

Remember Vishki

Bruce Dumes



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Online at
<https://remembervishki.net>

To D, and "the team": Marina and Lena



Julya and Bruce in Daugavpils. 2009

Cover photo: Market day in Višķi, Daugavpils District. 7 July 1927. Photographer Vitolds Krustāns. Neg. No. 7077. The original is in the holdings of the National History Museum of Latvia. Used with permission.

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PROLOGUE

The book is meant to be several stories, some of which happen in parallel. It is the story of a place: Vishki, a small village in Latvia and the birth place of three people who will be important in my story.

William J. Dumes, my grandfather, was born in Vishki in 1902, and immigrated to America in 1912. His father Chaim died in 1904 and is buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Vishki, Latvia.

Tanya Dumesh was born in Vishki in 1919. During the war, she lived in the Ural Mountains in Russia and returned to Vishki in 1948 with her daughters Raisa and Julya.

Leiser Dumesh was born in Vishki in 1930. During the war, he lived in Russia. After the war, his family returned to Latvia, but they lived in Riga.

Vishki is the nexus. It's not just a place on the map; Vishki is like a genetic *haplogroup* that ties these three lives together, and binds together all the descendants of Vishki.

From my perspective, the story is an arc from me to cousin Julya.

— Bruce Dumes 2024



Vishki is just above and to the left of "Dvinsk or Dunaburg" map from 1897

1. WILLIAM J. DUMES



Grandpa showing his two eyes to the camera.

I used to ask my grandfather about his life when he was a boy: "Where did you live?"

"Vishki. You can remember Vishki. It rhymes with Whisky."

He slurred whisky intentionally as *whishky*, like a drunk person might say it, as a joke. As if some overly gassed barfly was saying, "One more whishky, if you please, bartender!" as he passes out, head crashing on the bar.

It also rhymes much better as *whishky*, which makes the joke funnier. We both laughed, but I don't think I fully understood at the time why he thought it was so funny. It makes me laugh when I think of it now.

I didn't really know where Vishki was. He always said he was from Russia. Russia is a very big place. It could be anywhere. It was decades before I knew that Vishki is a real place in Latvia.

Once he showed me a stark, almost scary photo of a grave. It was sent before the war, he said, to show that they were taking care of the graves. I'm not sure if I understood at that time that it was a photo of his father's grave.

Grandpa was not quite three when his father Chaim died, and consequently had no memory of him. No doubt, the lack of a father encouraged him to be a bit wild. "He was mischievous!" Grandma said of him.

He often got into trouble. He spoke about how his older brother Arthur beat him up after he nearly drowned in a lake where the children were told not to swim. Grandpa said, "I don't understand why he beat me up. He should have been so glad that I was alive!"

There was a story about him fighting with another boy. They were throwing dirt or rocks at each other, and Grandpa lost an eye. His older sister Fannie would regularly accompany him to Dvinsk (now Daugavpils) in order to be fitted with a glass eye.

They probably took the train. It's about 25km from Vishki to Daugavpils on the A13 road today. The Vishki station was opened on November 1860 together with the Ostrov-Dunaburg (the German name for Daugavpils) section of the Petersburg-Warsaw railway.

The photo at the beginning of this chapter was taken, I was told, to show the authorities that he had two eyes before he would be allowed to emigrate from Latvia to America, where most of Grandpa's older siblings were already living.



The old train station in Vishki.

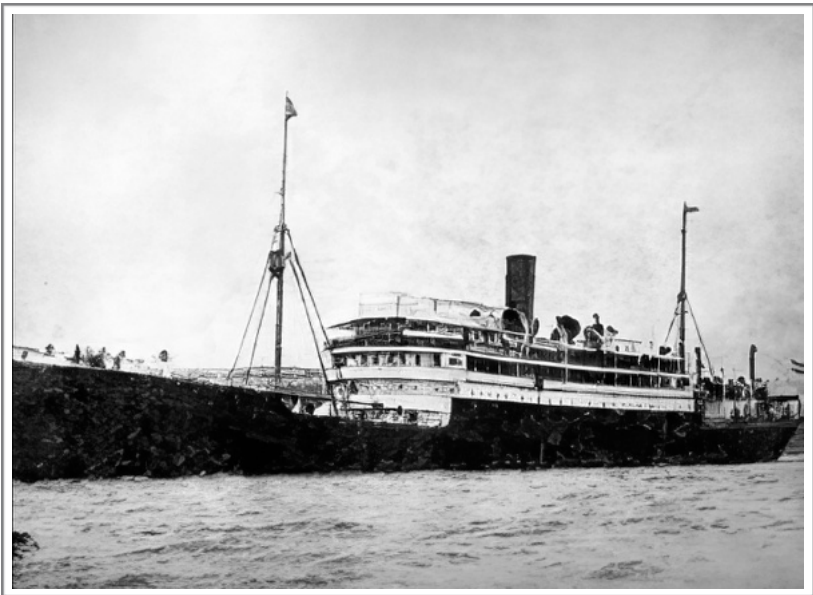
Almost 50 years ago, my cousin Ruth recorded an interview with my grandmother, Grandpa's wife Freda. Ruth's mother was Grandpa's sister Fannie, the one who had taken him to the eye doctor in Dvinsk. Therefore, my grandfather was her Uncle Bill and my grandmother was her Aunt Freda.

Grandma told Ruth some stories about how my grandfather came to America, and some of his misadventures onboard:

Somebody threw him a banana. He looked at it, but he didn't know what it was. So he threw it overboard. Another story was

that he saw a beautiful red thing that he thought was an apple. He bit it, and it was a tomato. The juice went all over his face. When they got to Ellis Island [sic], he had to go to the bathroom. When he flushed the toilet, he thought he'd done something wrong. He sat in there, looking at the door to see if the ocean was coming in.

Clearly, this was my grandfather's first experience with a flush toilet!



The Prinz Adalbert

Grandma was incorrect about Ellis Island, however. Grandpa, his brother Arthur, sister Anna, and mother Sadie actually arrived at the Port of Philadelphia in 1912, sailing on the *Prinz Adalbert*.



Dumes Junk & Hide Co. Vincennes, Indiana 1928

Grandpa, like many Jewish immigrants, went into the scrap business. There's an old joke, perhaps in questionable taste, that goes:

Q: Why are there so many Jews in the scrap business?

A: Because they let us.

My grandfather, William J. Dumes, founded the *Dumes Junk and Hide Co.*, now *Dumes, Inc.*, in 1926 in Vincennes, Indiana. Today, Dumes, Inc. is owned and operated by my brother Harold.



Stanley Dumes. Late 1930s.

Grandpa was always fascinated by new technologies. He loved home movies, and started taking 8mm movies in the 1930s, switching over to 16mm in the early 1950s.

Cameras in the early days didn't have *through the lens* viewing. The viewfinder on Grandpa's 8mm camera was a little metal rectangle that would flip up from the camera body. It was not really a precision instrument. So early on, a lot of people lost their heads in Grandpa's movies.

By the time he was doing the 16mm movies, he had a very decent *Bolex* camera, and his cinematography skills had improved immensely. It was, at long last, completely safe to put your head in front of his camera. He had a beautiful light

meter; I can still remember the smell of the leather case. He wore it around his neck, like a real cinematographer.

As a result, we have Dumes family movies going back to the 1930s. They include each branch of the family; the branches being my grandfather's siblings.

Grandpa loved flying and he owned a plane. In his obituary, it says:

He took an early interest in aviation, and became a pilot, flying private aircraft from O'Neil Field soon after it was built.



Grandpa's 8mm camera with the view finder

My father Stan loved to fly as well, and learned to fly when he was very young. "It's always a beautiful day above the clouds", he often observed.

I was a child of the Space Age and loved NASA. I wanted to be an astronaut. For school, I once had to write an autobiography. I titled it *From Little Tot to Astronaut*. For the

cover, I cut my face out from a school photo and pasted it over Buzz Aldrin's in an Apollo 11 crew picture.

I would jabber at length to Grandpa about the Saturn V booster, with its 1.5 million pounds of thrust, and so on. He would have been an engineer if he had the chance. I think he really enjoyed it when I got all astro-geeky.

Grandpa gave me a telescope as a bar mitzvah present. I remember once getting into an argument with him regarding the discovery of Pluto. He said, "Well, let's look it up!" He was 100% correct about every fact. I still love telescopes; astrophotography is tremendous fun.



NGC 7380 The Wizard Nebula. Bruce Dumes 2024

He introduced me to Hebrew, and taught me how to bowl. He was a great bowler; he would throw the ball so that it looked

like it was going straight into the gutter. But at the very last minute, with the ball only centimeters from the gutter, it would start to spin. Slowly at first, then faster and faster until it was a hurricane, crashing into the pins, just at the sweet spot.



Grandpa's 16mm projector

Alas, I never got very good at Hebrew or bowling.

Grandpa was very competitive. He would sometimes tease me by saying that I owed him money for the games that I lost. Which was all of them. I was never 100% sure if he was kidding or not.

He trained me to use his beloved movie projectors and film editing equipment. I became the projectionist whenever we had movie

time over at his house, which was a tradition at family gatherings. Aunt Mildred would narrate the films, identifying events, years, people, and places. Dad would often be sleeping on the floor before the movie was through.

For a while, I made a weekly bike trip to Grandpa's shop. He closed the shop at noon on Saturdays. We would go across the street for lunch at The White Kitchen. He was a *rib-eye*

steak with dry toast man. After lunch, bike in the trunk, we sallied forth to The Creole Lanes.

Post bowling, we usually went back to his house, where I would stay the afternoon. He regularly had some projects for me to do. There was often work to do with his movies: splicing, repairing, etc.

Once he asked me to make a label using one of those handheld machines that you squeeze to make labels. He didn't tell me it was for his hard hat, he just asked me to make a label with his name on it, so I typed out "GRANDPA". He laughed when he saw it. I realized my error and asked him if I could do it again. He said, "No" and put the "GRANDPA" label on his hard hat. I remember hearing him laugh when someone saw it and called out, "Hello Grandpa!"



Because he told me that he came from Russia, I used to ask him to teach me some Russian. I thought he was just being stubborn when he told me, "I don't know any Russian."

He never said, "We spoke Yiddish when I was a kid"; I guess he assumed that I understood that.

At that point, I thought Yiddish was just expressions like *meshuga*, *schmooze*, and *chutzpah* sprinkled into conversation, because that's all I heard. I had no idea it was a complete language.



L to R: Harold, Bruce, father Stan, Sandi, mother Phyllis, Grandma and Grandpa, Aunt Mildred with husband Dave Dansker and children Alan, Anita and Adrien. Alan's Bar Mitzvah. 1965

Grandpa was well liked and respected by the community. When he died in 1969, I had to miss some school. On hearing the news, my English teacher, Clancy Stout, loudly proclaimed "Your Grandfather? BILL???" and looked at me in utter disbelief as he shook his head and signed my permission slip. I was really shocked by how profoundly Clancy was affected by the news.

Clancy was well known in Vincennes. He was an eccentric character, but a great teacher. He used to play 78 rpm records of his grandfather, who was a songwriter as well as a singer.

After Grandpa died, Dad tasked me with finding a way to copy and distribute Grandpa's movies to the various family branches. Dad shared Grandpa's love of the movies and felt they were a family treasure. Over the years, Dad and I

experimented with different methods of copying them; VHS videotape, for example. But that was clearly not ideal.

It was just a little over 30 years later that I was able to digitize the movies and eventually put them online to share. By that time, Dad was suffering with Alzheimer's. I told him what I had done, and I said, "Sorry it took me 30 years!" He didn't say anything for a bit, then looked at me and said, "Well, 30 years go by pretty quickly."

William J. Dumes Dies This Morning

William J. Dumes, 67, a widely-known businessman of Vincennes and this area, died Monday morning at Good Samaritan Hospital following a brief illness.

Dumes was owner and manager of Dumes, Inc., a company that started in the "jerk business" and grew into a major salvage and waste recovery operation. The business is located on North Sixth Street in Vincennes.

The son of Hyman George and Sadie Silk Dumes, he was born in Russia, in 1902. He came to the United States of America in 1912 and moved to Vincennes in 1926, when he established Dumes, Inc.

A member of the Jewish community in this city, he was active in many local organizations.

Dumes was a member of the Jewish congregation here while

it was active, and served as president. He was one of the leaders who helped build the Hovas Hochim Synagogue at 8th and Harrison streets.

He took an early interest in aviation, and became a pilot, flying private aircraft from O'Neal Field soon after it was built.

Dumes was an Elk, a Mason, a member of the Hadi Shrine in Evansville, a Kiwanis and member of the Harmony Society. He was active in United Fund campaigns here.

Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Freda Dumes, 902 N. Second St., Vincennes; a son, Stanley, Vincennes; a daughter Mrs. Mildred Dansker, Bloomington; a sister, Mrs. Anna Shultz, Terre Haute, and six grandchildren. Three brothers and four sisters preceded him in death.

Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday from Boone Funeral Home in Evansville and burial will be in Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Evansville.

U.S. 41 Still

And so they do. After my father was no longer able to use the computer, my mother Phyllis Abels Dumes asked me to do something with the family tree data that he'd been collecting. I thought the software he was using was dreadful. Being a

programmer myself, I decided to create my own system. And why not put it on the web?

My website Dumes.net was born. Once I got the family tree info up, I realized that I could put my grandfather's old



William J. Dumes, late 1940s.

photos and movies on the website, as well. And it seemed to take on a life of its own after that.

Dumes.net also had the surprising effect of re-connecting me with cousin Art Lieberman. Art's grandmother was a Dumes; Rebecca Dumes Lieberman, another sister of my grandfather. I'll have more to say about her later.

Art created a Dumes Family Reunion in 2006, the first family reunion since 1980. He has been a great friend, reunion maven and colleague since.



2006 Dumes family reunion

They aren't saved in the earth along with the bones of our ancestors. Even if we can piece together a timeline, something like a history, we only have a list of names and dates. The nuances of the person; things that make each person unique, cannot be expressed on a census record.

A voice, once familiar, is gone forever...unless it is recorded.

Therefore, kudos are due my cousins Phyllis Zimblar Miller and her late mother Ruth Fishman Zimblar.



Dumes family reunion, Champaign, Illinois 1929

RUTH AND PHYLLIS

Ruth was a tremendous resource of family knowledge. This photo is of a Dumes family reunion from 1929. I have been looking at this photo all my life, but I didn't know who some of the people were. Ruth could not only identify each of them; she was one of them.

Ruth is the 5 year old on the far left, first row. These were her cousins, and she had grown up knowing all of them. Ruth told me that she was very close to her 1st cousin Mildred Dumes, same row, third from right. Mildred's little brother Stanley is second from the right. That's my Dad.

"I was a very good little girl", Ruth said once while mimicking her pose in the photo.

All the children in the photo were either siblings or 1st cousins, except for the baby held by Sadie, the matriarch. The baby was the first child of the next generation. Baby Eugene Vinik was the grandson of Sarah, Grandpa's oldest sibling.

Ruth was a real champion of Dumes.net and a wonderful friend whom I miss very much.

Phyllis has been a family history buff for a long time. It was Phyllis' idea to have Ruth do the interview with my grandmother. Grandma wasn't a chatty person, but she was very fond of Ruth, and Phyllis provided Ruth with great questions in preparation for the interview.

Phyllis filled me in on her branch of the family. For example, the tragic story of Sylvia, her mother's older sister. Sylvia, her husband and her brother-in-law died in a car accident on Halloween 1939 when she was only 21 and newly married.

My father would have been 13 when that occurred. It must have been a great tragedy for everyone in the family.



One of my grandfather's movies features Sylvia and her mother Fannie. Grandma said that Fannie was Grandpa's favorite, perhaps because she helped him when he was a boy in Vishki going to the eye doctor.

One of the things Phyllis showed me was a photo of a grave. It was the same "scary" photo that my grandfather had shown me when I was a boy. If Phyllis hadn't shown me the photo of Chaim's grave, I don't know if I would have been doing the web searches that brought me to the next step.



The transcription of the grave is:

*Chaim Yehushua Bar
Zev Dumes, died 24
Shevat 5664*

24 Shevat 5664 correlates to Feb. 10, 1904.

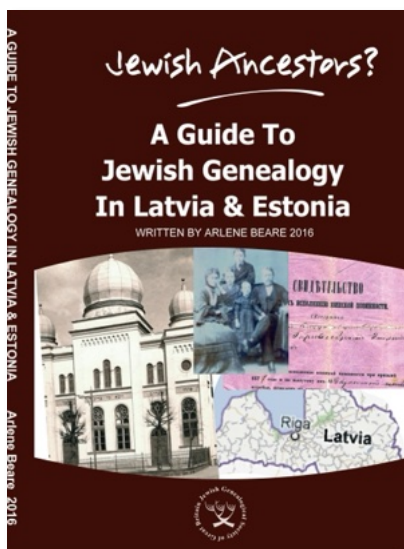
Phyllis' photo of the grave awoke the memory of Grandpa saying: "You can remember Vishki." I began doing periodic web searches for it, just to see what I could see.

At some point a search result came back with a link to JewishGen, which I had never heard of. Within JewishGen, there are a number of Special Interest Groups, known as SIGs, for different geographical regions. Researching in Latvia is very different from researching in Romania, for example.

The Latvia SIG had a newsletter, which they were in the process of putting online.

ARLENE, MARION AND RITA

This story would end right here if not for Arlene Beare and Marion Werle of the Latvia SIG, and Rita Bogdanova, formerly of the LVVA, the Latvian State Historical Archives.



Arlene Beare wrote *the* book on researching Jewish ancestry in Latvia and served as president of the SIG. *A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Latvia and Estonia* is a foundational document for doing this kind of research, and is now available online as a downloadable eBook.

Arlene's book

<https://shop.jgsgb.org.uk/catalog/downloads>

Arlene's work with the LVVA and Rita Bogdanova created the path to make this kind of research possible. I recently read that the LVVA stopped taking requests for research in 2020. That is unfortunate news.

Marion Werle is another hero of the Latvia SIG. I had the pleasure of working with her when I was volunteering as the SIG webmaster. But that came later.

ALEKS

Marion hired a Latvian researcher, Aleks Feigmanis, to transcribe some graves in a Jewish cemetery in the district of Latvia known as Latgale, of which Vishki is a part. He apparently still does research, and I would recommend him. You can contact him through his website

<https://www.balticgen.com/>

For some reason, Aleks was unable to deliver the data she requested, but instead gave her transcriptions of the nearby Vishki cemetery. Marion doesn't have any ancestry in Vishki, so those names did her no good at all. However, she generously donated the transcriptions to JewishGen, and printed them in the Latvia SIG newsletter.

At this point, I didn't know about JewishGen, and consequently, I didn't see the newsletter. However, they had recently put the index to the issue online, which included a reference to the graves in the Vishki cemetery. But the details were not yet online, just the table of contents.

