

Meer Kuyavskis And His Family



This is I at my twin brother Benjamin's place in Canada. To the left is my brother Moishe Kuyavskis. My brother Benjamin is behind him as well as the neighbor and Moishe's wife Sonya. To the right is my son Alyukas, who went to Canada with me. I am sitting in the 1st row. I have a yellow shirt on. To the right is my cousin Elya, sister of father's sister Chava with her husband, American Jew (do not remember his name). The picture was made in Montreal in 1995.

In 1947 I started working in the atelier as a tailor. I was pretty good money there. My skills got better and better and soon I became a good cutter of men's and ladies' garment. I had my own clients and had a rather comfortable living. I rented an apartment from one Jewish lady. It was not far from my work. In couple of years I went to work to the factory, where I was promoted to the foreman.

My life was good. Our family was very friendly. Elder daughter Aldona had also treated me like father and I loved her as my own daughter. I work hard at the factory and also took private orders at home. I provided a good living for my family.

In 1993 my wife Stepha died. I retired in 1993 as my Stepha became bed-ridden. I had to quit work when she became disabled. I had to look after her. She passed away that year. I have lived with my daughter since then. Unfortunately, Aldona's husband died of infarction. His daughter Yustina, has her own children. They are living in Kaunas, but we see each other very rarely as everybody has his own life.

My wife's death and my loneliness happened to take place in the period of state changes- Lithuanian independence. Finally, I got the chance to visit my brothers. I visited my elder brother Isaac in Israel. We have not seen each other for fifty years. In 1998 Isaac died and it was the last time I saw him. His daughter Chava is living in Israel and keeps in touch with my sons. I also went to my native city Lodz, walked along the streets, where ghetto was located. At first, I could not even recognize that place. My house was not preserved. There was a modern building in its place. Big stone synagogue is not longer there either. As it turned out, fascists put all remaining Jews

from ghetto and burnt it. People burnt down quickly, and the stone building of the synagogue was destroyed by artillery. It was hard to walk along the streets from childhood, where the blood of my kin was shed. It was the last time I was in Lodz. I did not go to Auschwitz for the same reason, though the society of ghetto prisoners invited me there on a number of occasions.

My biggest joy was when I met Benjamin. My son and I visited him in Montreal in 1995. Life parted us, but there are times when the twins can feel each other at the distance. Brother and I thought that we had never been severed, though our lives differed a lot. Benjamin became rather rich. He was in fur business. In the 1960s he had his own fur production and a network of fur stores. Now Benjamin lives on the interest from the capital that he earned. He can do what he wants. He gives free lectures on holocaust in the university. He opened up the exhibition of photographs on catastrophe. He cannot go to his motherland, Lodz, Auschwitz as neither I nor him can imagine walking on the streets that imbibed Jewish blood.