Part I.

ANTECEDENTS IN 19TH-CENTURY RUSSIA: NEMIROV, KAMENYETS PODOLSKI, RUSSIA (THE UKRAINE)

I suppose I could make a chart to display my "yikhes," my "high status" ancestors, the sort of genealogical chart which so many of the Wasps in this country, a land of immigrants, display in their living rooms, including English or Scottish or even lace-curtain Irish family crests. [See chart "Family Tree" below, p. 397.] Such displays of make-believe coats-of-arms would seem to announce, wordlessly and hence modestly, that one's ancestors who came to this country from England, Scotland and Ireland were members of the noble class. Unfortunately their descendants forget that their nobility resides not in the blood of their ancestors, but rather in themselves and that their forebears chose to come here to this new country not because they were better than their neighbors, rather to become better than they had been in the old country.

But I make no pretensions to noble status or the special high character of my antecedents. Note that I do not say ancestors, rather antecedents, meaning the earlier links in the chain of which I am only a single link and one desperate to ensure is not the last and (¡God Forbid !) will not be broken in my generation. Therefore, for the time being, I would rather give a running narrative account of what I heard about the generations past beginning with the most remote from the early nineteenth century, those who lived and died before I was born and of whom I learned from others, especially my grandparents.

I was raised and educated by people born, raised and educated in the nineteenth century; yet my life has spanned the greater part of the twentieth century. And so, I am the bridge between the nineteenth-century generations before me, and the twenty-first century generations which will follow me. I am a marginal man —the nineteenth-century modalities to which I was exposed and molded were transformed in the twentieth. So, my lifelong experience has been one of constantly adjusting myself to the norms of the twentieth like the wine in the bodegas of Jerez. The new wine is always mixed with remnants of the old, so that the wine of today still is part the wine of yesterday.

My knowledge of those who preceded the generation of my grandparents is based entirely on what I heard from them and my mother and father, and in some cases their siblings or friends, "lawntslait", countrymen, paisanos, from "der awlter heym" [the old home town, Nemirov, sometime just referred to as "in der heym," back home]. Much of what I heard was probably embellished, edited and altered to conform to the viewpoint of the narrator. Some of the facts may be erroneous or even invented in order to prove a point. The teller of the tale is more important than the tale he tells.

Chapter 1.
Mother's Mother's Forebears

Counting myself as generation one, that is of the first generation born in America, I carry in my living memory stories going as far back as five generations to the second quarter of the nineteenth century and the time of Tsar Nicholas I, 1825 -1855, at least 150/160 years before the time I am writing these words (3 February 1994). My mother's mother, Sooreh Dintsyeh (Yiddish for Sarah Dinah in Hebrew and English), who died in Brooklyn at my aunt Ida's house in 1940 at about 72 years of age was born ca. 1868. She told me stories she had heard from her grandmother. I do not know if it was her maternal or paternal grandmother; probably her paternal grandmother, named Libeh, my great grandfather's mother. I am named for him. He was known in Nemirov as Shmeel Libeh's (Samuel Libeh's son).

My grandmother's grandmother recounted the pitiful stories of how the Russian authorities would come to town and kidnap little boys, probably under the age of ten or so. They were carried off to be raised by peasants until they were old enough to be enrolled in the army where they served for 25 years. These "cantonists," as they were called, were separated from their parents and the Jewish community with a view to having them forget that they were Jews and become Christians. My great-great grandmother remembered how the little frightened boys were loaded into wagons. They wailed and cried and dirtied themselves while being transported through the streets. Their mothers and fathers stood about unable to do anything while the wagon rolled through town picking up children at random and carrying them off to be lost forever to their families.

My father was named for such a cantonist, known as Sahnyeh Sawldawt, Sahnye the soldier, who never forgot he was Jewish and found his way back to Nemirov after twenty-five years in the Tsar's army, not counting time he spent as a child being raised by a peasant.

To continue this narrative of my maternal antecedents, my mother's mother's father, my great grandfather, already mentioned above, was Shmeel Libeh's. I havea photograph portrait of him which hung in my grandmother's house all the years of my childhood. The portrait was given to my mother after my grandmother died, in 1940. It came into my possession after my mother died January 1, 1960 at the age of 69/70. The picture must have been taken soon after 1905, the year my grandmother came to America and before I was born in 1911 (October 10). I was

named after him, implying that he died not long before I was born, at most six years. He sent the photograph to my grandmother, Sooreh Dintsyeh, not long after she had arrived in America. My mother, then thirteen years old, along with my grandfather had left earlier, in 1903. Shmeel Libeh's, as thousands of other Jews in Russia, knew that he would never see his daughter or his grandchildren ever again in his life. And so, he sent her this photograph.

The photograph, of rather large size, about 12" X 16" more of less, was taken in Nemirov. It is lightly tinted and printed on very thin paper which has deteriorated to some extent. I wanted to preserve it and asked Bill Stars, supposedly a mayven in such matters, how I might go about it. Bill, may he rest in peace, was a colleague and friend and whose office was right next to mine in the Old Art Building on East Campus of Duke University. He advised me to glue the photo to a masonite board and varnish it. In the process, some of the paper flaked off. I was very upset, for I should have left it alone. At any rate, I had some black and white photos made of the original, copies of which I expect to give to my children at the appropriate time.

