 1974, I had heard so much about her from Irene that I felt I had known her for a long time. Frania's arrival in New York was very emotional, full of warm embraces and joyful tears. I was pleased that she approved of me as the "suitable" husband, perhaps destined by Providence to be the husband for Irene.

Irene.

To confirm the culinary legends circulating in our family, and to emphasize the approval of Irene's choice, Frania immediately suggested that she make *pierogi* the way we used to have in our youth.

A few days later, when Frania recovered from her jet lag and from the initial shock of arriving in America, we took her to Manhattan, where she was ovewhelmed by the high-rise buildings, the crowded sidewalks of Fifth Avenue, and the endless automobile traffic. Her impression of St. Patrick's Cathedral was that it was immense–both as to the size of the building and its many religious displays.

After Frania left our home to stay with Pola in Atlanta, we missed her very much. We remained in touch with her until her death, and have continued to correspond with her niece, Genia, in Legnica, Poland. In September 2000, we attended the wedding of Genia's daughter. Irene visited Frania's grave with flowers in her hand and love in her heart.

To this very day, the timeless proverbs that were part of the daily conversation in Frania's original village, and later in her life in Drohobycz and Legnica, have become an occasion for humorous, but practical, explanations and solutions to some of our daily dilemmas. Never place keys on the kitchen table. Never lay new purchases on a bed. When things are misplaced, turn over a drinking glass. Never go back if you forget to take something with you. We routinely apply these maxims. I must admit that even though I do not believe in them, I uphold them out of sentiment.

We never forget Frania for what she was and what heroic things she did to save the lives of Pola, Irene, and their mother. Whenever we are asked how we survived the Holocaust, the answer quickly turns to Frania's tiny apartment in Drohobycz, and Frania is wholeheartedly ascribed the title "Saint."

Irene Frisch with her daughter, Sharone (seated middle back), Sharone's husband, Paul Kornman and their daughter, Isabel.

Irene and Eugene Frisch and their son, (Benjamin) Randy (on the left)

BENJAMIN (RANDY) FRISCH
(Irene and Eugene's son)

Frania is a constant reminder to me of the 'righteous gentiles.' My mother always told us about Frania, even when we were little children. Years later, I am still awed by her bravery. She visited us in the United States when my sister and I were teenagers. She did not speak English, so we could not communicate. Yet she clearly loved my sister and me. Frania will always be remembered in our family. Growing up, I heard many stories about Frania helping our family survive. I am grateful that the whole story is now recorded in this book.

SHARONE KORNMAN
(Irene and Eugene's daughter)

A friend will sometimes ask if I can watch her child for a few hours. I think, "My house will be extra messy, our children may quarrel, I will have to stay home, and I may even have to prepare and extra meal." I usually say "yes" if it is convenient for me, if my children want this child to visit, or if the visit will be relatively short. But what if I had no children, or had just enough food for myself, of if the visit would last for several years?

When people ask how my mother survived the Holocaust, I tell them: "My mother, her sister, and their mother were hidden by the family nanny in a small, one-room apartment." It is a simple answer to give, but a difficult concept to accept.

We all know the story of the evils of the Holocaust, of the many people who helped to kill millions of innocents or who simply looked the other way while friends and neighbors were slaughtered. But there is another story about the Holocaust, the story of a few courageous people who risked everything to save those who were marked for death. I am proud to tell people the story of Frania, the noble woman who saved my mother and her family. I am proud that my aunt has chosen to publish this story.

APPENDIX

POLA'S POEMS

(translated into English)

POLA'S POEMS
WRITTEN WHILE SHE WAS IN HIDING

04 July 1943

STRENGTH MORNING EDITION

Fields of rye rustled
Through the whole world
Carried on their wings
The precious flower of a song.
Do float, song, through the fields
Carry on your wings
Alleviation for the reapers
Across the whole village.
And when the dusk envelops the field
And the night comes on,
You-on your wings-carry,
Song, a multitude of glorious sounds.