Arlene's contact info was on the page, so I wrote to Arlene and explained about my research. She sent a PDF of the newsletter. Arlene must've checked the names, because she

sent me the kindest letter, telling me how excited she was for me, beginning on this journey.

- 16- Yaakov bar Yehiel Michel died 5646
- 17- Eliakim bar Hayim died 5646
- 18- Hayim Yehoshua bar Zehev Dumes died 5688
- 19- Persya Rada bat r. Lipman Amdur died 5641

From the JewishGen Newsletter

Interesting to note that Aleks had transcribed the year of Chaim's death as 5688, which would have made it 1928, way off from 1904. The name seems right, but did I have a match or not? I thought that if I could get a photo of the grave, then perhaps I could confirm if it was the same one as in the old photo.



The old photo on the left, Aleks' on the right.

Marion told me that Aleks had photos of all the graves that he had transcribed. But he charged for each photo, so they weren't included in what Marion was given. Aleks emailed me the modern photo of the grave. It was unquestionably the same.

It was especially exciting because I received this photo only a couple of days before the Dumes Reunion in 2006. I was able to announce to the family that the grave of Chaim Yehushua Dumes still existed in the Jewish Cemetery in Vishki.

I hired Aleks and also the LVVA to do a search for documents.

CHRISTINE

After I became a member of JewishGen, I found there was someone else researching Vishki. Christine Usdin lived in France. Her grandfather was Zalman-Eliokim Usdin from Vishki.

I wrote to Christine, who wrote back enthusiastically. She had been looking for years, but had never before met another Vishki descendant. We felt an immediate connection through Vishki, because it held some air of mystery for both of us.

She was close enough to drive to Vishki, and had been there before. Christine was fluent in Russian, both in writing and speaking. She had been using it most of her life. She started in school because she wanted to be able to talk to her grandfather in Russian.

Christine was an artist. She had a foundry where she made jewelry and Jewish influenced art. We were both obsessed with getting additional information about Vishki. She already knew quite a bit. One of her ancestors, Boris Usdin, had at one time been the richest man in Vishki. He even had a telephone.



KLEZMER MUSIC 2005 Christine Usdin

Christine and I decided to transcribe all the records and documents for Vishki that we could find. Christine threw herself into this project and translated literally thousands of pages of documents for Vishki and other regions of Latvia.

Her work is now part of the JewishGen databases; future researchers of Latvian records are in her debt.

I assembled all the data that we had collected for Vishki, long before the data was given to JewishGen, and put it on the Vishki *Kehilalinks* (aka *shtetl*) website that I made for JewishGen.

Christine's name is woven into many parts of my story. We were good friends and colleagues in Vishki research until she passed away.

LEARNING RUSSIAN

I started learning Russian. Take that, Grandpa! I'm finally learning it.

I thought it would be useful to be able to read the documents, which at that time were written in Old Russian because Russian was the language of government. Some records do include some Yiddish.

While traveling in the Latgale region of Latvia, located in the eastern part of the country, it was quite handy to know some Russian. Something like 50% of the population in Latgale are ethnically Russian.

Learning Russian also gave me the ability to work with Christine Usdin on the documents. She loved the language and started writing emails to me in Russian to encourage me to use it.

Christine could even read Russian script with relative ease. There are words in Russian script that seem to me to be a series of humps, all alike. I suppose if the word meant *an upside-down camel with 10 or 11 humps*, that might be ok.



I did my best to help read through the records that were available on the LVVA's *Raduraksti* website that had come online and other documents that we were accumulating.

It turned out there were a few more Dumesh families in Vishki than just my great-grandfather's. Aleks had attempted to fit all the families together.

However, there were some Dumesh families that couldn't be tied to my family with the given data. Nevertheless, I put everything up on Dumes.net in hopes of figuring it all out someday.

Here is my Dumesh tree starting with the very top that we can prove with documentation.

Leib, at the top, is my 3 times great-grandfather.
He had 3 sons:

Israel: conscripted, and probably did not return to Vishki.

Movsha Meyer: fate unknown

Wulf b. 1839: is my 2 times great-grandfather. He had 3 sons, Chaim, Jossel Leib (usually just called Leib), and Schender.

In the 1897 census, the three sons of Wulf Dumesh all lived on Riga Street in wooden houses covered with wooden tiles.

- **Chaim Dumesh**, son of Wulf and his family (my great-grandfather) The image of this record begins this chapter. You may or may not find that interesting, but trust me, genealogy geeks will love it.
- **Lieb Dumesh**, son of Wulf and his family
- **Schender Dumes**, son of Wulf and his family

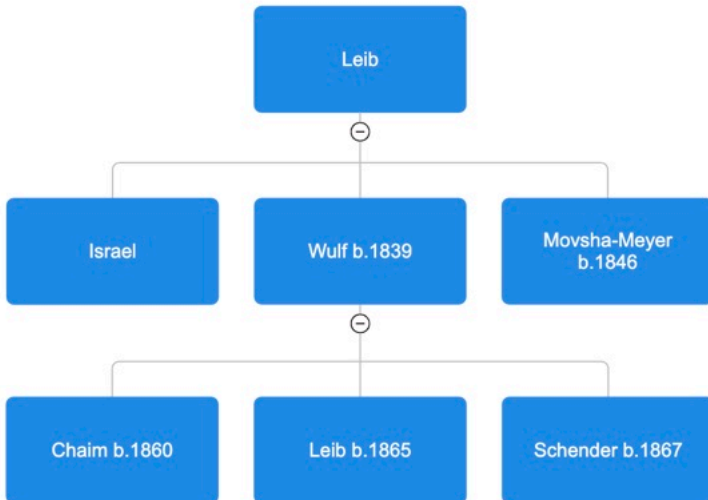
Additionally, there were three more Dumesh families living on Riga Street that could not be connected to the three brothers.

- **Itsik Dumesh**, son of Jankel and his family.
- **Haya Dumesh**, daughter of Gershen and her family.
- **Genoch Dumesh**, son of Idel, and his family.

So I just put all the Dumesh listings on Dumes.net. At that point, I felt like I had achieved everything I set out to do.

Meanwhile, in Riga, Latvia, a man named Leiser² Dumesh was slowly recovering from a serious stroke. He was very close to his grandson, Vadim, who was soon leaving for Israel in order to attend film school. Vadim decided to buy his grandfather a computer so that they could keep in touch via email.

Vadim would naturally have shown his grandfather how to use the web browser to search for things. As it turns out, Leiser was close to his grandfather when he was a boy. They started doing web searches for a place called "Vishki"...



² Pronounced like laser as in laser beam or the character Lazer Wolf in Fiddler On The Roof. From the Biblical name Eliezer (Genesis 15:2). For about 50 years (1941 - 1991), Leiser was known as Lazar, a name assigned to him upon arrival in Russia due to the absence of his birth certificate

3. CHAIM AND SCHEINA



L to R: Anna, William, Louis, Arthur, Sadie, Rebecca, Sarah,
Fannie.1923

Let me introduce you to great-Grandpa Chaim and his family. It's a shame that there are no photos of him.

When he was a boy in Vishki, Grandpa was Wulf Dumesh. I only learned that his name wasn't always William when I read the ship manifests. If you are just starting out in genealogy, ship manifests are a lot of fun. Some manifests have some amazing info that is unavailable anywhere else.

When we were still pretty new to genealogy, my wife Debra (I call her *D*)³ and I made our first visit to our local family history library, i.e. the big Mormon (LDS) temple in Westwood. I'm so grateful that they provide a wealth of documents for free. I just wish that whoever keeps baptizing Anne Frank would cut it out.

I was a bit lost trying to find my grandfather in the *Soundex* lookups. Soundex is a phonetic algorithm for indexing names by sound, since spellings varied so frequently in historical records.

This guy came over and asked if I needed help. I told him that I was looking for my grandfather, and he asked his first name.

"William", I said.

"No, his original name, his Yiddish name⁴."

"What?"⁵

He gave his head a *What a newbie!* shake and said, "Probably Wulf."

³ *Debra, D. or just D are ok – but NOT Deb, Debs, and definitely not Debbie!*

⁴ *A Yiddish name is the term used to describe their name as it was in 'The Old Country'.*

⁵ *To Pulp Fiction fans: Say 'What?' again.*

Live and learn. This is a whole lot easier today, by the way. Almost everything is online and the web does the searching for you. Though occasionally the transcriptions are a bit wonky. That is, mangled beyond comprehension.

I was soon to know the Yiddish names of all my Grandpa's family. Since great-grandpa Chaim never got to America, his name did not change. Otherwise, he would have been known as Hyman, since they named the first grandson Hyman after Chaim.

Chaim's wife Scheina Freida became Sadie. Children from oldest to youngest:

- Sora Tzipa became Sarah Dumes Kaplan
- Avram Leib became Louis
- Riva Toiba (Taube on her ship manifest) became Rebecca Dumes Lieberman
- Aron (Artzik on the ship manifest) became Arthur
- Feige became Fannie Dumes Fishman
- Neima became Anna Dumes Schultz
- Wulf became William (Grandpa)

There was a younger child, Moshe, who died of scarlet fever at age 3 in 1907.

Chaim Dumesh, son of Wulf, born in 1839, was a *glazier*. A glazier is someone who works with glass, either in manufacturing or cutting and installation. This seems to be a family trade; most of the Dumesh men worked as glaziers.

He was also listed as a *cabman* in the 1897 census. It was unusual to have two listed professions, the Latvian Archives noted. Family legend has it that Chaim had a business delivering mail or parcels by horse and wagon. The person receiving the parcel paid for the home delivery, similar to a third party local delivery service today, e.g. *GrubHub*.

In a way, Chaim is the hero of my story, because it was his grave that brought me to Latvia, but I don't know anything personal about him. My grandfather couldn't tell me anything about him.



I was lucky to know Grandpa as a person -- what he liked to do, what he liked to eat. He used to sing the song *I'm A Ding Dong Daddy From Dumas*⁶, and he *borrowed* the song title for

⁶ The song title is spelled "Dumas".

a series of ads for his Auto Parts yard, an adjunct business which no longer exists.

I don't know if Chaim liked to sing, or what his favorite food was. Perhaps Chaim liked to look at the stars and knew the constellations.

The stories say that after Chaim's death from typhoid in 1904, Scheina Freida, his wife, continued the delivery business.



L to R: Sadie, Arthur's wife Jenny, Fanny, Rebecca, Anna, William's wife Freda

SCHEINA FREIDA

Scheina Freida was the daughter of Aron Novoselok of Vishki. In America she became Sadie (from Scheina) Silk (from Novoselok). Her brother Rabbi David Silk, formerly

Novoselok, of Los Angeles used the same name transformation after he immigrated.

Sadie must have been a formidable person. Aunt Mildred told me that she seemed like a very tall woman, and she does seem much taller than her daughters and daughters-in-law in the photo on the prior page.



Scheina Freida Novoselok, Sadie
Silk Dumes. 1923

Of course, Mildred was only 9 when her grandmother died. Mildred said that Grandpa would get very irritated when Sadie spoke Yiddish, insisting that she speak in English.



Sarah Dumes Kaplan, around 1913

SARAH

Daughter Sarah was the oldest child and the first to marry; she married Jacob Kaplan while still living in Vishki in 1903. They had four children: Hyman, Rebecca, George and Helen Anna, better known in the family as *Babe*.

My cousin Harry and cousin-in-law Caroline Lieberman once recorded a family history interview with Babe. So I will periodically refer to something that Babe said. As it turns out, some of what Babe said was not exactly correct, which is another good lesson for the nascent genealogist: Listen to all the family stories, but keep an open mind as to the veracity.

Babe said that Chaim and Sadie were very well off, and that they had the only piano in town. I'd like to believe that one. It would be nice to know that the family was musical!

Jacob and Sarah were in England, en route to America when Sarah realized that she was pregnant. She returned to Vishki to have the baby, and Jacob traveled on alone to get established in New York.



Jacob and Sarah's house at 503 East Park in Champaign, Illinois. This was the Dumes family "home base" for several years, starting in 1912.

Sarah and Jacob's son Hyman was born in June 1904, just months after the death of his grandfather Chaim, for whom he was named. Sarah and baby Hyman joined Jacob in New York a couple of years later.



Louis Dumes (on the right) tending bar in Brooklyn. 1911

LOUIS

Leib, or Louis, was the eldest son. In the 1897 census in Vishki, at age 12, Louis already has a profession; he is a merchant

Louis immigrated in 1905 or 1906. Louis is my "problem child" genealogically speaking; he keeps eluding me in various records. I made a tongue-in-cheek video called *Louis Dumes - Man of Mystery* using clips from Grandpa's movies, calling him *Man of Mystery* because he does such a good job of hiding.



Rebecca Dumes Lieberman around 1912.

REBECCA

Daughter Taube became Rebecca in America. Rebecca Dumes Lieberman is the grandmother of my cousin Art, whom I mentioned earlier.

Rebecca arrived in 1908. She was called *Taube* on the manifest, and sailed on *The Saratow*, arriving at Ellis Island on March 20, 1908. Taube was traveling with Jacob Kaplan's sister, Stive Kopeleuskaja. We can verify Stive's status as Jacob's sister because she lists herself that way.

brother, - Jacob Kaplan 178
101 Main St. New York

FANNIE



Sadie and Fannie. Perhaps around
1912?

Feige, later Fannie, arrived at Ellis Island on Sept 11, 1910 on "The Russia". On Fannie's manifest she noted she was going to meet "brother: L. Dumesch c/o J. Lewitt 314 Amboy Street Brooklyn, NY", which refers to Louis Dumes.

"Scheine Dumesch Wiskis, Witebsk Gub". "Scheine" is Sadie, Wiskis is Vishki and Witebsk is Vitebsk. "Gub" stands for Gubernia, a large province in the Russian Empire.

Brother: L. Dumesch, c/o J. Lewitt
134 Amboy Street, Brooklyn N.Y.

Scheine Dumesch
Wiskis, Witebsk Gub.



Arthur, Anna, Sadie, William, Fannie in Vishki, ~1908

SADIE, ARTHUR, ANNA AND WILLIAM

Sadie, Arthur, Anna and William were still Scheina, Artzik, Naima and Wulf when they traveled together from Vishki to their final stop at Jacob and Sarah Kaplan's home at 503 East Park in Champaign, IL.

Sadie was said to be extremely pious and even lit Shabbat candles on the ship while traveling to America in 1912. The timing of travel was important, because Louis was waiting for his mother to arrive before he got married.

Louis was to marry Rebecca Stein, a young lady from Dvinsk⁷, where Wulf had gone to the eye doctor.

Before Louis married Rebecca, the story goes, Rebecca's mother actually met Scheina Freida as strangers, while still in Latvia. The two ladies were just chatting about things, talking about their kids in America. I imagine it as something like this:

Two elderly Jewish ladies, sitting at the stop, waiting for the train. They look at each other, smile, "Hello, I'm Cheya Dvaireh, please call me Cheya".

"And I'm Scheina Freida. I live in Vishki, but I caught the train down to do some shopping here in Dvinsk."

"And what's the big occasion for all this shopping, Scheina?"

"Well, Cheya...I have to go to America!"

Scheina pauses a moment, takes a breath and holds her hand out as if to say, 'Wait till you hear this' Then continues...

"My son Leib, I mean Louis now, my oldest son is getting married!"

The ladies both scream with excitement and they hug.

⁷ There was a young lady from Dvinsk, who wanted a good look at Pinsk. She started to go, but failed to show her passport and ended in Minsk.

"Well, Scheina, I've got news too! My darling Riva, Rebecca now, is also in America and is also getting married!"

They are about to scream and hug some more, but Cheya stops and says, "Rebecca's fiancée is named Louis and he is from Vishki. What is his intended's name?"

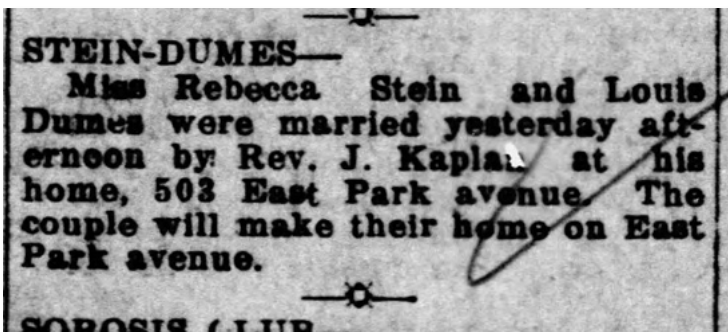
Wide-eyed, Scheina replies, "Rebecca. Rebecca Stein. From Dvinsk."

More hugging and laughing...

And.....scene

It just occurred to me as I was writing this how strange it would have been for my grandfather to meet some of his siblings. He was just a toddler when Jacob, Sarah and Louis emigrated, and only 6 when Rebecca emigrated. And Grandpa's nephew Hy, Jacob and Sarah's son, was only 2 years younger than himself.

And so, with all the family present, Louis and Rebecca were married.



4. LEISER



It is October 1940. You are a 10 year old boy on horseback. It's not a fine thoroughbred. It can't do dressage. It's a working horse pulling a wooden covered wagon, both of which have seen better days.

The wagon creaks a little louder every year. To you, it feels ancient, as if it were 1,000 years old. Perhaps it was built by the Egyptians or the Romans, you surmise, or by some other ancient civilization. You imagine yourself as a Roman soldier with his armor and red cloak floating majestically in the cool evening breeze, surveying the landscape with your powerful gaze.

Your grandfather is walking next to you, humming quietly to himself, lost in his melody. The light is beautiful and amber, with sunset approaching. Your shadow stretches all the way across the road.

The wagon is empty. That means Grandpa sold everything on this trip! And his money pouch is heavy. That means he got lots of new orders. No wonder he is humming so happily today.

Everybody loves your grandfather's things. He makes things out of tin; useful things for the kitchen, plates, cups, and so on. He makes pretty candle holders to make the house seem nicer. On Hanukkah, he always makes dreidels for you and all of the other kids too.



Horse cart in Vishki. 2007

Normally, this would feel like the best day ever. Ever since you can remember, this has been your favorite thing: to run out and meet Grandpa Genoch on his way home. Everything about it feels comforting; the gentle rocking of the very slow walking horse, Grandpa's humming, the smell of the countryside, especially this time of year when the hay is rolled up. It is so beautiful.

"Grandpa", you say softly. Genoch doesn't hear, because his humming is too loud. "Grandpa", you say louder.

Genoch looks up, as if from a dream, then turns to look at you and smiles. "Hmmm?"

"Why do I have to go?"

Genoch sighs and says, "You know why. Your father has a very good job waiting for him in Riga. It is much more money than he could ever make here. He has a nice new place for you to live."

"Why can't I just stay here with you? We can keep everything just like it is, only it would be even better because I could spend ALL of my time with you!" you plead, knowing it was impossible, but still hoping.