Depicted in the photograph is a handsome man, perhaps in his early seventies, with strikingly grey-blue eyes, the color probably added by the tinting, a long white, well-shaped beard, and wearing a typical Russian cloth cap with a bill. My great grandfather's family name was Pilch and he was a native of Nemirov.

I have to extrapolate his age by working back from my grandmother's age. She died in 1940 at the age of 72, which is to say she was born in ca. 1868. Her grandmother Libeh, Shmeel's mother, knew the times of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855). She had witnessed first-hand the kidnapping of Jewish boys and so was certainly born before 1825 when Nicholas ascended to the throne and instituted the "cantonist" system, and old enough to have vivid memories of the kidnapping of little Jewish boys in Nemirov. I would venture a guess that she was probably at least ten to fifteen years old in 1825, that is, she was born about 1810 to 1815. On the other hand, I have no evidence or even a vague clue on which I might conjecture when she married and when her son Shmeel was born.

Working back from 1940 when my grandmother died at the age of seventy-two and, therefore, born in 1868. But how old was her father Shmeel Libeh's in 1868? She was the fourth of six children. He and her mother Eedis [Yudith in Hebrew] were probably married in their teens and had their first child by the time they were twenty. Early marriages were encouraged among Russian Jews in the nineteenth century. One important reason was that married men, even if they were still in their teens, were exempted from conscription to the Tsar' army.

Shmeel Libeh's may have already been in his mid-twenties when his fourth child, my grandmother, was born. His age was 1868 minus 26 = 1843, which is to say he was born in the mid-1840s. This date 1843, seems both possible and probable suggesting that his mother Libeh was between twenty-eight and thirty-three years old when he was born.

This line of reasoning is in concert with my grandmother's date of birth 1868. 1815 (Libeh) + 28 = 1843 (Shmeel) + 25 = 1868 (Sooreh Dintsyeh).

My great grandfather Shmeel was blind and infirm when he died, possibly a year or two before I was born in 1911. That being the case he was probably in his late sixties. I am unable to judge how old he is in the photograph he sent my grandmother after she was already in America and which I inherited through my mother. He may have already been over sixty years old when that picture was taken, perhaps in 1906 or 1907.

As I already mentioned above, the family name was Plich, a fact I became aware of later on when I got to know two of my grandmother's brothers. The family name was never used when speaking of events in "der heym." My great grandfather was simply referred to as "der awlter Shmeel Libeh's," the old Shmeel Libeh's. Two of my grandmother's bothers, Leepeh and Elkooneh, Elkanah in Hebrew, had the family name of Pilch. That is how I learned that this was the name they brought over with them from Nemirov.

In his early years Shmeel had a bakery. I vaguely hearing my mother say that it was a "kawndeeterskeh behkeherai," pastry bakery, a type supposedly common in Warsaw. The bakery burned to ground leaving him totally without a means of earning a living. Fire insurance was something unheard of in the Ukraine. When your house burned down, all the material goods you and, in some cases even your forebears, had accumulated over years and years went up in smoke and you were impoverished, often for the rest of your life. It was then that he became a "meykler," broker, in the marketplace of Nemirov, that is the main square of town where the open-air market was held.

The marketplace was where the coachmen, "bahl-ha-gool'es" would congregate with their horse-drawn freight wagons and passenger coaches. There they would arrange for fares or freight. As a "meykler" Shmeel would round up passengers for the bahl-ha-gool-es who paid him a fee for this service. He was a sort of "pre-industrial" travel agent, a fact he bemoaned all his life. To make a living he had to deal with the coarsest and most unlettered social elements in Jewish society

This is a convenient place to give some account of Shmeel Libeh's children, my grandmother's siblings, all of whom were born in the second half of the nineteenth century in Nemirov. Besides my grandmother Sooreh Dintsye, Sarah Dinah in Hebrew and English, there was a son, whose name I do not remember. In fact, I had heard of him very infrequently. He remained in Nemirov and did not emigrate to the United States. I believe he was killed by the Bolsheviks, according to what my grandmother told me, ca. 1918 or so, in a pogrom instigated by Petlura. Petlura was not a Bolshevik, but a murderer notwithstanding, who killed thousands of defenseless Jews in the little towns in the Ukraine where, in many cases, they numbered more than 50% of the total population.

There were also two other sons, Leepeh and Elkooneh, both of whom I knew as a child, albeit not too well. They came to America later than my grandmother. They lived in Brownsville, an entirely Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn. Leepeh, I believe, may have been the son one who shared the care of my great grandfather with his brother Moisheh on a monthly basis. Elkooneh was the youngest of my grandmother's siblings.