THOUGHTS ABOUT FREEDOM

05 July 1943

Oh my freedom, you longed-for one,
Let me come out to this God's world
With my eyes and soul, which are so thirsty,
Asking to finally look out from behind bars.
So that I could come out and take in deeply
The sun and the fields and this whole world
And with my eyes wide open look around
This world blooming like a mythical flower.
Alas, these are only my dreams,
Dreamed out in my distress and bondage
Which bring together various memories
And will ignite when the end of my misery comes.
"Sylwester Ostrozny"

"Sylwester Ostrozny"
25 June 1943

RAIN

Silent street, veiled with mist of rain
One hears only monotonous tapping of the rain drops on the windowpanes,
Such silence as if before a storm
And the whole world is bored with these rains.
Now and then wind moans softly
As if it were giving up the world
And then silence again or great silence
And again wind and rain go hand-in-hand like brother with brother.

06 July 1943

NIGHT

Night full of charm flowed down over the earth
Starry and beautiful and intoxicating
Having some strange power within
Lifting various memories on its wings.
It flowed down so softly with velvety steps
Wrapping black fog around the whole God's world
And flowing still farther along the blue trail
Putting to sleep trees and each and every flower.
It is flowing so softly, holding everyone in its memory,
Listening to the gentle whispers of the brooks.
Then again it is allured by the song of
Chorus of nightingales singing in the grove.
It is standing and looking, all ears,
Before it turns around, the day is already creeping
And with teary eye night looks longingly
At its crumbling masterpiece.
"Sylwester Ostrozny"

Summer

06 July 1943

Summer came with big steps
Already one can see the results of its reign
Gaiety spreads all over the world
By now one can see summer's great efforts.
Here trees already in full blossom
Display their beauty all around
And in the meadows and fields from the early morning
Farmer has got lots of work.
Everywhere far and wide
You see the whole world at work.
Despite that, everyone is joyful,
Everyone has a smile on his face
In the evening when the working day is done
And the work has stopped all around,
One hears only the glorious and sweet songs of nightingales
And some sort of joy is left in the heart.
And summer keeps spreading its loveliness
And it expands in every-widening circles
In order to give away its entire beauty.
"Sylwester Ostrozny"

"Sylwester Ostrozny"
06 May 1941

SPRING

Spring! Little spring! Oh, our darling, you
Who make the whole world come to life
In the sunshine your beauty has ripened
Your beautiful golden like a precious flower.
    You beautiful queen who at the break of dawn
    Lavish generous gifts on everyone
    Who envelop the whole world in your brilliance
    Casting spells of your charms on everyone.
One can see you already everywhere, everywhere you are complete
You covered the whole world with a green carpet
In your honor the whole world is singing a loud morning song
And everything hastens after your chariot
    To relish in the beauty of your charms
    To enjoy beloved spring
    Who adorned our earth with greenery
    And ordered the birds to use a charming song.
To wake up to life the entire world
So that the earth would blossom with marvelous beauty
So that everyone walk with a song in their mouth
There is nothing more beautiful than our spring!!

Pola and Irene Bienstock, hidden children of the Holocaust, miraculously survived a series of events during World War II, any one of which might have ended with their death.

This story is devoted to their savior, Franciszka Sobkowa, a Righteous Gentile, who risked her own life for close to three years to save Sara Bienstock and her two daughters, Pola and Irene.

The German occupation of their town of Drohobycz, Poland in 1941 initiated the planned annihilation of all of the Jews of Drohobycz. Frania hid the family not only from the Nazis, but also from the local Ukranian-Polish population who in part helped in the murder of Jews.

This is the story of a woman who loved a Jewish family as if it were her own. Today, Pola Bienstock Arbiser and Irene Bienstock Frisch, as well as their entire extended family are alive because of the actions of one Christian woman. It is a story of the triumph of good over evil.

Franciszka Sobkowa

Scroll

Medal of Honor

ISBN 0-9724971-0-2