As you pull up to Grandpa's house, you can smell the fresh challah. Somehow, Grandpa always makes it home with just enough time for us to give the horse dinner and put her away for the night.

The rest of the family is waiting as you walk in. Your father looks at you and says, "We need to leave very early tomorrow, Leiser, so right after dinner you need to get to bed."



L to R: Chaya, Israel (Leiser's father), a granddaughter and Genoch Dumesh. Vishki 1915

"But what about shul? I always walk to shul with Grandpa!", you plead again.

Genoch walks over to you and puts his hands on your head. He closes his eyes and mumbles some prayers to himself. "There", he says. "Now you'll be safe."

He pulls you over to a corner and whispers, "I have given you a special prayer. It's a secret, so you can't tell anyone. It is a

special request and can only be used for the most important things."

You look at him with incredulity and a half-smile, as if to say, "Oh c'mon, Grandpa. I'm not a little kid!"

"What if the neighbors knew that I possessed such a powerful prayer? Why, Bella would be asking me to change potatoes into pumpkins. Itzhak would be asking me to help him win a bet. Aron would ask for his hair back."

You start giggling, despite feeling so sad. Grandpa could always make you laugh. "But Grandpa..."

"All will be as God wants it to be, little Leiser. Now, go, sit by your father."

This is how I imagine Leiser Dumesh in 1940, when his father moved the family to Riga. Within a year, Leiser would be living in Gorky, Russia with his father's brother Moisey as an evacuee.

Leiser was born in 1930 in Vishki. His father was called Israel Dumesh, the youngest of 10 children. Israel's parents, Genoch and Chaya, lived close to the other Dumesh families in Vishki. In the 1897 census, you can see all the Dumesh families living on Riga street, nearby the synagogue.

Leiser grew up as any small, happy boy in a rural village. But the finances of the time were difficult. Young people were leaving Vishki to find work. By the time Leiser was growing up, 8 of the 10 children of Genoch had left Vishki.

In 1940, Leiser's father Israel found work in Riga and moved his family there. If he had stayed in Vishki, they would probably have not survived.

When his family left Vishki in 1940, Leiser was 10, and his memories were those of a small boy. To him, Vishki was a big place, full of life and activity. He thought the population of Vishki to have been in the thousands.

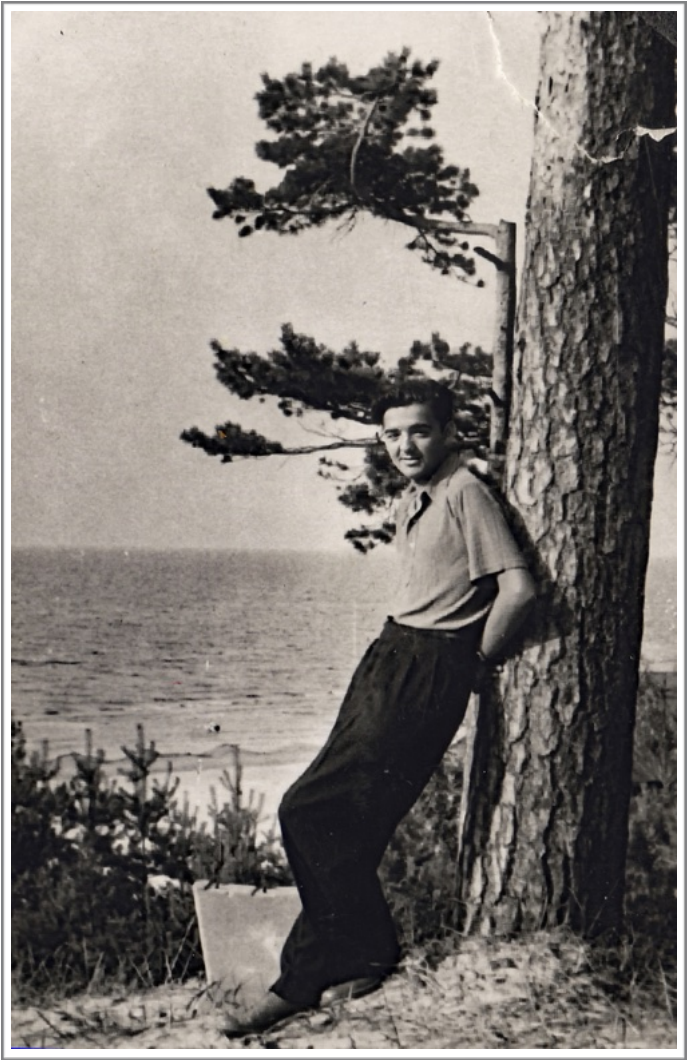
Leiser loved his grandfather Genoch very much. Genoch was a tinsmith, and famous in the area for the quality of his wares. Once a month, he would go on horse-cart to the neighboring towns to sell products and take orders.

When returning from his sales trips, Genoch would always take the same road home, and Leiser would always run out to meet him. Leiser would ride the horse back home, while Genoch walked beside him.

He was especially proud of Genoch's importance in the synagogue. The Yiddish word for synagogue is *shul*, and Leiser usually used the word when talking about the shul in Vishki, except when he was writing formally. I grew up hearing synagogue and shul being used interchangeably.

Genoch was a *Cohen* in the shul; a Cohen is not a Rabbi, but a man of knowledge, importance and lineage who sat just behind the Rabbi, next to the Torah. Leiser and his father would often walk to shul and then Grandpa Genoch would come over to their house after services.

Leiser spoke Yiddish and Latvian as a boy in Vishki. My grandfather spoke only Yiddish. Both Leiser and Grandpa were thrown into a new world where the language was completely foreign. For Leiser, it was Russian in 1941 and for Grandpa, American English in 1912.



Leiser in Jurmala, Latvia. 1954

Leiser wrote:

What I've remembered my whole life is that Vishki was a busy place, full of people and life in full swing all the time. There was no industry in Vishki; mostly craftsmen and miscellaneous traders keeping small shops and stores serving locals and adjacent farms and villages.

Trade was very boisterous; dairy products, poultry, meats, small and large livestock, fruits and vegetables, various crafts were sold.

On December 5, 2006, I received an email from Vadim Dumesh. He told me that his grandfather, Leiser was from Vishki, and that Leiser was the grandson of Genoch Dumesh, son of Idel, whose family tree I listed on Dumes.net.



L to R: Leiser, sister Feiga, mother Bluma, brother Wulf and father Israel. Riga. 1960

Vadim and Leiser found Dumes.net via Christine Usdin's website. Christine was always looking for free web space, so I gave her some. Her stuff is still there at Usdin.Dumes.net.

Vadim and Leiser looked at the trees I had posted and confirmed that the family of Genoch Dumesh who lived on Riga Street in 1897 was the family of his grandfather. Genoch Dumesh was a neighbor of great-grandpa Chaim Dumesh.

Vishki is a very small place. We **must** be related, we all felt, but how? There was no paper trail. I suggested that we do a DNA test. DNA testing was still pretty new and comparatively primitive at this time, but we would still be able to get a ballpark idea of how many generations back our connection is.

The result of the DNA test was a SHOCK!

The DNA test showed that we were not at all related, at least not through the male chromosome line, the so-called *surname test*, which was all that was available to us in those days. We are in a completely different genetic haplogroup⁸.

I recall Vadim being disappointed on one hand, but rather thrilled on the other about the result, because of the pride that Leiser took in Genoch being a Cohen in the Vishki shul. A Cohen is said to be a male descendant of Aaron, the first

⁸ A family of maternal or paternal lineages that descend from a common ancestor.

Jewish priest, and a member of the Jewish priesthood. There is a particular DNA haplogroup that the *Cohanim*⁹ are said to belong to. Leiser matched to that one.

Studying Russian enabled me to build a warm relationship with Leiser. The Russian language is challenging; the grammar is complex and seemingly whimsical. Winston Churchill famously described Russia as a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. This also describes some aspects of the Russian language. But it is a very interesting and beautiful language, in my opinion.

We talked about all kinds of things. Like me, Leiser was very interested in space science. He spoke about how much he enjoyed the Soyuz/Apollo mission in 1975. The Russians and Americans met in space, docked spaceships and shook hands through the hatch.

He loved watching bicycle races on television, especially the Tour De France. As I write this, Mark Cavendish broke a cycling record by winning his 35th stage in the Tour. Leiser would have loved that. We would have been emailing about it. He hated the cheaters, as Lance Armstrong turned out to be. Leiser was a man of strong principle.

I built a website for him at Dumesch.Dumes.net. Over the years, the families of the children of Genoch had lost touch with each other. Leiser began a project to track them all down and reconnect them, which he accomplished. I think he was very happy and proud of that.

⁹ plural of Cohen

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In his book *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire*, Alexander Beider points out that there are 3 related names: Domashevskij, Dumes, and Dumesh. Domashevskij from the village Domashi and Dumesh from the village Dumsy.

Domashi is a tiny place in Belarus. There is a Dumsiai in Lithuania; perhaps that's Dumsy. In 2011, Dumsiai had a population of 18 people.

Wherever it was, it was probably a place name adopted by people when surnames were being assigned, so it is likely that Leiser's line and my line had roots in the same place. Perhaps our families were friends for hundreds of years!

In early 2007, D and I were attending a meeting at the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles (JGSLA). D is a very serious genealogist with ancestry in Germany and Denmark, among other places.

Someone was giving a talk about traveling to Ukraine or Belarus (I forget which) and finding the Jewish cemetery plowed over for development. We felt that we had to go, sooner than later.

In order to relay our feelings as closely to how we felt at the time, I'm going to occasionally quote from a travel blog that D and I kept.



RIGA

From the travel blog:

Riga is indeed a beautiful city, much more than I anticipated. In addition to the Old City, for which it is justifiably well known, Riga has wonderful parks and gardens, planted with taste and care. We first ventured out about 10AM and it had just stopped raining. Things were very quiet, but after a couple of hours, everything burst into life and color.

The Old City has so much to offer visually at every turn. Old cobbled streets wind around and around, leading you on adventures of discovery. There are outdoor cafes everywhere.

We walked to the synagogue, which is in the Old City. In the Old City, buildings were constructed one against another. It survived WW2 only because the Nazis worried that burning it might cause a fire through all of Old City, the buildings being so close together.

It's beautiful inside. There was a gentleman who allowed me to borrow his kippah so that I could step in and see it. It is in the orthodox tradition, with men and women separated, so we didn't go in for the service, but I did sneak a picture from the entry way.



D & I met Leiser and his elder son Genrikh for dinner at a charming restaurant which was decorated to look like Old World Latvia. One of the highlights is that if you order trout, you can watch as they catch the trout from the pool in the basement.

Genrikh's English is far better than my Russian, as I had only been studying for about six months, but Leiser kept encouraging me to talk to him directly in Russian.



L to R: Leiser, Bruce, Genrikh. Riga 2007

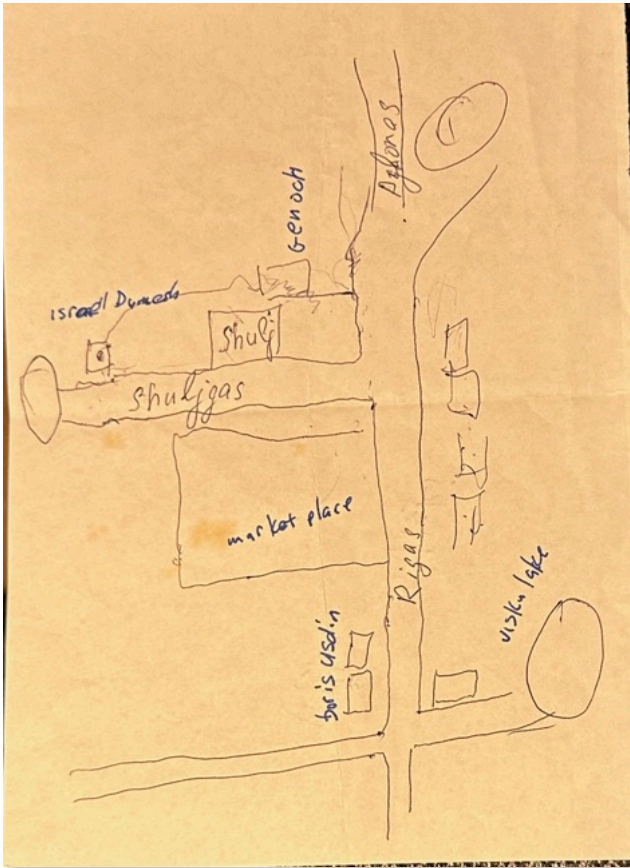
I asked Leiser if he could draw a map of Vishki, as he remembered it.

Leiser spoke a lot and I understood a little. But I could see how happy he was that we had come to see him. It's rather like the Soviet cosmonauts and the American astronauts reaching across the ships and shaking hands. Our ancestors were *landsmen*. It was not just a meeting, it was a reunion.

Genoch Dumesh, Cohen of the shul in Vishki would no doubt be *kvelling*¹⁰ to see what a fine man Leiser became.

Tomorrow, we will be making the reverse trip that little Leiser made in 1940, when his family came to Riga.

Tomorrow we are driving to Vishki!



Leiser's map of Vishki with my annotations.

¹⁰ Yiddish: to be extraordinarily pleased, burst with pride

5. VISHKI



Later than I expected, D and I finally pulled in to Vishki. The highway from Riga to Daugavpils is a 2-lane, not particularly well maintained road. If you get stuck behind a slow truck, it may be an eternity before you can pass him. I got stuck.

However, the drive across Latvia is stunning; the gentle hills, the farm lands and unpaved roads reminded me of Southern Indiana, where I grew up. Perhaps my grandfather felt similarly when he arrived in America.

When Grandpa emigrated in 1912, Vishki was at its peak; a lively town with about 1,200 residents, more than 70% Jewish. Tinkers and tradesmen of all kinds crowded the streets on the twice weekly market days. Produce, meats, prepared foods, linens, glassware, baked goods of all kinds were abundant.

I can understand why Grandpa said that he was so reluctant to leave. As a 10 year old, it must've seemed like a magical place. Leiser thought so; that is how he remembered Vishki.



Market day in Višķi 1927. Same credits as cover photo.

Vishki is pronounced Vishki, but actually spelled Višķi in Latvian. The diacritic over the š sounds like *sh*. I'm using the spelling "Vishki" to aid in pronunciation, rather than writing it as Višķi or Viski.

You'll also see a mix of Dumes, Dumeš and Dumesh. Same thing. In Latvian, my name would be Dumeš, which is pronounced Dumesh. But in America, we are Dumes with an *s* sound at the end. So Grandpa started out as Wulf Dumesh, but became William Jacob Dumes.

To further add to the confusion, in some places where the diacritic is not used, like passports, they use a doubled s to indicate it. Once Leiser showed me his passport; his name was spelled DUMESS.

THE HISTORY OF VISHKI

The most famous Vishki-ite ever was Marta Skavronskaya (1684-1727). She became the wife of Peter I of Russia and was called *Catherine I*. Nice work if you can get it.



That's "Ekaterina I, Empress of all Russia" to *you*, peasant!

It was another Russian Catherine, long after Catherine I's reign that established what was called *the Pale of Settlement*. Catherine II, better known as *Catherine The Great*, had to overthrow her husband, Peter III, in order to come to power. In my mind, I picture a cartoon Catherine bopping cartoon

Peter on the head, and then all the cartoon Russians cheering.

As it turned out, it was a really good thing for Russia. Under her long reign, Catherine The Great was responsible for a rebirth of culture and science. She built universities, libraries, theaters, and began what is considered to be the Russian renaissance, an era of enlightenment.

I suppose when she created the Pale of Settlement in 1791, it was meant to be from an enlightened point of view. She could've just said, "No Jews Allowed" in the entire Russian Empire.

The Pale of Settlement was a region of the Russian Empire in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish residency, permanent or temporary, was mostly forbidden.

The Wikipedia description is so good, I might as well quote it:

Most Jews were still excluded from residency in a number of cities within the Pale as well. A few Jews were allowed to live outside the area, including those with university education, the ennobled, members of the most affluent of the merchant guilds and particular artisans, some military personnel and some services associated with them, including their families, and sometimes their servants.

The archaic English term pale is derived from the Latin word palus, a stake, extended to mean the area enclosed by a fence or boundary.

Today, the expression *beyond the pale* means to be outside the bounds of acceptable behavior.

There are four major regions in Latvia. The region of East Latvia is called Latgale. Jews began to settle in Latgale when the Pale was established, because Latgale was the only region of Latvia that was within the Pale.

THE FIRST INDEPENDENCE 1918

Latvia declared independence from the Russian Empire on November 18, 1918. This resulted in the Latvian War of Independence, which concluded with the signing of the Peace Treaty on August 11, 1920.

After Independence, the Latvian language became more important in Latvia, because it was now the language of the government. Children learned Latvian in school, while Jewish children still spoke Yiddish at home. Life was good in Vishki, but most Jews still worked as tradesmen or peddlers, with no real opportunity for young people.

Because of Latvian independence, the Pale of Settlement was no longer in force. Jews could travel and live outside of Latgale. Added to this, knowledge of the Latvian language allowed Jews to more easily relocate to Riga in search of better employment. By 1935, the Jewish population of Vishki had shrunk by 50%.

Even so, the Jewish community was still vibrant. In 1936, they rebuilt the synagogue. The original, built in 1880, is pictured here, and is the one my grandfather would have remembered. For about 90 years, the Platsinsky family served as rabbis of Vishki. They were famous in the area as a rabbinical dynasty.



The synagogue of Vishki, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Yankel.

The first was Rabbi Moshe Platsinsky, who served as rabbi for more than 40 years. My great-grandfather Chaim would have been a small boy when Rabbi Moshe first came to Vishki. Genoch, Leiser's grandfather, was about the same age as Chaim. I'm sure they both grew up with a strong reverence for Rabbi Moshe. They were both in their late 40s when Rabbi Judah took over.

According to Babe Kaplan, her father Jacob traveled from his home in Lithuania in 1902 or 1903 in order to study with Rabbi Moshe. Jacob Kaplan married Chaim Dumesh's oldest daughter, Sarah. As a student, Kaplan needed a place to stay, and he found lodging with the Dumesh family. Then he became a son-in-law.

Babe said: *It was a big honor to have a student, and he was very bright. He got three meals a day, room and board.*

Judah Platsinsky followed in his father's path and in 1907, became the rabbi of Vishki. Rabbi Judah would have been Grandpa's rabbi.

No doubt Scheina Freida consulted Rabbi Judah once or twice regarding young Wulf's behavior. Leiser's father Israel was born in 1905, only a few years younger than my grandfather. So he would also have been under the watchful eye of Rabbi Judah.

His son, Yankel Platsinsky, took the rabbinical reins over in 1931 until his death in 1941. Rabbi Yankel would have been the rabbi that Leiser knew when he was a boy. His grandfather Genoch would have been sitting behind Rabbi Yankel when they were in shul.

The rabbis of Vishki are in a sense another timeline that runs in parallel with my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and then Leiser. Vishki connects that timeline as well.

WHEN THE REDS CAME

The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was a non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR. It contained a secret protocol in which they partitioned between them the sovereign states of Central and Eastern Europe: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Romania.

In other words -- Hitler and Stalin said to each other, "Look, you get to occupy those countries and I get to occupy these countries, and then we don't have to fight each other, ok?" I suspect that both Hitler and Stalin shook hands while they were crossing their fingers with the other hand behind their backs, i.e. I don't think either one meant a word of the "non-aggression" part.

On June 17, 1940, Latvia was invaded and occupied by the Red Army. A Soviet government was installed; the new regime nationalized businesses and shops. Russian once again became the language of the government in Latvia.



Red Army BT-7 tank and ZIS-5 truck in Riga. 1940

Leiser wrote:

I remember when Soviet troops came to Vishki; “the Reds came” as we’d say back then. The other kids and I ran there to take a peek at the soldiers. They were very friendly and kind, treating us with crackers and candy.

When the Reds came, father left Vishki for Riga. He found work there at a leather-sewing factory and a place to rent. In October 1940, he came back to take us to Riga; my Mother, me, 6-year-old sister and one-year-old brother.

After the war, when the Soviet Government retained control of Latvia, Latvian schoolchildren would be taught to say, "Ленин жил, Ленин жив, Ленин будет жить!" (Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live!) until Latvia once again declared independence in 1991.



VISHKI TODAY



Vishki is now a very small place. There are no stores, no shops at all. It's just a few short streets with scattered houses and some abandoned buildings.

However, people grow their own food, fish from the nearby ponds and lakes, and you'll find fresh flowers in the windows of the little houses as you walk by.

Having arrived late, it was later than I had expected when I finally called Lolita. Nevertheless, in 10 minutes, Lolita and her family were there to show us around.

LOLITA

Lolita Kozlovska worked at the Daugavpils Tourist Information Center. Before our trip, I found the email address for the Center and wrote to them about my intention to visit Vishki. Lolita answered my email. She was actually born and raised in Vishki. Her mother still lived there.

Lolita's passionate interest and knowledge regarding the history of Vishki was impressive. Although not Jewish, she was very caring and sensitive regarding the fate of the Jews in Latvia. When I told her that I was coming to visit, she volunteered to show us around.



Little green house once owned by a Dumesh.

Lolita showed us where the cemetery was, but since we were running late, we didn't go inside. We were already planning on coming back the next day to photograph all the graves.

Lolita showed us a little green house that was said to have once belonged to a Dumesh. In our travel blog, I wrote:
There is an old wooden house. Someone called Dumes lived here before the war, but we don't know which Dumes yet.



Part of what were the stone steps to the synagogue.

Just a short distance behind the little green Dumesh house, the synagogue of Vishki once stood. Only remnants of the stone steps remain. There are no known photos of the second synagogue, to which these steps would have led.

Other than the steps, there is no trace of the "big, beautiful synagogue" that Leiser described to me. The Nazis and the vultures that followed them had done their job well.

There was a very nice memorial a little bit outside of Vishki, recently erected, to the Jews of Vishki and nearby Dagda who were killed at that spot by the Nazis.



Memorial to the Jews of Vishki and Dagda

The Jews of Dagda were being "escorted" to the Daugavpils ghetto through Vishki. The Vishki Jews had already been killed or sent to the ghetto. People had been walking for kilometers and they still had 25 km to go. Some tried to escape into the fields, but were caught. All the Jews were killed on the spot, bodies left in a pit by the road.

Lolita had a friend, an elderly lady named Veronika. Lolita pronounced her name Ver-a-NI-ka. Veronika was born in

Vishki in 1923 and lived her entire life there. Lolita took us to meet her.

VERONIKA



Veronika Galvene 1972

When Veronika Galvene was a girl, her Jewish friends called her *the Yiddish Goy*. She was not Jewish, but she could speak Yiddish and everyone's home was open to everyone. Today, the word *goy* can have a pejorative connotation, but that was not the case here. They really just meant *the Jewish non-Jew*.

"Dumeshi? Are they Dumeshi?", Veronika asked in disbelief when Lolita introduced us. Can you imagine how she must

have felt? Her old friends, the Dumesh, have come back to Vishki to see her.

Veronika spoke about her friends; her closest friend was named Tanya Dumesh, but she also spoke about Tanya's sisters, Tsilya and Dobka.

She spoke about a shop owned by a Dumesh where they had a machine to make wool, and how they loved playing with it. She also spoke of Mr. Judinš, who also had a shop. She said he was the most prosperous in town.

The Jews of Vishki literally saved Veronika's life. Something happened to her when she was young and required medical care in Riga, but her family didn't have sufficient funds. The Jewish community collected enough money to send Veronika to Riga and get the medical treatment that she needed.

Veronika was 18 when the Nazis arrived in Vishki.

D wrote in the travel blog:

She cried when she told us how they rounded up her friends and took them away---the men first, sending them to Daugavpils to a work camp, then the women and their children and babies. She mimed the babies in their mothers' arms; no one was spared. One child got away, escaping from the Germans. This girl came to Veronika's mother's house and her mother rounded up bread, cheese, any food so that the girl would have something to eat. But the girl was caught by the Germans as she fled along the road eastward from Vishki.

She told us that it pains her greatly to think about those days but she loved her Jewish friends and misses them. She only hopes that nothing like those times ever happens again.

Veronika spoke in a language called Latgalean, a local dialect. There are very few speakers today, but Lolita could speak and understand it. When I met her, Veronika was very ill and clearly in pain.

The transcription and translation were done by Professor Len Latkovski of the Latgale Research Center at Hood College in Maryland. Len was a really interesting guy. He was born in Latgale, and could speak and understand Latgalean.

This info is from the Wikipedia page about Len:

He provided "trunk loads" of medicine and necessities on his trips to Latvia.

Known in his native Latgale for his teachings and dedication to the region, Latkovski was once honored with a biographical exhibit at the Central Rēzekne Library.

I have done some editing for ease of reading.

Date: August 26, 2007

Place: A nursing home in Vishki, Latvia

Participants:

Veronika Galvene Viski resident. Born 1923? Age 84

Lolita Kozlovska, friend of Veronika

Lolita's daughter

Bruce Dumes, descendant of Dumesh family from Vishki

Debra, Bruce's wife

Veronika (V) [Crying]

Lolita (L) [Calms her] *everything is all right, do not cry. Everything is all right. We have visitors. These people have come from America, Jewish people from America. They have come here to talk to you.*

V: [is upset..crying] ...

L: *She is very ill, and she does not like this place.*

V: *From America?*

L: *Los Angeles. They wanted to see.*

V: *Dumeschi?? Are they Dumeschi? There was the synagogue... you saw it?*

L: *Yes, yes. We showed it.*

There were Tsilya, Tanya, Dobka. Tanya was the oldest. We were friends.

They called me 'Yiddishe goy' because I was friends with them. They spoke well. I understood and spoke Yiddish. They were my friends. We all lived together. There were many Jewish friends. They helped me very much. They helped us build a house. The Jews... if it were not for the Jews, I would not be here. I would not be here without Jewish people. I was young and sick and they sent me to Riga.

These Dumesh near the synagogue had a store from which we purchased products. They made wool from a machine; when we were small children we played with the machine. It was interesting for us. We were friends. I was a friend with more...

There were Judinš (pronounced Yudins). Yes, Judinš had a store...they were the most prosperous.

Now, Tanya's daughter lives in Daugavpils. Tanya is deceased.

Veronika couldn't remember the name of Tanya's daughter.

But who is Tanya? **Who is Tanya Dumesh?**

6. VISHKI DAY 2



When the graves were dug and fate was written in stones in the Cemetery of Vishki, there was no thought that Vishki would ever be anything but a small Jewish village. There would always be memories and stories that were passed down. The names in the cemetery would be familiar.

The cemetery is situated about a 1/4 of a mile from the village, on the edge of the lake. It is surrounded by majestic, almost regal walls. They give the cemetery a sense of permanence and sanctification.

They say *This is a special place, and a serious place. Have reverence and humility when you stand on this ground.* There is an old iron gate, which is in disrepair. We are told that lions once adorned the top of the gate, but they have long since been taken.

Now the cemetery is a memorial to the Jewish shtetl that once was Vishki; that place full of life and joy that Leiser remembered.

The site of the cemetery is an amazing location, overlooking a clear, blue lake. People drive to the lake for recreation; I saw several RVs with boats headed towards it.

The cemetery feels immense when you are in it. The entire cemetery slopes upwards from the entrance continuing to the highest point, overlooking the lake. That's where I found Chaim.



Bruce (on the left) with Chaim. 2007

He had some premium real estate for his final resting place. The scary photograph belied the beauty of the spot where the grave still stands. At the time he was buried, these trees must have been small.

When I was standing at Chaim's grave, I imagined my grandfather as a 10 year old boy standing there. His father died when he was only 2. Perhaps Wulf would visit the grave and have solitary conversations with a father that he never knew.

I thought of Wulf standing there for the last time and saying goodbye, as little Leiser had to say goodbye to his grandfather. Of course, Leiser didn't know that he would never see his grandfather again.



It was because of that grave that I had come to Latvia. If it did not exist, there would be no listing for it in the JewishGen newsletter.

If WW2 had not occurred, I would have lots and lots of Latvian cousins; thousands of them. One of them probably



would have been walking me around Vishki instead of Lolita. He or she would show me the homes of my ancestors, which might still be there, and of course the shul where Leiser used to come as a boy. It would not be just the stone step remains of the synagogue, which now lays like a grave marker, without a name.

From the travel blog:

The countryside of Viski is quite beautiful; huge hay fields, heavily wooded areas, lakes -- quite charming. The village itself is mostly made up of old wooden homes.

I saw a couple of dozen people around the town, gardening, walking, riding bikes. Like many small towns in America, it appears that as soon as someone is of an independent age, they leave Vishki to find better opportunities. So Vishki is largely a city of older folks with a few young ones who haven't left yet.

I spoke with a gentleman who was tending his garden. He lived across the street from where the old Synagogue stood.

Amazingly, he could understand my Russian when I spoke to him! I told him that my grandfather was born in Vishki, and he asked my name.

He pointed to the little green house on the corner and said Tanya Dumesh that lived there. Veronika Galvene, the elderly lady that we spoke with, talked about Tanya Dumesh. she was her friend. She said they used to have a shop where they would spin wool, and she loved to watch them do it.

I don't know about a Tanya Dumesh. She wasn't in any of the census records or vital records that we've been able to track down. But these two people have a clear memory of her.

WHO IS TANYA DUMESH?

7. HOLOCAUST IN VISHKI

By October 1941, all of Latvia was occupied by the Nazis. In Latvia, as in other occupied territories, the Nazi government widely involved locals in the Holocaust, especially known criminals and those with a history of violent and sadistic tendencies.

In Vishki, the bloodiest raids were organized and carried out by what were termed *zhyd-shooters*. In Russian, *zhyd* is an offensive word for a Jew. The word was also used in Latvian before the war, but without the negative connotation. After the war, Latvians adopted the polite Russian word for a Jew: еврей or evray.

Some Jews were shot down in Vishki, like Genoch, Leiser's grandfather. He was shot in front of his home when he refused to leave. Some Jews were killed in the Jewish cemetery. The rest were told to pack their valuables; they were to go to the Daugavpils Ghetto.

There were over a hundred people who left towards Daugavpils, 25km away, both on foot and in horse carts. Those too exhausted to go on were shot. Before they entered the ghetto, their valuables that they had been carrying were taken from them.¹¹

Doctor Gurevich of Vishki described how the Jews of Vishki did not quietly submit to the Nazis or the *zhyd-shooters*:

¹¹ *Eleonora Petrovna, No Višķu pagasta vēsturē*

*I saw everything. I heard shouts and moans of the poor, desperate people. Some of them were fighting the murderers like lions. I saw how the Jews, even wounded and bleeding to death, were still attacking the executioners with their bare hands, some with stones, and were fighting till their last breath. These were strong, courageous people.*¹²

The Jews of Vishki had already been evacuated when on a July morning in 1941, the Jews of nearby Dagda were being escorted to Daugavpils through Vishki. People were exhausted and hungry. Some attempted to escape. They tried to hide in the hay fields, but they were caught. All of them were ordered to stand in a nearby pit.

In the quiet of the beautiful Latvian countryside, the machine-guns could be heard for miles, even in the neighboring villages. After the guns had long since silenced, the villagers gathered to see what had happened. The pit was full to the edges with bodies.

The geography of Vishki is such that it is no stranger to periodic flooding. In Spring of 1942, water flooded the pit, and body parts started to appear here and there. The blood of the Jews rose from the ground and stained the fields with the color.

In July 1944, the Red Army "liberated" Vishki from the Nazis.

¹² Z. Jakub, *Jews in Daugavpils*, publ. 1993

8. EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED



Julya at the little green house. 2009

Everything Is Illuminated is a mostly fictional autobiographical story and book by author Jonathan Safran Foer. The narrator in *Everything Is Illuminated* is Alex Perchov from Odessa. The story is essentially about how Alex's life changed after he met Jonathan and they went on a "rigid search" (as Alex put it), with Alex's grandfather, also named Alex. The goal was to find *Trachimbrod*, the shtetl of Jonathan's grandfather Safron in Ukraine.

Grandfather Alex seems at first to be simply a mean, vulgar, and strongly anti-semitic old man. Alex turns out to be a Jew

from the same shtetl, but long hid his Jewish past, even from his wife, children and grandchildren. The story ranges from funny, tragic and bittersweet. The movie adds some great music -- I just wish it was available on vinyl!

Jonathan's story is certainly not my story, but there are some echoes. Grandson Alex writes to Jonathan: "I have reflected many times upon our rigid search. It has shown me that everything is illuminated in the light of the past. It is always along the side of us. Jonathan, in this way, I will always be along the side of your life. And you will always be along the side of mine."

It's an unusually hot, humid day in June 2009, and I'm once again in Vishki.

I'm walking down a quiet street with a small group of people. Vishki doesn't often receive groups of tourists. On this trip, I have a new guide. As we slowly walk, my guide points out places of interest.

We come to a house where my guide once lived. She knocks on the door and asks to look inside. It's the little green house, the one that both Lolita and the gardening man pointed out in 2007.

On this day in 2009, my guide is Julya. She lived in this house when she was a girl. She is my 3rd cousin. Her mother was Tanya Dumesh.

MEET TANYA DUMESH



Tanya Dumesh. Riga 1941

Tanya was born in Vishki in 1919, the oldest daughter of Nota and Ginta-Jocha Dumesh. Nota was, like his brothers, a glazier.

Tanya lived with her family in Vishki until January 1941, when like most young people at that time, she left for Riga in search of a job. She found employment in a knitted fabric

factory and rented an apartment. In the spring, she brought her sister Tsilya to Riga. Tsilya found work in a weapons factory.



Vishki, about 1940. Tanya's sisters and friends. Upper row, from the left: Lyuba Dumesh, Tsilya Dumes. Lower row, on the right, Doba Dumesh.

When the Germans invaded Riga, it was sudden and chaotic. Tsilya was evacuated by the weapons factory where she worked, and Tanya left with the family who owned the house they were living in.

It was a dangerous and difficult journey. At first, they were on foot to the train station. Bombs were exploding around them and they lost each other. Tanya made a long, arduous trip to Russia, sometimes riding on a cattle train.

At last, she arrived in the Ural Mountains. She was alone, and probably spoke no Russian. Leiser told me that when he was evacuated to Russia, he didn't understand a single word of Russian.

Leiser wrote:

On June 22, 1941 World War 2 came to Latvia. Father returned home early from work and told us that we are going on a bus to Russia.

My father hurriedly packed a small suitcase and off to the bus station. Only women and children were admitted to the buses. Father stayed in Riga, and endured the ghetto and concentration camps.

Leiser traveled to Gorky in Russia to stay with his father's brother Moisey. Moisey was a well respected professor of Medicine at the Medical Institute in Gorky.

Tanya lived in the Ural Mountains during the war. There, she met Dimitri; romance ensued and a daughter Raisa was born in 1944.

Tanya endured so many personal tragedies and so much loss. Her strength and resilience in the face of so much tragedy was extraordinary. If I were writing a fictional story, I would worry that I have made it overly dramatic, or created too powerful of a heroine.

Raisa's father Dimitri was a soldier; he died in battle in 1945. Tanya was alone again, now with the responsibility of an infant.



Tanya Dumesh with baby Raisa in
the Ural Mountains. 1945

After the Soviets were once again in control of Latvia in 1944, it was possible to send letters between Russia and Latvia. It was then that Tanya learned the fate of her sister Tsilya. They had both written to a mutual friend in Vishki who put them back in touch. Tsilya was actually not very far from where Tanya had been living, and so they were able to reunite!



Tanya, Raisa and Semyon. 1947

Tanya would have learned from the letters the fate of her family. They all died in 1941; Tanya's parents, Nota and Ginta-Jocha, and her sisters Lyuba and Doba, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends. So many to mourn.

Tanya's 2nd daughter was Julya. Julya's father, Semyon Macevich, had been exiled from Leningrad in 1935 during the Stalin repressions. Semyon had been a worker in Leningrad who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He worked down the hall from someone who became a target of Stalin.



Jan 1948. Raisa and Tanya, pregnant with Julya, Semyon is deceased.

Stalin had everyone in the area exiled, which was standard practice in the Stalin regime. Semyon ended up in the Urals, where he met and fell in love with Tanya.

Semyon's period of exile ended in January 1948; he had not seen his family in 13 years. They decided to return to Semyon's home in Leningrad so that they could be married with his family around him. But before they made their return, Semyon suffered a fatal heart attack.

Tanya made the trip anyway, and Julya was born in Leningrad. Unfortunately, Semyon's family refused to help Tanya and her daughters.



Raisa, Tanya, baby Julia in Vishki. 1948

Meanwhile, Tsilya had married. When Tanya decided to return to Vishki, Tsilya stayed in Russia with her husband Sergey. Tsilya occasionally visited Tanya in Vishki, but made her home in Russia until she passed away in 1994.

We have all seen photos of cities and towns ravaged by bombs and tanks in wartime. But this was not the case in Vishki. The destruction in Vishki came after the war.

After the war, the Soviet government, for a nominal fee, allowed people to disassemble the former homes and shops of Jews. This is how the synagogue of Vishki was destroyed;

not by a bomb, but disassembled piece by piece. The pieces were hauled away and used in new construction.

I sent Leiser a photo of Raisa and Julya taken in Vishki in 1957 when Julya was 9. When I sent it, I did not understand the importance of why they were standing just there. Leiser, however, knew exactly where it was. Behind the girls is a single wall standing, the remaining wall to his family's home. Before the war, where the girls are standing was the center of life, especially Jewish life, in Vishki.

Leiser wrote:

Before me is a photograph taken in late 1957. Two Jewish girls, Raisa and her younger sister Julya are standing in the center of Vishki, in the most popular place of the Jewish inhabitants of the pre-war shtetl.

To the right of Julya, by about 20 meters, there was a big, beautiful synagogue. The synagogue was a center, sort of a club, to which the paths of all local Jews always led. Needless to say, many people gathered especially on Friday evenings, on Shabbat, and during the holidays.

There were always people in the synagogue, daily prayer services were held. People came to the Rabbi to talk about their jobs, to get advice on various daily matters, especially because Rabbi Platsinsky knew all the Jewish families and had been in all houses for weddings and other family celebrations.

On the left of the older girl Raisa, by some thirty meters, was the beginning of the market square. This was also a very lively place. The market was held twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays. On the market days, people came to Vishki from all



L to R: Raisa and Julia. Vishki 1957. The synagogue was to the right of them. The remaining wall of Leiser's childhood home can be seen behind them.

adjacent villages and farms; people even came from Dagda and Kraslava and other big places.

When my father and Uncle Moisey came back from Vishki (after the war), I asked what had become of our house. Father said that there was only a brick wall left.

Every inhabitant of adjacent villages and farms could receive, for some small symbolic price, the right to demolish any Jewish house and acquire the claim on all the house and the property in it. So the locals came to Vishki with hired workers and dismantled the houses, brick-by-brick, taking back the bricks

and other materials to their villages and building new houses there.

In this manner all the houses on Shulgas street and other places were dismantled. But Shulgas street and the shul were the first to be destroyed, because this was the center of the Jewish life in Vishki.

In 1948, when Tanya returned to Vishki, her family home was gone; disassembled and taken for parts, like the synagogue. Only the foundation was left. She asked former neighbors, who had taken some of her family's belongings if she could have some things back. She was given a broken chair and a piece of embroidery cloth.

But there were still good people in Vishki who remembered Tanya and her family, and she was fortunate to have the friendship of Veronika Galvene. Tanya was able to rent a house, and later got a job working as a seamstress in a sewing shop in a little green house, near where the synagogue stood.

Tanya's father Nota had a brother named Israel. It was Israel who owned the shop that became the little green house that Veronika talked about. She said there were two Dumesh brothers, but she couldn't remember the names. She was talking about Nota and Israel.

Nota and Israel were my Grandpa's 1st cousins; he would have known them well. When Grandpa left Vishki he was 10; Nota was 18 and Israel was 21. Nota's father was Leib, the brother of my great-grandfather Chaim.



Vishki Market Day showing the shops owned by Mr. Judinš and Israel Dumeš. 1927.

The photo from market day in Vishki shows the shops of Israel Dumeš and I.D.Judinš. These are the shops that Veronika spoke about. Veronika called Mr. Judinš the most prosperous in town. The I.D.Judinš sign says "manufaktūras tirgotāva" in Latvian and "мануфактур торговля" in Russian which can be roughly translated as *manufactory store*. The sign with I.Dumeš reads "preču, tabakas un stiklu tirgotava" which roughly means *goods, tobacco and glass store*.¹³

¹³ Thanks to Margo Dumesh, Leiser's granddaughter for help reading the signs.



On the left, Raisa, Julya and Tanya at the little green house. 1957

Because Tanya's uncle once owned the shop, the government gave permission for Tanya and her family to have a room in the shop. Julya's sister Raisa left Vishki in 1960 to study in Russia, where she stayed with her Aunt Tsilya. There, she met and married her classmate Vasili and they had two children, Valentina and Elena.



L to R: Raisa, Tanya, Julya

A few years later, Tanya and Julya were living in an apartment with a common kitchen in a three story building. At this time, Tanya worked as a nurse and Julya was in school.

By the early 70s, Julya was married to Lyonya and living in Daugavpils. They had two daughters, Tanya and Marina. Raisa and her family left Russia and moved to Daugavpils. It

was a joyful time for everyone. For over 10 years, the family grew.

But in 1987, tragedy struck again: Raisa was diagnosed with cancer. She had an operation, and there were complications. She did not survive.

This loss was finally more than Tanya could bear and she passed away a year later.



Julya, Lyonya, Marina, Tanya, Tanya. Daugavpils 1989

MEET JULYA DUMESH



Julya wrote:

I was born in May 1948 in Leningrad. Mum had no place to live, so she decided to go back to Vishki, her home town. There, people helped us to live. It was quite difficult, but my mother was a very strong, spirited woman.

We were a very close family, Mama, Raya¹⁴ and I. The most difficult thing was to find a job to feed the family. But in 1955, a sewing workshop opened and Mum worked there as a dressmaker. The workshop was located in the house of Mum's Uncle Israel.



Julya and Lyonya wedding. 1970

I finished my studies in Riga and worked as the manager of the post office of Vishki. After two years I went to Daugavpils and worked as a telegraphist. In 1970 I got married. My husband Leonid worked as a machinist in locomotives. We are both retired and help to raise my grandchildren.

¹⁴ *Nickname for Raisa*



Julya in Vishki. 1968

9. SCHENDER



L to R: Wulf (son of Schender), Luba, daughter Flora, Alexander and Chaim and Alexander's Bar Mitzvah in Brooklyn. 1960

To recap, there were three Dumesh brothers with three separate households, all alike in dignity, in fair Vishki ¹⁵ in 1897: Chaim, Leib, and Schender.

¹⁵ *The author was attempting to reference the opening lines of Shakespeare's Romeo And Juliet: Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona*

Chaim was my great-grandfather. We've just met the descendants of Leib; they include Tanya and Julya. Let me introduce you to some of Schender's descendants.

Schender was married twice. With first wife Nechama, Schender had 7 children. The fate of 4 of them: Sora-Tsipe, Rocha-Feiga, Hasya and Haya is unknown. It is assumed they died in the Holocaust.

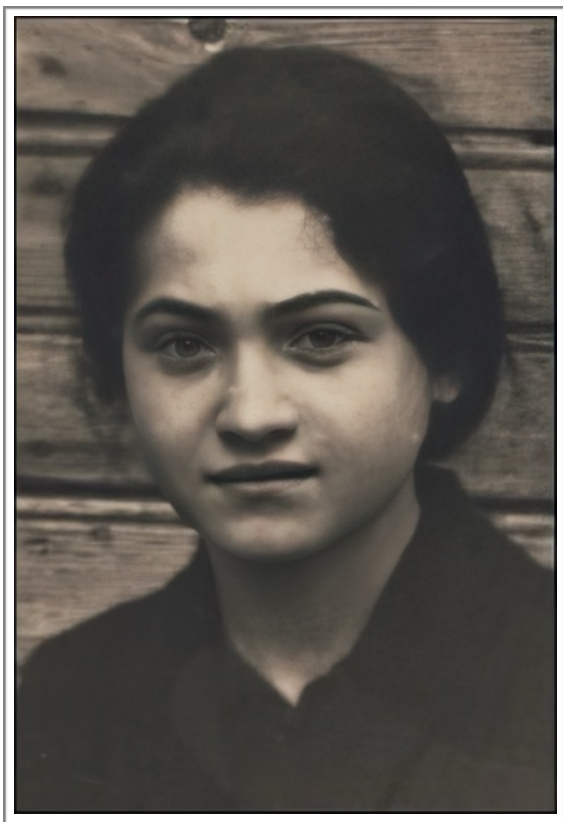
LEIB-WULF

Schender's oldest son Leib-Wulf was married to Shula Usdin. Shula was related to my friend Christine Usdin. Leib-Wulf was a school teacher in Vishki, but by 1940, Leib-Wulf and family had moved to Riga. In October 1941, they were in the ghetto; Shula died there, along with her daughters Yeva and Nechamia.

After the war, Leib-Wulf immigrated to America, where he became Wulf Dumes. He lived the rest of his life in Brooklyn, NY until his death in 1970.

It seems impossible to believe that Leib, who was born in 1899, would not have remembered his cousins in America. He was 13 when Grandpa left Vishki. But apparently, no attempt at contact was ever made after he immigrated.

My father once told me that Grandpa had hired someone to research the name *Dumes* and was told that the only people in America with that specific spelling (not *Dumas*) were our cousins -- meaning the cousins we already knew about.



Shula Usdin Dumesh

Perhaps Grandpa was attempting to find out if any of his Vishki cousins made it to America after the war. In any case, it appears the researcher wasn't particularly good; there are lots and lots of unrelated people named Dumes in America.

Basketball player Devan Dumes comes to mind. He's far too tall to be related to my family¹⁶ Though ironically he did play for Vincennes University, located in my hometown.

LUBA

Schender's daughter Luba was able to evacuate to Russia during the war where she met and married Chaim Zilberstein.

In 1950, Luba, Chaim and their son Sander, age 3, named after his grandfather Schender, immigrated to the US. After immigration, Sander became Alexander in America. A daughter Flora was born a couple of years later. Alexander has passed away. I have been unsuccessful in locating Flora.

If you ever read this, Flora, your cousin Rina in Israel would like to be in touch. She remembers when your brother Alexander came to visit.

¹⁶ And yes, Devan Dumes is Black. But it's true about my family being mostly short.

JOSSEL



Jossel Dumesh, son of Schender 1924

Younger son Jossel moved to Riga in 1926 with his wife Dina, daughter Baschewa. Jossel and his family died in the Riga ghetto in 1941.

LEAH



Leah Dumesh Riga 1933

Leah was born in 1915, the youngest child of Schender Dumesh and only child with Schender's 2nd wife, Freida-Pera. Schender died at the mental hospital in nearby Daugavpils in 1926.

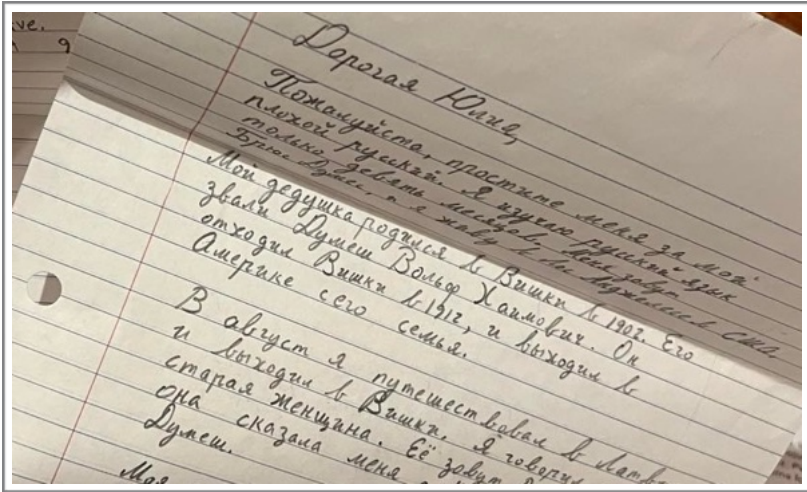
After Schender's death, Leah and her mother moved to Riga. Their financial circumstances were dire, and Leah was placed in a shelter where she lived from 1926 until 1930.

In 1933, Leah married and moved to what was then still called Palestine. In 1948, the same year of the creation of the modern state of Israel, a daughter Rina was born and a few years later, a son, Zvi-Hersh.



Rina and family. 2021

10. THE LETTER



Julya kept the letter I wrote introducing myself.

It was back in 2007, a month or so after D and I returned home from Latvia that I received an email from Lolita. She had consulted with her mother, and they felt pretty certain they had the name and address of Tanya Dumesh's daughter.

Whoever Tanya Dumesh OR her daughter is! I would have thought at the time.

So I wrote Julya a letter¹⁷.

¹⁷ If this were a movie, I'd have Joe Cocker's version of *The Letter* playing right after I said "a letter", while I'm pictured laboriously writing the letter.

I briefly mentioned in a prior chapter that Julia had two daughters, Marina and Tanya. Tanya is the elder sister, married to Sasha. Marina is married to Misha.

Marina and I have been the *point people* for our family branches. Marina speaks English beautifully, so even though I still enjoy Russian, I usually make it easy on myself and rely on her expertise with English.



Julia singing in Riga. 1969

Marina, Tanya, and Julia looked at Dumes.net and understood how they were connected to my family tree. Marina pointed out that on Dumes.net, I had her grandmother Tanya listed as Traina.

This was the name listed in the archives in the birth documents. I now list Tanya as a nickname for her to honor both the documentation and her adopted name.

There's no way to know now if she was called Tanya as a child, or if she adopted it to be more Russian sounding after she was in the Urals. Julia said that she had only ever known her mother as Tanya. And so, the riddle —

"Who is Tanya Dumesh?" — ends with the realization that Tanya was my second cousin 1x removed.

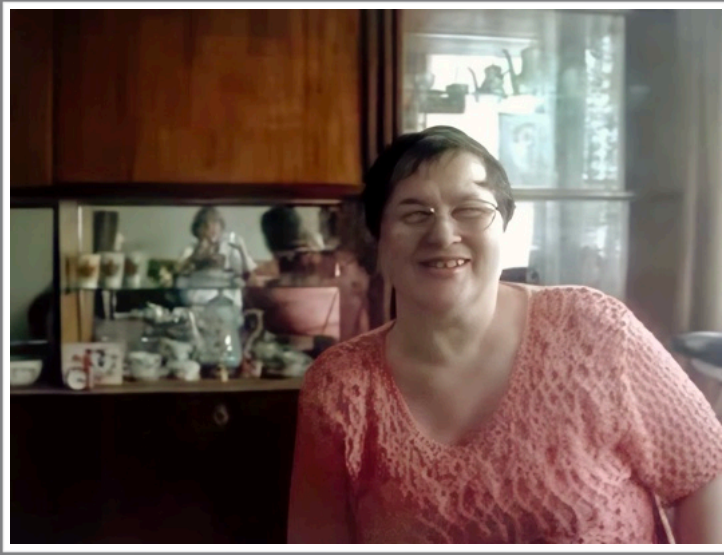
Marina sent me some photos, but there were precious few from before the war. When Tanya and her sister fled to the Urals, they had no photos with them. The only pre-war photos were given to Tanya by friends after Tanya returned to Vishki.

My friend Christine Usdin was as excited as I was about the discovery of my cousins. She decided to make a trip to Latvia to meet them! Since Julya had grown up in Vishki, she had known some of Christine's relatives who had lived there when she was a girl.

Christine's fluency in Russian enabled her to be completely at ease. I am still much better at written Russian, as opposed to spoken Russian, which I find to be a mix of fun and terror, kind of like a roller-coaster.

Christine made a video of Julya, Tanya, Marina and Marina's son Max. Marina acts as host/narrator/translator. She makes a joke that they are trying to speak a little French because Christine was French.

Julya is imploring me to come visit them in Daugavpils. The video is available to watch on the *Remember Vishki* website.



Julya is asking me to come to Daugavpils, from Christine's video.

They mention several foods including *shashlik*¹⁸. I should mention that I really like food. It is possible that I might refer to cuisine a few more times in these stories.

In my emails, I would sometimes ask Marina about what they eat and I mentioned shashlik because of D. D learned about shashlik from a high school Russian class. Her teacher, Mr. Slovik (Mikhail Ivanovich), had a weekly *Russian Culture Day* (культурный день), and one day they learned about shashlik. When I started learning Russian, D made a joke in Russian about shashlik. I asked Marina about it, and so they figured I must really like shashlik!

¹⁸ *Shashlik is like shish kebab; skewered and grilled cubes of meat.*

In the video, Julya promises me shashlik when I come to visit.
And shashlik I got!

They are the warmest, sweetest people you'll ever meet. I knew that as soon as I saw the video and heard their voices. I feel emotional watching it now, and I've seen it hundreds of times. If not for Christine going to meet them, and making this video, it wouldn't exist.

For Julya's 60th birthday, I sent her this image as a large, printed photo. It's a picture from the 2006 Dumes family reunion. I added the caption:

Dear cousin Julya. Happy Birthday from Bruce, Debra and all of your American cousins! May 2008. Love and best wishes for many more!



Дорогая кузина Юля. С Днем Рождения от Брюса, Дебра и все твои американские кузины! Май 2008.
Любовь и наилучшие пожелания на многие другие дни рождения!

11. BACK IN THE FORMER USSR



Leiser and Bruce at Jurmala. 2009

In 2009, I returned to Latvia!

Genrikh, Leiser's elder son, picked me up at the airport and got me to my hotel. Genrikh is a really good person and was a devoted son. Leiser wrote to me of Genrikh's kindness and generosity, which I experienced when I visited Riga.

I've had the chance to become a little friendly with a number of Leiser's relatives over the years. The descendants of Genoch Dumesh are admirable and intelligent people. We may not be connected through our biological DNA, but we are all descendants of Vishki. That is a cultural bond. We are

all in some way a product of where we came from, even if rebelling against it.

Leiser and Genrikh met me at my hotel in Riga. Genrikh acted as host, chauffeur and translator, taking me around to a number of addresses that I wanted to check out.



"What about the sausages?" – Alex Perchov from the movie "Everything Is Illuminated"

I had sent Leiser a list of places I'd like to see, places where some of my cousins lived before and during the war. Leiser had arranged them in logical order and we set out to find them.

Some of the addresses were in what had been the Jewish ghetto in Riga. I don't believe in ghosts, but there were still echoes of pain and suffering that penetrated the air and darkened the sky when I was there in 2009.

We headed for Jurmala (pronounced *Your mala* with the accent on the 1st syllable). *Jur*, Leiser told me, means *sea* and *mala* means *shore* in Latvian.

Jurmala was, during Soviet times, one of the most popular resort destinations in the Soviet Union, especially with the party leaders.

Genrikh told me that when the highway from Riga to Jurmala was built in 1968, it was the nicest highway in the Soviet Union. Whenever a Russian filmmaker wanted to portray an American highway, they would use the road to Jurmala.

We had great lunch of sausages and beer at a nice place on the shore. We sat outside, even though it was a bit cool. The waitress came over and put a blanket around each of our shoulders. I asked Genrikh and Leiser if this was a Latvian tradition. They in turn asked the waitress if this was a tradition, and she said, “Well, only when it’s cold.”

After lunch, Genrikh showed me more of Riga until it was time to say goodbye and catch the train to Daugavpils.



Leiser with a blanket around his shoulders.

12. HELLO, DAUGAVPILS!



Lyonya, Bruce, Max in front, Julya, Marina, Misha, Lyudmila, Tanya, Nastya, Sasha

I saw them first. They were waiting as the train pulled up. I could see Julya looking around nervously, trying to guess which door I'd come out of as I was lumbering through the train cars with both of my travel bags. There were a number of train cars, and I managed to pick the one that would be the longest walk from the station on arrival.

I recognized them all immediately. Marina and I had been exchanging emails regularly since we made contact, so I had seen recent photos of everyone. Marina's young son Max

decided from the first that he was going to be my friend, and he announced it to everyone: Брюс - мой друг! (Bruce is my friend).

It is such an honor to be welcomed into a family that is so close. Julya told me at the train station that she welcomed me not as a cousin but as a brother.

We went to Julya's house for dinner, which was really wonderful. They asked me if I'd be afraid of eating mushrooms that her husband Lyonya found, but Lyonya knows his mushrooms. I had a really wonderful soup that Julya made with them.



Tench fish

We had some blins, which is very much like a blintz, with sour cream. There is a Russian expression, Первый блин

КОМОМ, which means the first blin is a lump. Similar to the idea that the first pancake is always bad, because usually the pan isn't hot enough yet.

The word “blin” is also a mild swear word, as in “Blin, I locked my keys in the car!”



Chicken in jelly

We had some fried tench fish that Lyonya caught. I had never heard of tench fish, but it was very tasty. Apparently they are considered invasive in Canada, so Lyonya should get an award from Trudeau. He has single-handedly reduced the tench population in Latgale.

We had tomatoes and cucumbers, sliced kielbasa, chicken in a jelly made from consommé, which also was very tasty. So much food! Julya loves to see people eat.

For dessert we had wild strawberries that Lyonya had collected. These look very much like ornamental strawberries, very small and round-ish, which my wife says are inedible, but these are delicious. Julya is diabetic and doesn't eat sugar, so she has these strawberries in her tea to make it sweeter.

Julya told me that her poor nutrition when she was young had left her with a lifetime of health issues, so she loved to see people eat well. One day when we were going out, Julya turned to Marina's husband Misha and asked him if he had lunch yet. He said "Yes", and she said, "Well, when we come back this afternoon I have some food for you", ignoring the fact that he said yes. And he nodded his head in assent that he would eat.



Wild strawberries picked by Lyonya

13. PICNIC IN VISHKI



Tanya, Lena, Marina, Bruce. 2009

To paraphrase Jonathan Safran Foer in *Everything Is Illuminated*, Vishki does not exist for me, I exist because of it. I am who I am, at least partly, because of Vishki. I was drawn to Vishki because of its existence.

Of course, it's just a place like any other place. The countryside is very beautiful, and, as I said before, reminiscent of many parts of rural America. Planet Earth, in general, is a pretty nice place. Here's hoping that it stays that way for a long time to come.



Ilya, baby Artyom and Sandris

We drove towards Vishki and stopped along the way to collect some wildflowers to place at the memorial to the Jews of Vishki and Dagda, just outside of Vishki.

We parked at the edge of town and walked up the street. Julya spoke about each house, as well as the houses no longer there; who lived here or there and memories of them. As we walked through town, Vishki-ites would recognize Julya and come over to greet her.

We've caught up to where we were when I introduced you to Julya.

It's an unusually hot, humid day in June 2009, and I'm once again in Vishki. Julya showed me the little green house, and we were able to go inside. Julya described what her life was like there.

There isn't much to the house. I don't know how people live there during the winter; uncomfortably, would be the answer, I suppose. To say that the house "needs work" would be flattery.

Still, I found it absolutely charming. Honestly. To me, this house is an important character in my story. Lolita, Veronika and the gardening man spoke of Tanya Dumesh and this house.

In the first email I received from Marina, she spoke of how emotional she felt when she saw the photo that I had taken of the house. To her, this was the house that her mother and grandmother once lived in. This was the house she remembers playing around when she spent childhood summers in Vishki.

I toyed with the idea of trying to buy it, but managing the care of it from America is a crazy idea.

It was after seeing the photo of the little green house in 1927, when it was Israel Dumesh's shop, that I decided to write this book. I've been carrying around these stories in my head, but I didn't know how to tell them in a coherent way. That's why I chose to introduce Julya to you starting from the moment when she was on the porch of the house. When I took the photo, it felt like time traveling.



Julya inside the house

The folks living there were nice, albeit a tad suspicious, I think. Understandably. But they graciously let us in and tried to show us around, though really Julya led the tour.

Memories of her childhood in Vishki were very present in her mind. As she told the stories, it was as if she were describing events from the previous week.

There were no luxuries, practically no possessions at all. A television with satellite dish. Bed sheets for curtains. But there were fresh cut flowers on the table and a beautiful light came into the house.

We went to see the apartment building where Tanya and Julya lived starting in 1962. An elderly lady who lived in the building at that time still lived there; she came out to talk to



Lena, friend, Julya, Tanya

us. She knew Julya as a girl and then later Marina as a girl when she would come to stay with her grandmother in Summer. Marina told me that the lady seemed exactly the same to her as she did when she was a girl.

Julya showed me where they grew potatoes and learned to make a delicious soup from the sorrel that grows wild in Vishki. The emotion and loss in her voice felt like tears in the humid summer air as she spoke about her mother and sister.

Marina and I often talk about Vishki. When she was a girl, Marina would spend summers there, staying with her grandmother Tanya. She remembers climbing up the windows of the little green house, and grew up hearing about the house.



Tanya and Julya planting potatoes around 1962.

It was a short walk to Veronika Galvene's house from Tanya's apartment. It is a tiny, but picturesque cottage, which was once surrounded by other homes, Jewish homes, that no longer exist.

Seeing it made me think of the story that Veronika told us and how she cried as she told the story, watching her friends being taken and being helpless to stop it. She mimed a baby in its mother's arms as she spoke about how no Jew was spared.



Veronika Galvene's house

Those who were killed died only once; Veronika, as a survivor of the terror, was forced to relive these moments many times in her memory with such pain and anguish.

We went to the cemetery. I showed them Genoch Dumesh's grave and the grave of my great-grandfather, Chaim Dumesh, Julya's great-grand-uncle.



Picnic time! Lyonya and Ilya, Tanya's son, taught me to cast a line, but no one was having much fishing success that day, not even Lyonya! Fortunately, there was no shortage of food.



14. MY LUNCH WITH JULYA



Дорогая кузина Юля. С Днем Рождения от Брюса, Дебра и все твои американские кухни! Май 2008.
Любовь и наилучшие пожелания на многие другие дни рождения!

When I entered Julia's home, the birthday photo I sent to her was framed and proudly hanging.

I'm sad to report that many of the faces in this photo are no longer living. Those of you who read this and are in the photo, you'll be pleased to know that Julia got a personal introduction to your photograph. Julia took the photo down from the wall and asked me for each person's name and how they were related to her.

Julia loved to feed people. My maternal grandmother, Ida Zucker Abels, also loved to cook and to feed people. My siblings were indifferent to food, so Grandma Abels loved to watch me eat. She was a spectacular cook. There are some things unique to Romanian Jewish cuisine; the style of Hamantashen, for example. They are filled with crumbled

walnuts and honey, with a soft dough, not the cookie-like dough that you usually see with poppy seed filling.

Julya told me that she wanted to prepare something different for me every day that I was visiting. Lyonya made a joke that she has a cookbook with a 1,000 recipes in it and she's only made 5 of them.

Lyonya is a really nice man, a real *mensch*¹⁹, as they say. He makes the family laugh all the time. He loves to joke and do funny things. Julya's family are all among the nicest and warmest people I have ever met.



Cold borscht

¹⁹ A person of integrity and honor.

Lunch started with delicious cold borscht (холодный борщ) and an appetizer of home-pickled peppers and cucumbers. Julya made two types of herring. One was chopped with eggs and onions into a traditional Jewish dish called *farshmak*.

You can eat farshmak as is; it has a pâté like texture, very much like chopped liver. It's also wonderful on bread and butter, which is how they like to eat it. Marina told me that Julya always said to her as a child, "Without salt, it is not tasty. Without bread, it is not substantial."

She also had some marinated salted herring and onions; Julya suggested that I place this on bread too. Lyonya made a wonderful dish with grated potatoes that are formed into a ball with chopped meat on the inside, which are first boiled, then browned in a pan and cooked in a sauce. I can hear D thinking "You had me at potatoes."



The grave of Tanya Dumesh

Later, we looked through her photo albums, and then we went to the cemetery in Daugavpils to see the graves of mother Tanya and sister Raisa.

They told me that Tanya loved the little wild strawberries that Lyonya likes to collect, and next to her grave, some wild



"The Twins" - Misha's Mum and Julya

strawberries started growing, all on their own, what D calls a *volunteer plant*. There were ferns, also *volunteers*, growing around Raisa's grave, and they were a favorite of Raisa.

Because they could not go to nature, nature kindly came to them.

I just happened to think about the pronunciation of Dumesh as I was writing this. The name Думиш, as it is spelled on Tanya's grave, should be pronounced Dumish, with the second vowel sound of *ee* instead of *eh*. I just asked Marina and she verified that they pronounce it as such, while we use the *eh* sound in Dumes.

SHABBAT WITH LENA AND SERGEY

Marina is very interested in her Jewish heritage and spent some time in Israel. When we visited the cemetery and cleaned up Chaim's grave, Marina sang *Adon Olam*, which she learned in Israel, as a tribute. There's a video on the Remember Vishki website.

Marina had the idea of having a Shabbat dinner with candles, wine, challah and blessings. Lena and Sergey were very kind in hosting us.

Lena is a professional cook. She used to manage a hotel near Vishki and teaches cooking. She has cooked for the former president of Latvia and even King Charles, when he was still Prince! So of course, everything was wonderful.

There was veal. Lena says she'll buy veal for Sergey when he's been really good. Potatoes, mushrooms, salad, all kinds of wonderful things.

Lyonya asked if it was acceptable to have a mixture of traditions, with wine and vodka. Personally, I thought it was an excellent idea. It was a wonderful evening.



Lena's veal and potatoes.

15. SHASHLIK



My last full day in Daugavpils was the best. We had a really nice picnic, and it was a special day for everyone. Marina said that they rarely get together as a whole group, and that alone made it special.

The site was along the river *Daugava*. *Pils* is castle in Latvian. There was a structure there that you could climb up and see an incredible view. Marina pointed out that on the back of the 10 Latu bill, you see this view of the Daugava pictured.

The location was amazing, an extraordinarily beautiful view. "прекрасный вид, да?", I said to Misha's Dad, trying to think of something that I knew how to say in Russian. It means, "It's a beautiful view, isn't it?" It worked! He understood me and replied something like, "Ну, да" (Well, yes).



Pardon me while I have a strange linguistic interlude:

Вид (*pronounced vid, rhymes with "weed"*) is interesting because the verb "to see" is видеть (*videt*), so вид is technically "a sight", but it is understood to mean "a view to look at".

The English word "video" comes from the Latin videre, "to see". The 1st person singular form of videre is "video": I see. Russian



Picnic at the Daugava group. 2009

was showing off its Proto-Indo-European (or PIE) heritage, from the East Slavic branch of the language tree.

A cognate is what you call a word having the same linguistic derivation as another; that is, from the same original word or root "To see" is a cognate between Latin "videre" and Russian "видеть(videt)".

The picnic was a chance to get to know everyone being a bit more themselves; Sasha and Ilya playing football (soccer), Julya and Misha's Mom hanging out -- they call them "the twins". Lyonya was doing calisthenics in the open field.

Julya was so worried about me playing football with Ilya and Sasha, probably with good reason; this is not where my skills reside. But I felt like it was the right thing to do, because they gave me a beautiful jersey and scarf for their local team.



Ilya and Bruce with gifted soccer jersey.

Marina showed me how to pick the wild strawberries. They are so tiny that you can fit more than a dozen in your hand, and so sweet. If you've never eaten a strawberry straight off the plant -- the intensity of the flavor is extraordinary.

Misha and Marina provided the meat for shashlik which they marinated the night before with onions, and everyone (except me) brought wonderful things to eat. Julya made rice and brought pickled tomatoes and cucumbers. Lena and Sergey brought wine, vodka, challah leftover from Shabbat, and other neat stuff.

Sergey was the shashlik-meister. The tomato on top was one of his traditions. It was really delicious!



Shashlik à la Sergey

In 2011, Cousin Art organized another Dumes family reunion, this time in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Leiser asked his grandson Vadim, who is a filmmaker, to record him congratulating the Dumesh of America on their reunion. We played the video on the opening night of the Reunion, and it is available to watch at the Remember Vishki website.

Julya really wanted to come, but her health prohibited the travel required. However, we were able to share it with them over the internet. It might be hard to remember the state in the internet in 2011, but the technology was quite limited by today's standards.



Marina, Julya and Tanya via Skype 2011

By this time, Tanya and Marina were living in England with their families. Julya and Lyonya were still in Daugavpils.

Julya, Tanya and Marina sang for us and introduced themselves to all the cousins present. It was an amazing moment. People were crying.

Marina is a grandmother now! I asked Marina for an update, which she kindly provided. Marina wrote:

At the end of 2009, due to the difficult economic situation in the country, Marina and Tanya decided to move to England with their families. Marina's daughter Anastasija got married and her son Timur is now 2 years old.

Tanya is also about to become a grandmother: Lyudmila is now expecting a baby. Lena's son Nikita also lived in England for several years but returned to Latvia after the tragic passing of his father Sergej.

Raisa's elder daughter Valentina has passed away. Her daughter Svetlana and two grandsons Artyom and Dmitry live in England and her younger daughter Olga and granddaughter Anastasija live in Daugavpils.

Julya passed away in February 2023.

16. SAY THE DEAD MAN'S NAME



Photographing the graves in 2007.

There is an expression to which several cultures lay claim. Before becoming a genealogist, D was an Egyptologist. She says that the Egyptians said it first:

To say the dead man's name is to make him live again.

The Nazis didn't want to just kill the Jews. They wanted to eradicate any evidence of their existence. *To remove their names.*

One of my projects was to get good photos of each grave in the Vishki Jewish cemetery. My hope was to improve upon the list published in JewishGen. After all, the date had been

mis-transcribed by Aleks Feigmanis for Chaim's grave. There were probably other errors. My hope was to get good photos of each grave and improved transcriptions.

However, the stones required a lot of cleaning in order to be read. I hadn't anticipated this and had no tools with me. Just a camera. So I did the best I could with what I had.

KLAUS-PETER REX

In the summer of 2008, Klaus-Peter Rex, a German priest, led an international group of youths to perform a one week restoration project of the Vishki cemetery. Klaus-Peter and volunteers performed this work across Europe every year in different locations.

Part of their project, in addition to clean-up and minor repair is to carefully photograph every grave with special techniques to help the legibility without damaging the stones.

Klaus also made a map with the stones numbered. I hope to have the map included as an insert to this book, or maybe I can print up some and send one to people on request. I also made an interactive version online at the Remember Vishki website.

During Soviet times, it was quite common for the stones to be taken and used to make roads. Klaus-Peter found some stones tied up, leaning against a wall, ready to be shipped out. On Klaus-Peter's map, these are the ones given the alphabetic identifier rather than a number.

I think this is why there are so few graves from the 1930s. They would have been towards the front of the cemetery where there are no marked graves now. I believe those stones were already removed and used in some road somewhere.

FINDING GENOCH

Leiser wrote:

When all the Jews in Vishki were gathered, Genoch refused to go. He was immediately shot and buried in a hole that was dug by the road.

There were eye-witnesses. They showed my father where Genoch was killed. Father and his brother Moisey took his remains to the Jewish cemetery, setting a tombstone by the grave. Genoch's soul finally rested in peace.

One of Leiser's regrets was that he had never seen Genoch's grave. He didn't know where it was in the cemetery. He was unable to find it on his last trip to Vishki with his younger brother Wulf.

When Leiser was younger, his father Israel would ask him to go with him to Vishki, so that he could show him the grave. But Leiser was a young man and thought *we can always go some other time*. But by the time his father died, that time had never come.

Leiser, Vadim and I spent quite a while looking through all of the photos and data. First, the photos I took in 2007, then the numbered ones that Klaus-Peter took in 2008.



Wulf on the left with Leiser at the cemetery. 2003

When I returned to Vishki in 2009, we got a better photo. With a mighty team assembled consisting of Lyonya, Misha, Marina, myself and мой друг (my friend) Max, who refused to stay at Julya's, we ventured off to Vishki.

We worked on the grave of Genoch Dumesh. The overgrown grasses made it difficult to find. Lyonya brought a scythe to cut the grass around the grave.

The cleaned up grave of Genoch further identifies it. We could now see a capital Г (G) and a Дым (Dum) Interesting to

see that they used the Russian letters for the name. There weren't any Jewish stone workers who survived the war in Vishki.



We were able to say with certainty that we found the grave of Genoch. I think it really meant a lot to Leiser to know that it still exists and how to find it.

When Leiser finished secondary school in Riga after the war, he left for St. Petersburg, which was still Leningrad at that time, to study at the Institute of Railroad Engineering. He returned to Riga when he completed his studies, where he worked for 44 years in the Riga's Electrical Machinery Factory



Misha and Marina shade the lettering on Chaim's grave.

Daugavpils.

Christine Usdin died in 2014. She was an enthusiastic researcher, a good friend and as a fellow descendent of Vishki, she did the old town proud.

Lolita Kozlovska died in 2018. If it hadn't been for Lolita, I wouldn't have met Veronika.

Julya died in February 2023 after a long period of illness.

(RER) and raised his sons Genrikh and Boris with his wife Nonna. He retired in 2000.

Leiser passed away in 2014. There are some other people in my story who have passed on.

Veronika Galvene died in 2009. After I connected with Julya, Julya went to see her, and they had a very warm and tearful reunion. If it hadn't been for Veronika, I wouldn't have heard about Tanya's daughter in

THE NAMES



In these tables, the N° column refers to the numbers which Klaus-Peter assigned to the graves. There are some names which do not have Klaus-Peter numbers. Unfortunately, we realized after Klaus-Peter and his team were finished that a few organizational errors were made, i.e. the use of the same number or missing photos.

Credit for most of the translations goes to Avraham Malthete. I am greatly indebted to him for his time and knowledge, which he generously shared with us.

Please take a few minutes to say some of the names, and help them to live again. It's a *mitzvah*, which is a really nice thing to do.

1840s

Year	Month	Firstname	Father	N°
1841	Nov 28	Peshe, daughter of	Yitzhak	139
1843	Dec 22	Sarah, daughter of	David	135
1843		Hene, daughter of	Zeev	218
1844	Oct 27	Shlomo, son of	Azriel	163
1845	Nov 14	Shlomo, son of	Ezrial	162
1846	Oct 5	Tobiah-Meir, son of	Yehudah- Halevi	71
1847	Apr 9	Sheine, daughter of	Efrayim	134
1848	Jan 13	Abraham, son of	Moshe	160
1848	Jun 29	Rahel, daughter of	Yehuda	188
1848	Jul 2	Yosef, son of	Eliezer	159
1849		Nechama, daughter of	Yehuda	

1849	Apr 1	Shalom, son of	Eliyahu	158
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1849	Nov 6	Eliezer, son of	Shlomo	157
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1850s

Year	Month	Firstname	Father	N°
1850		Eliezer, Son of	Shlomo	
1850		Hasya, daughter of	Yehuda-Leib	
1851	Dec	Ekha, daughter of	Yehuda	186
1852	Apr 11	Shima-Frida, daughter of	Yosef	185
1852	Oct 2	Hana-Rivke, daughter of	Yehuda	14
1853	Jul 8	Yitzhak, son of	Tsevi (Tzvi)	183
1853	Nov 11	Gele, son of	Hayim	182
1853	Nov 21	Haya, daughter of	Treitel	155
1854	Sep 20	Yosef, son of	Israel Halevi	181
1856	Jan 23	Zelda, daughter of	Hayim	270
1856	Nov 27	Rivka, daughter of	Isser (Asher)	200

1857	Sep 19	?	Hayim	180
1859	Oct 18	Manoach, son of	Eliyahu	217
1859	Dec 28	Mindel, son of	Eliezer	216

1860s

Year	Month	Last name	Firstname	Father	N°
1860			Peshe, daughter of	Yitzhak	
1860			Moshe, son of	Eliahu	
1860			Mendel, son of	Eliezer	216
1860	Mar 31		Abraham- Hayim, son of	Yehosh ua	199
1860	May 27		Esther, daughter of	David	178
1861			Meita Yokheved(?), daughter of	Azar bar Yayim	
1861	Feb 21		Meir(?), son of	Shlomo	233
1861	May 9		?a woman, daughter of	?	198
1862	Mar 1st		Frida, daughter of	Yeshaya hu	177
1864			Yohanan-Eli, son of	Yehuda	

1865			Abraham, son of	Yehuda	
1865	Nov 30	the children	Yosef and Yekhiel, sons of		302
1865/ 1866		Palkin	Zelde, daughter of	Aba-Moshe	228
1866	Aug 7		Yehoshua, son of	Tzvi	153
1867	Jan 4		Tsippe, daughter of	?	63
1867	Nov 20		Shalom, son of	Yehuda-Leib	57
1867	May 6		...Aba, son of	Zeev	99
1868	Oct 31		Frume, daughter of	Shmuel	98
1868	Dec 12		Reuven, son of	Mordec hai	97
1869	Feb 20		Ziskind, son of	Juda	95
1869	Apr 27		Sarah-Malka, daughter of	Yehoshua	55
1869	Nov 28		Hasya, daughter of	Moshe	89

1870s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1870		Shub	Israel- Abraham, son of	Baruch- David	F
1870	Feb 23		Sh...	Shmuel	273
1872			Mehulihal, son of	Natan	
1872	Jan 20		Shifre, daughter of	Aba Hayim	196
1873			Tsvi, son of	Arye Leib	
1873	Nov 26		Malka, daughter of	Yehel (Yehuda)	91
1874	Mar 10		Abraham, son of	David	58
1874	Mar 27		Shmuel, son of	Hayim Halevi	90
1875	Feb 9		Natan, son of	Nahum	103
1876	Jan 29		Hasya, daughter of	Moshe	59

1876	May 24	Hinde-Haya, daughter of	Meir- Eliahu	49
1877	Jul 7	Sarah-Rivka, daughter of	Yehuda	64
1878	Jan 13	Yitzhak, son of	Yehuda	84
1878	Aug 3	Idel, son of	Shlomo	65
1879	Apr 2	Yosef, son of	Yitzhak	72

1880s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1881	Jan 10		Golde, daughter of	Yosef	92
1881	Aug 14	Amdur	Pesha-Rada, daughter of	Lipman	236
1881			Sarah, daughter of	Alexander -Sender	
1882	Jan 12		David-Zeev, son of	Yosef	96
1882	Nov 22		Yeshayahu, son of	Yehoshua -Noah	81
1883			Naftali-Herz, son of	Natan	134
1883	Jan 2	Shnipt (?)	Shmuel, son of	Yosef	67
1883	Jan 3		Rahel, daughter of	Natan	82
1883	Feb 9		Blume, daughter of	Yitzhak	195
1883	Feb 11		Libe-Yente, daughter of	Shlomo	66
1884	Jul 30		Eita, son of	Meir	52

1884	Oct 4		Eliahu, son of	Yitzhak	74
1885			Tsirel, son of	Abraham	50
1885			Shlomo-Zalman, son of	Abraham	
1885			Hayim-Meir, son of	Shlomo	
1885	Jan 1	Katz	Jakov, son of	Zelig	79
1885	Mar 6		Fruma-Elke, daughter of	Dan	51
1885	May 25		Rute, daughter of	Abraham-Aba	
1885	Dec 10		Shterne-Rachel, daughter of	Aharon	60
1885	Dec 31		Kaufman, son of	Yosef-Halevi	53
1886			Yakov, son of	Yekhiel-Michel	
1886		Usdin	Eliakim, son of	Hayim	
1886	Jan 3		Kaufman, son of	Yosef	53

1886	Apr 12	Ite-Golde, daughter of	Shmuel	68
1887	Feb 19	Hayim-Israel, son of	Yekhiel- Avraham	86
1888		Naftali, son of	Hertz	56
1888	May 21	Dite, daughter of	Abraham- Aba	78
1889		Bluma, daughter of	Yitzhak	195
1889	Apr 22	Shime, daughter of	Shimon	88
1889	Jun 6	Tsippe, daughter of	Abraham	62
1889	Oct 4	Shlomo, son of	Abraham Halevi	80

1890s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1890	May 7		Hena, daughter of	Zeev	218
1890			Hene, daughter of	Yosef	161
1890	Oct 27		Shlomo, son of	Azriel	163
1890	Oct 29		Hana, daughter of	Aharon	38
1891	Nov 12		Beila-Sheit, daughter of	Aba	43
1891			Hayim, son of	Yehuda- Leib	
1891	Jul 23		Tsevi-Hirsh, son of	Shmuel	76
1891	Aug 24		Yosef, son of	Zeev	42
1892			Lein, son of	Shaul	
1892	May 11		Aba-Gala, son of	Aba	110
1892			Abraham- Aba, son of	Dov Halevi	

1892	Nov 11		Sheindel, son of	Moshe	44
1893	Mar 5		Haya-Sara, daughter of	Aba	111
1893			Hana, daughter of	Aron	
1893	Nov 22		Haya-Hinde, daughter of	Tzvi- Heshel	36
1893	Dec 13		Hayim- David, son of	Avraham	129 (R)
1894			Shmuel, son of	Aron-Zelig	28
1894			Meita, daughter of	May	
1894			Bluma, daughter of	Israel	
1894	May 23	Minsler	Yale, daughter of	Yerachmiel	47
1894	May 30		Betzabel, daughter of	Shmuel	48
1894	Aug 18	Heskin	Shmuel- Gershon, son of		29
1894	Sep 25		Zolkind, son of	Lipan	115

1894	Dec 5		Haya-Peshe, daughter of	Hil(?)	129 (L)
1895	Feb 20		Yehoshua- Zelig, son of	Meir Hacohen	24
1895			Yosef, son of	Zeev	42
1896			Yekhiel- Abraham, son of	Yakov	112
1896			Haya-Sora, daughter of	Abba	111
1896			Mishirael, son of	Moshe	
1896	Aug 10	Rozey	Lasha-Bune, daughter of	Yitzhak	114
1897	Mar 5		Yechiel- Abraham, son of	Yaakov	112
1898	Oct 29		Gitel, daughter of	Zvi	69
1899			Mezohavav (?), son of	Yehuda	
1899	Jan 20		Hinde, daughter of	Israel	30
1899	Feb 11		Libe-Yente, daughter of		

1899

Feb 27

Haya-Sarah, Aba(?)
daughter of

304

1900s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1900		Usdin	Sora-Piesha, daughter of	Moshe	194
1900	Jan 25		Gitel, daughter of	Shlomo	73
1900	Apr 20		Shime, daughter of	Shimon	88
1901			Mirke, daughter of	Levinson Halevi	
1901	Feb 27		Beitel-Eliezer, son of	Lipman	237
1901	Aug 4	Omrud (?)	Peshe-Rada, daughter of	Lipman	236
1902	Dec 21		Beyle, daughter of	Natan (?)	299
1903	Apr 3		Haya-Rivke, daughter of	Abraham	75
1904	Feb 10	Dumes	Chaim- Yehoshua, son of	Zev	125
1904	Apr 20	Pavde	Sheinele, daughter of	Dov	126

1904	Jun 10		Haya-Sora, daughter of	Yehudah	32
1904	Aug 7		Frume, daughter of	Baruch (?)	245
1904	Dec 18	Heller	Rachel, daughter of	Shimon- Leib	214
1905	Apr 25		Shalom, son of	David	61
1906	Feb 17		Michle-Beil, daughter of	Dov	240
1908	Jul 10		Shmuel, son of	Aba	21
1909	Jan 18		Idel (Yudel), son of	Israel Ha cohen	208
1909	Nov 25		Feibesh- Mendel, son of	Yosef- Leib	87

1910s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1910			Mussa, son of	Hayim-Meir	
1910	Mar 14		Sara, daughter of	Baruch	202
1910	Nov 7	Notkin	Gershen-Reuven, son of	Nahum	243
1911	Mar 6		Shlomo-Yehudah, son of	Shabtai	238
1912	Feb19		Abraham-Aba, son of	Dov Halevi	209
1912	Aug 2		The virgin?, daughter of	Hayim-Israel	252
1914	Apr 11		Heyuda-Leib, son of	Hayim	192
1914	Jan 4		Rivka-Dvora, daughter of	Tsevi Halevi	45
1915	Apr or May	Dumesh	Hasya, daughter of		70
1915	Dec 21	Usdin	Nachman, son of	Eliokim	
1915			Dvora, daughter of	Tsvi Halevi	

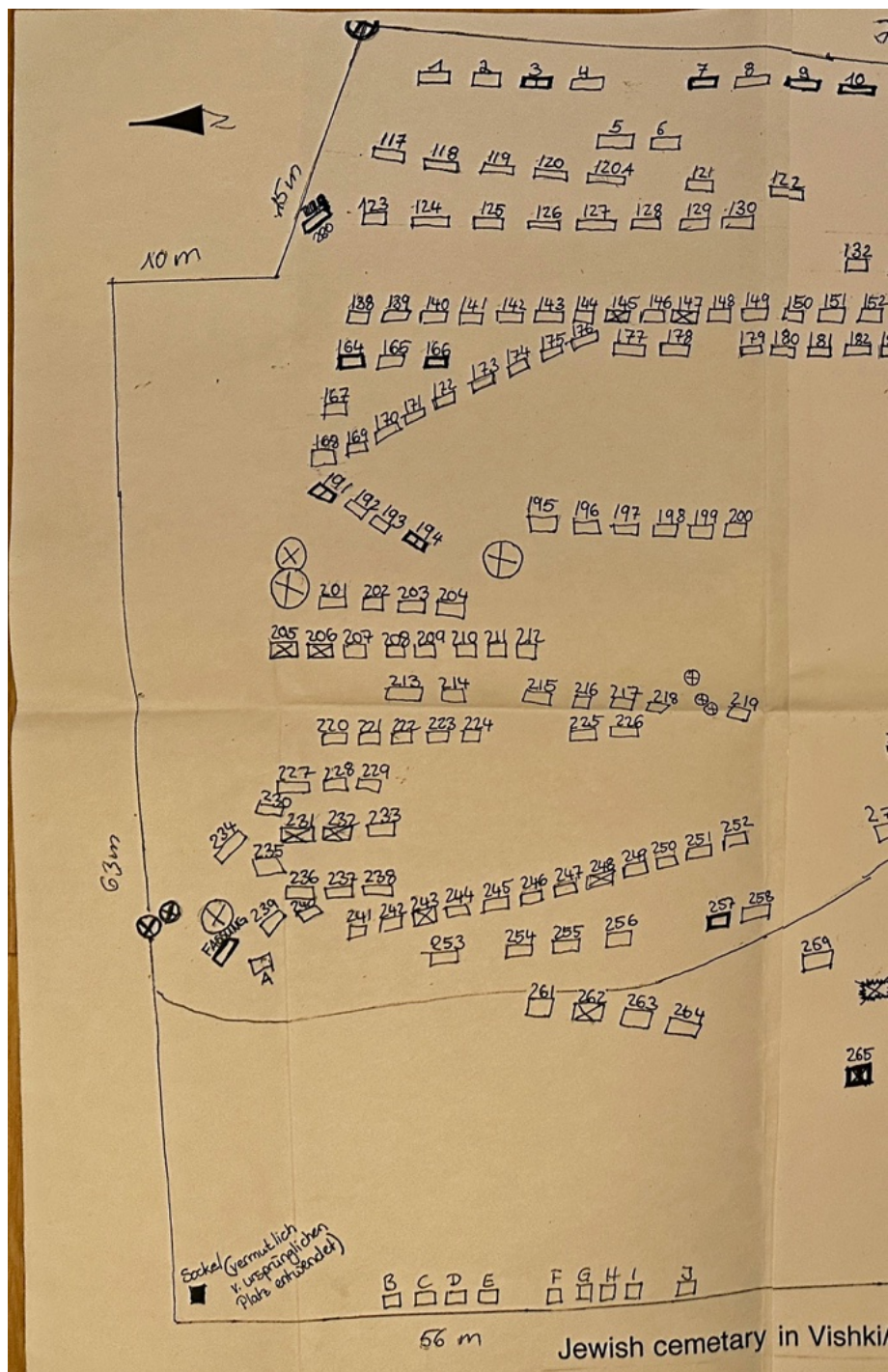
1917		Vetkin	Mordekhai, son of	Shmuel	
1917	Jan 27		Rahel, daughter of	Yehuda-Leib	117
1917	Apr 6	Notkin	Mordechai, son of	Shmuel	207
1918		Hariz (?)	Abraham-Zelig, son of		
1918	Apr 20	Dumesh	Hasya, daughter of	Gershen	70
1918	Apr 26/27	Ulman	Rasha, daughter of	Yehiel (Yitzhak-Rafael)	
1918	Aug 31		Abraham-Zelig, son of	Naftali-Hertz	106
1918 / 1919		?	Shabtai, son of		258
1919	Apr 14	Gram	Asher(Osher), son of	Meir	119
1919	July 19	Skorodoch	Meir-Velvel, son of	Selig	241
1919	Oct 15		Bel...	David-Tsevi	120
1919	Nov 19	Grob	Hiene, daughter of	Eliezer	17

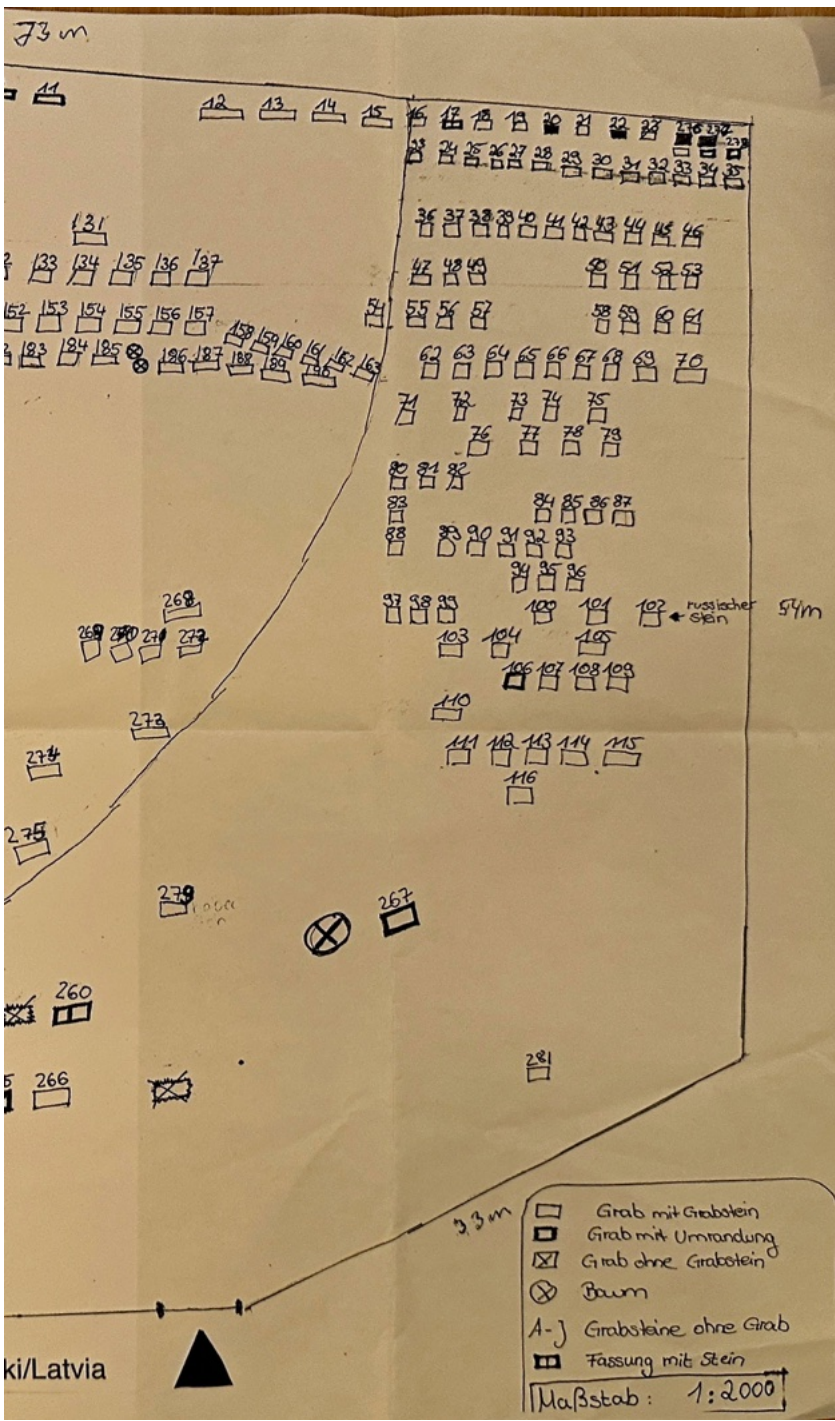
1920s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1920		Katz	Yenta, daughter of		
1920	Jun 9	Tzirin	Hayim- David, son of	Eliakim	167
1920	Aug 9	Kit (?)	Feye, daughter of	Shemaryahu	104
1920			Yehoshua, son of	Eliezer	
1921		Golan	Hana, daughter of		
1921	Nov 23	Gram (?)	Mordekhai, son of	Osher (Asher)	05
1922	Feb 15		Nechsa, daughter of	Abraham	210
1922	May 1		Pieshe- Hinde, daughter of	Yeshyahu Halevi	06
1923	May 14	Kukle	Meir, son of	Aharon- Eliahu	235
1923			Hase-Rivka, daughter of	Shlomo	

1923	Jun 26		Sheina, daughter of	Pinchas	13
1923	Jul 22	Kagan	Tzila, daughter of	Zvi	E
1924	Feb 13 or Mar 14	Shavik (?)	Sholem, son of	Dov Halevi	12
1924	Jul 21	Valk	Abraham, son of	Dov-David	01
1925	May 23	Valk	Meir, son of	Abraham	01
1925	Dec 19	Fonarov	Shlomo, son of	Gabriel	
1925	Dec 31		Roshe- Rivka, daughter of	Alexander	301
1926			Sheina, daughter of	Menachem	
1926			Aba, daughter of	Israel- Shimon	
1926	Jan 30		Sarah-Ita, daughter of	Yrachmiel Lazerovich (?)	113
1926	Nov 12	Goland ski	Yitzhak, son of	Shelomo	23
1927	Feb 9	Tzirin	Pesha, daughter of	Eliahu	03

1927	Feb 9		Roche-Rivke, daughter of	Alexander	02
1927	Apr 14	Ulman	Braha-Hinde, daughter of	Yitzhak-Rafael	260
1927	Oct 3	Shepsh elevich	David-Hayim, son of	Zalman	8





1930s

Year	Month	Surname	Firstname	Father	N°
1933	Jun 4	Notkin	Ezra, son of		04
1934	Aug 29	Skorochood	Selig- Mordechai, son of	Aba- Moshe	101
1936		Lohvitz	Kila, daughter of	Hamagad Arye	

1940s-1970s

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
1941			Eliahu, son of	Aba	105
1941	Jun 24		Eliahu, son of	Aba, son of Israel-Shimon	306
1941	Jun 24		Aba, daughter of	Israel-Shimon	105
1941		Dumesh Na Cohen	Genoch, son of	Idel	267
1941			Pieshe, daughter of	Yitzhak	139
194...		Kl...	Hayim, son of		259
1970		Bor	Ruvim, son of	Gershen	

Incomplete or illegible dates

Year	Month	Last Name	Firstname	Father	N°
			??	??	211
			??	Yosef	187
			??	Hayim	259
			Baruch (?), son of	Abraham (?)	263
	Dec	Dumesh	Frume, daughter of	Abraham	39
		Kukle	Getsel, daughter of	Yitzhak	85
		Usdin	Haya, daughter of	Nachma n	93

	Aug	Gurevich	Haya-Sarah, daughter of	Yakoov Halevi	253
190.	Dec		Haya-Sarah, daughter of	Yehuda	32
			Hayim, son of	Yehuda- Leib	40
		Gurevich	Hine, daughter of	Israel	305
	Nov		Isser, son of	Naftali	227
			Malka, daughter of	Dov	136
	Feb		Michle, daughter of	Hayim- Aba	264
	Aug		Mindel, daughter of	Yitzhak	219
			Moshe, son of		190

			Moshe-Dov, son of	Yequ Ariel (?) Halevi	230
	29 ?		Neche- Holde, daughter of	Moshe	100
192.	Jan		Pinchas, son of	Yehuda	16
	1st day of Pesach		Sarah- Yachne, daughter of	Leib Halevi	31
189.		Katz	Yaakov, son of	Selig	79
	Mar	Katz	Tsevi-Hirsh, son of	Israel	54
1885 (?)			Tsirel, son of	Abraham	50
		Dumesh	Yaakov, son of	Hayim	26

Meilach	Yaakov, son of	Abraham	B
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	Rabbi Yefte(?)		41
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Jul	Yehuda, son of	?	19
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	Yehoshua, son of	Eliezer	133
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Eve of Hanukah	Yokhanan, son of	?	149
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	Yosef, son of	Moshe	140
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17. BARUCH TO THE FUTURE



Baruch in front of the new sign marking the site of the synagogue.

I'm not *the Wreck of the Hesperus*, but I'm not as young as I once was, and I'm aware that I won't be here forever. Therefore, it's heart-warming to see new interest in the Jewish history of Vishki.

A surprising amount of interest has been generated by a relative of Leiser named Baruch Chauskin, the cantor of the Jewish community of the German city of Osnabrück. Although born in Riga, he has been living in Germany for 30 years.

When Baruch first visited Vishki in 2012, he felt the same emotions that I did for the place. As a very religious man, I think he felt the most emotion about the site of the synagogue. He started making regular visits with groups of volunteers. He said they found three steps; three steps of the synagogue.

He was so moved by this, he organized the "Drei Stufen" Three Steps Association, and has been working with the local district government, who have been extremely supportive. In 2021, Drei Stufen erected a memorial plaque at the site of the synagogue.



The three steps with memorial rocks and candles.



Baruch recently led a team of volunteers to clean and restore some of the grave stones in the cemetery. He has lots of plans and ideas, and has been working with a local official, Mr. Juons Strods, who is himself from Vishki, to implement some of these ideas.

Mr. Strods is himself very enthusiastic about local history, and had banners made showing vintage photos of Vishki. One of the banners is the image of Israel Dumesh's shop. It was Baruch who made me aware of this photo and Mr. Strods helped me get permission to use it in this book. Thanks to both of them!

These banners are made of a very durable material, but will be taken down for safe-keeping during the winter months.

Baruch and his family, including sister Sophia had street markers made and installed. These markers are written in Latvian, Hebrew and English, and they indicate where

Shulgas Street was and the road that takes you to the cemetery. Both signs were made by local craftsman Valdis Grebež.

Both Baruch and Mr. Strods are still actively working to create an increased awareness of Vishki's history. There are discussions about a Vishki museum at the site of the synagogue.

I am very grateful for their efforts.



Sign for Shulgas next to the Israel Dumesh house.

18. A FEW FAMILY RECIPES

Old World Cooking Secrets

Tradition Plays Important Role in Jewish Cooking

BY RITA H. ASHBY

They continued to go from the city, but it was not until the late 19th century that the Jewish people began to settle in the United States. Many of the early immigrants came from Poland and Russia, and they brought with them their own cooking traditions. These traditions were passed down from generation to generation, and they are still an important part of Jewish life today.

One of the most important aspects of Jewish cooking is the use of fresh ingredients. Many Jewish recipes call for fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats. This is because fresh ingredients are believed to be healthier and more flavorful. In addition, many Jewish recipes are based on simple, everyday ingredients that are easy to find in most kitchens.

Another important aspect of Jewish cooking is the use of traditional cooking techniques. Many Jewish recipes are based on techniques that have been passed down for centuries. These techniques are often simple and straightforward, but they are also very effective. For example, many Jewish recipes call for slow cooking, which allows the flavors to develop and the ingredients to become tender.

Finally, Jewish cooking is often a social activity. Many Jewish recipes are designed to be shared with family and friends. This is because food is an important part of Jewish culture, and it is a way of bringing people together. In addition, many Jewish recipes are designed to be easy to make, so that everyone can participate in the cooking process.



Mrs. Miriam Shuman (left) makes a chicken salad which is the center of most meals when hosted K. Mrs. Miriam Shuman is smiling the wife and the mother of Mrs. Miriam Shuman. Mrs. Miriam Shuman is smiling the wife and the mother of Mrs. Miriam Shuman. Mrs. Miriam Shuman is smiling the wife and the mother of Mrs. Miriam Shuman.

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1/2 cup milk
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Phyl's Famous Chicken Soup

This is not exact, but pretty close to how my mother taught me to make chicken soup. This recipe of my Mom's was printed in this article in local paper in 1966, which pictures Mom and Grandma Dumes. We always had chicken sandwiches with the chicken from the soup on toast with Miracle Whip, ketchup and lettuce. Matzo balls not required but highly recommended.

- 1 young hen (4 to 5 pounds)
- 2 quarts water
- 1 tablespoon salt
- sprinkling of parsley
- 1 whole onion
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 carrots
- 4 celery tops

Wash chicken thoroughly and trim off excess fat. Cut chicken into halves or quarters and place in salted water in deep kettle. Cover; bring to boil; uncover and reduce heat. Add onion, bay leaf, carrots, celery tops, and parsley. Simmer until chicken is tender (about 3 hours). Skim when necessary. Remove chicken to a platter and strain soup. Chill, skim off fat which has congealed on the surface. Re-heat before serving.

Credit for this recipe goes to Phyllis Abels Dumes. This recipe was printed in the Vincennes Sun-Commercial on March 31, 1966.

Bruce's Lobster For Neighbors

When my mother made chicken soup, she would make the chicken dance while she washed it in the sink, singing a song like "Hello, Bruce. I'm Charlie the Chicken." The psychological effects of the Charlie the Chicken dance have never been fully calculated, but are demonstrated herein by the astonishing tale of "I'll Never Cook A Living Thing Again", or as I'm calling it here: "Lobster For Neighbors".

You might ask, "Hey Bruce, not for nothin', but lobster isn't Kosher. What's the idea of putting a lobster recipe in a book with all this Jewish stuff?"

The first time I ever heard the word *Kosher* was at a family wedding, the first big wedding I was able to go to, even if I was sitting at the kiddie table. I was probably 10 or 11.

The waiter was asking for our drink preferences, and I asked for a glass of milk. All the kids at the table gasped, this huge, audible *Did he say what I thought he said?* gasp. "Aren't you Jewish?", one of the kids asked me, accusingly.

When I replied that I was, they all gasped again at twice the volume. I spotted my parents' table and walked over and told my mother this story. She laughed and said, "Order whatever you want and I'll tell you about it later." So in that spirit, here is my recipe, along with a bit about my experience making it.

First, buy a lobster. If you notice that they get less expensive per pound as they get bigger, ask yourself: "Is there a good reason for this or do people just think the littler ones are

cuter?" If you answer yourself "But the bigger ones are so cheap per pound!", you may come to regret that decision, after you pick the biggest one they have.



An AI generated image, because I was curious to try it.

Now, this is important. **DO NOT NAME YOUR LOBSTER!** I named mine Larry; Larry the Lobster.

Next, take your lobster buddy to his new home. Larry rode with me on the blue line to the red line to Harvard Square in

his cardboard box. After the long and somewhat bumpy trip, I put him in the sink with some ice water as instructed by the fish monger and made him do the ceremonial dance: "Hello, Bruce! I'm Larry the Lobster! Cook me and then eat me, please!"

You may realize, as I did, that you don't have a pot remotely big enough for a Godzilla-sized lobster. Fortunately a neighbor came to my rescue with a bona fide lobster cooking pot, identifiable because of the happy little lobsters adorning the outside of the pot. Maybe the happy little lobster pictures are supposed to fool the lobster; to make the lobster think, "Hey, that big tub of boiling hot water looks like lots of fun! Look at those happy guys!"

Meanwhile, after all this time, you might notice that your lobster isn't moving around very much anymore. Larry didn't move at all. He had gone to the great kelp bed in the sky. To Crustacean heaven. He was an ex-lobster. He's dead, Jim.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, call up the fishmonger where you bought it and ask him what to do. He'll probably assure you that if the sad event was very recent and he's been in ice water, your dear departed lobster will still be just as delicious as he was the minute that he first set eyes -- or whatever you call those things that lobsters have -- on you.

Boil the water and, perhaps with a note of inevitable sadness, prepare to drop the lobster in. After all, he was going to have to die, right? *Poor guy, you may think to yourself, I'll miss that mysterious smile of his.*

Pick up your lobster very carefully, and drop him in the boiling water. Because Larry was already dead, I picked him up very casually without thinking too much about it.

At this point, don't be too surprised if your lobster wakes up. That's what happened to me, Larry woke up and had serious reservations about my plans for him. He was not taken in, not for a second, by the happy little lobster pictures.

He was screaming about hiring an attorney and made all kind of threats. So what could I do? It was him or me. I dropped him. I dropped him in the boiling water.

But then -- and it helps if you can imagine the Bernard Herrmann *Psycho* "stabbing music" here -- Larry managed to grab the side of the pot with one claw. The water boiling around him didn't slow him down. He seemed to be pulling himself out of the pot!

Well, I panicked. I took the lid of the lobster pot and repeatedly banged it on Larry's claw until he finally let go. At long last, Larry fell into the water, and magically turned that beautiful red of a wonderfully cooked lobster.

Larry ended up being eaten by the neighbor who lent me the lobster pot. I just couldn't do it in the end. I hope your neighbor enjoys his lobster as much as mine did! Cheers!

Credit for this recipe goes to Bruce Dumes

Julya's Farshmak

Without salt, it is not tasty. Without bread, it is not substantial. -- Julya



Farshmak is a traditional dish of Eastern European cuisine, especially popular among Jewish communities. Everyone liked Julya's farshmak. It was very special because, as Lyonya noted, its main ingredients were the tenderness of Julya's hands and her love.

Other Ingredients

Lightly salted herring fillet — 300 g

Boiled eggs — 2

Onion — 1

White bread — 1 slice

Milk — 50 ml (for soaking the bread)

Soft butter — 50 g

Vinegar — 1-2 tsp

Sugar — a pinch

Clean the herring fillets, removing all bones and skin.

Remove the crust from the bread slice and soak the crumb in milk.

Peel the onion and eggs, and cut them into large chunks.

Pass the herring, onion, eggs and squeezed bread through a meat grinder or blend them in a food processor. (Yulia always used a Soviet-style metal meat grinder.)

Add the soft butter, vinegar, and sugar. Mix well until smooth.

Place the farshmak in the refrigerator for 1–2 hours to chill and let the flavors meld.

This dish is served as a pâté or spread on bread.

Bon appétit, with love from Yulia, the owner of tender hands.



This is what Julia's meat grinder looked like. As a girl, Marina was responsible for cleaning it after use. It was very heavy and they only had cold water!

Raya's Stuffed Goose Necks



Julya, left with her big sister Raya

Julya's sister Raya (Raisa, when speaking formally) often made this dish. I had never heard of it. I asked my mother about it and she remembers her mother Ida cooking goose necks. Raya's daughter, cousin Lena contributed this recipe and heartfelt story of her mother Raya preparing it.

Raya's Stuffed Neck – The Taste of My Childhood!

Zashitoye (stuffed neck, literally "sewn up") is the taste of my childhood! It was a traditional Jewish dish that my mother often prepared, and she seemed to make it better than anyone else. In a Soviet home, the Jewish origins of the dishes we ate were never mentioned, so I only learned its true name—*Gefilte Gelzele* (stuffed necks)—when I was an adult. But the taste of it is unforgettable! It was better than candies, pastries, or desserts!

We all watched eagerly as my mother ceremoniously sliced the *Zashitoye* into equal portions, ensuring that everyone got their fair share. No matter how full you were, this dish was always eaten down to the last crumb. I can't recall a single time anyone ever refusing their portion of *Zashitoye*!

The recipe is traditional and includes the following ingredients:

- * 2–3 goose or chicken necks (we kept them in a fridge, when cooking a whole chicken or goose)
- * rendered goose or chicken fat (*schmaltz* in Yiddish)
- * onions
- * wheat flour

Filling: The fat was melted, and the onions and flour were fried in it until golden.

The necks were sewn up on one side with a large needle and thick thread that was always kept in the kitchen specifically for this purpose. Then the neck was stuffed with the filling and sewn up on the other side. The process was quite laborious, but my Mum was very good at sewing, so I don't think it was hard for her.

When boiled, the necks would puff up like a balloon, so you had to make sure not to overstuff them. The skin had to be pierced in several places. After boiling, the necks were fried until they turned a beautiful golden brown.

The dish was served hot, because it never had a chance to cool down!

Credit for this recipe goes to Lena

Marina's Sorrel Soup



Marina made this sorrel soup for me with sorrel that she picked in Vishki, so I asked her to write the recipe. It seems likely that Marina's grandmother Tanya Dumesh learned to make sorrel soup when she was a girl in Vishki. It's simple, but very tasty!

Sorrel soup with a hint of childhood.

Sorrel is always associated with Vishki to me. It reminds me picking the sorrel on the meadow behind my grandmother's allotment, the meadow that used to be a market.

And we often had the sorrel soup when we stayed at Grandma's as it was cheap and quick to make. You can make cold or hot sorrel soup.

Cold sorrel soup

Ingredients:

Sorrel

Potatoes

Eggs

Spring onions

Dill

Salt

Sour cream

Boil the potatoes, sorrel and eggs separately, cool them and put them in a pan of cold boiled water. Add salt, chopped dill, spring onions and a spoonful of sour cream. You can make your soup without the potatoes as well.

For the hot sorrel soup you don't need eggs but you add grated carrots and chopped onions instead. You will also need some meat (it's up to you what kind of meat you choose: chicken, pork or beef).

Boil the meat and then add all the other ingredients to the broth. It is best to serve the soup with sour cream and sprinkle of fresh dill and spring onion.

Credit for this recipe goes to cousin Marina.

Grandma Dumes' Potato Kugel

I once asked her to make this and she said if I grate the potatoes, she would make it. I happily complied!

- 10 medium grated potatoes
- 1 small grated onion
- 2 tablespoons *schmaltz* (rendered chicken fat)
- 2 tablespoons melted shortening (I'm guessing Crisco)
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Salt and pepper to taste. Put in a hot, greased oblong pan. Bake about 2 hours at 350 degrees.

Credit for this recipe goes to Freda Fialco Dumes. This recipe was printed in the Vincennes Sun-Commercial on March 31, 1966.

Ida Abels' Romanian Hamantashen Filling

My mother's mother was really the best cook ever. But she was one of those cooks who could never exactly remember all the ingredients or processes when giving the recipe out. It will remain a mystery whether or not she was simply forgetful, or wanted to make sure her reputation for cooking would remain unchallenged.

Her Hamantashen filling was made with walnuts and honey, and the crust was soft, flakey and buttery, almost like a croissant; not at all like the crisp cookie texture most people's Hamantashen seem to be.

Here's her filling recipe, according to my mother's notes:

- 2 cups ground walnuts
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 eggs, beaten (I'm dubious about the eggs. I prefer it without.)
- pinch of salt

Combine all ingredients except eggs and cook over a low heat, stirring constantly until thick. Then add eggs. Cool before using.

Credit for this recipe goes to Ida Zucker Abels



William J. Dumes, then Wulf Dumesh in Vishki, around 1908
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Sandi's Cheesy Tomato Thing

My sister Sandi used to make these open-faced sandwiches when we were kids. Sandi's daughter Tracey tells me that she continued to make them for herself and for her kids.

- 1 slice white bread, preferably with the crust cut off
- 1 slice of tomato
- 1 slice of American cheese

Put a little Miracle Whip on the bread, next the tomato slice and finally the American cheese on top. Put it in the broiler until the cheese is melty and gooey. Slice into 4 squares.

Credit for this recipe goes to Sandra Dumes Simmons

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Leiser Dumesh on the left with Bruce Dumes. Jurmala 2009

My name is Bruce Dumes. I'm a musician and a retired software engineer. In 2009, I traveled to Latvia to meet my recently found cousin Julya.

A lot of things had to happen in just the right way in order for the story to unfold as it did, and many of those people are now gone. This book is my way of leaving a marker, something like a less Icelandic Arne Saknussemm in *Journey To The Center Of The Earth*.