My grandmother also had two sisters who also came to America and who lived in Brownsville, Etyah and Temah. I knew Temah rather well because we would visit her house on occasion. I even knew her children, my mother's first cousins, but now after so many years and with no contact at all, I do not remember all of them, let alone their names. I do remember that Etyah was older than my grandmother and that her family name was Portnoy.

Temah was the youngest of the three sisters. She was always ailing, had a "weak heart." She actually had a heart attack during my uncle Benny's wedding to Julia in her parents' brownstone house in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. I remember her as a handsome white haired lady sitting on the front porch of her house on one of streets that cross south of Pitkin Avenue in the vicinity of Hopkinson Avenue, which one I do not remember.

Etyah had a son, Khayim or Chayim, who was drafted into the army during World War I in 1917. He was sent to the training camp out in Yaphank, Long Island, the very camp that figures in Irving Berlin's song "How I hate to get up in the morning." He was the sorriest looking soldier ever seen. A peaceful, quiet, studious young man who could not raise his voice let alone his fist. He was born in Nemirov, but came this country as a child. One of the reasons his parents, and most other Russian Jews too, left Russia was to avoid having to serve in the army of the Hoomahn ha roosheh, Haman the heartless, the antisemitic and cruel Tsar and "aranfawlen in goyisheh hehnt," fall into gentile hands. Poor Etyah and her husband, whose first name I have forgotten, suffered untold anguish, more so because Khayim was an only son who might never come back from the war. Fortunately, the war ended in 1918 and he was mustered out without having seen action. My mother had a picture of Khayim (and I have it too somewhere) in full uniform taken at the army training camp. There he is standing at attention with his peaked army hat, his uniform a little wrinkled, holding his rifle with the butt on the ground at his side.

Etyah's husband, I do not remember his name, was a handsome little man with a small pointed beard and twinkling eyes. In winter he always wore heavy felt boots of the type common in Russia, "peedyawfkes." These boots were still available in the shoe stores in Brownsville when I was a child and were commonly worm by the peddlers who stationed their pushcarts, laden mainly with vegetables and fruit as well as other non-perishable merchandise, in the open-air markets along the curbs

of parts of Blake Avenue and Belmont Avenue. I do not know what his work was, but judging by his boots, it must have been outdoors.

My grandmother Sooreh Dintsye's other sister Temah, had four children: Velvel, diminutive for Volf; Leyah; Eedis; and a girl nicknamed Chubby. I do not know Temah's family name. One of Temah's daughters, whose married name was Evans, had a son who was in textiles, perhaps a textile engineer. He came to Charlotte to work. It may have been in the 1950's. I wrote him inviting him to come to see us here in Durham pointing out that his mother and my mother were first cousins. He never replied.

Tema's a son Velvel I remember very well. He was called Willy in English. One hand, I do not recall which, was quite shorter than the other. It looked shriveled and totally atrophied. He was not born that way, but what had happened was that he was in an accident and had been run over by a truck. I do not know if it was a horse-drawn or a motorized vehicle. This occurred when he was a young boy, and probably at the time of the First World War, in 1917 or even before. I remember that there was endless litigation in the courts that went on for years and years. Just when the matter was settled, I am not aware, but I was led to believe from what I overheard as a child, that the settlement was in his favor.

Willy had spent so much of his childhood and younger years in hospitals, in courtrooms and around lawyers, that it was natural for him finally to be employed by lawyers. I do not know if he worked at what today would be called a paralegal in a law office or for his own account. At any rate, my mother said he was an "ambulance chaser." He apparently specialized in accident cases and would bring claimants to the lawyers who employed him, on salary or on a fee basis, I do not know which.

I remember him as a handsome and well-dressed young man, a real lawyer-type, with his useless arm dangling from one side and which he was always adjusting when it would obstruct what he was doing with the other. My sister Esther told me after reading the first draft if this book that Willy married a girl born in Russia who felt she was superior to his family because she had "gekawntchet ahrt klahsen gimnazieh" completed eight years of gymnasium, high school. The last time I saw my mother's cousin Willy was years before we moved away from Essex Street to Empire Boulevard. This was before 1926 when I entered Erasmus Hall High School (in Flatbush on the corner of Flatbush and Church Avenues) as a first year student, the equivalent of the 9th grade today.

It was in Temah's house where my mother and grandfather Shaiyeh stayed during the first days after arriving in New York from Russia. I do not know how long they lived with her, probably only a short while. It must have been very difficult for my grandfather who had left my grandmother and the other children in Nemirov. He had to take care of a my mother, a thirteen-year old girl, and leave her in Temah's care while he went to work. Temah and her family lived somewhere in a tenement

house on the lower East Side. It was customary for new arrivals to find temporary lodging in the flats of family or friends who had preceded them to the "gawldeneh mehdeena." Kitchen chairs were pushed together and some blankets or quilts were spread to make a bed for the new arrivals.

My mother slept on such a makeshift bed in Temah's kitchen. But it seems that Temah was less than gracious. My mother always remembered, not with animosity but merely to describe Temah's character, what she once said to my grandfather Shaiyeh regarding my mother whom she looked after while he was at work, "Zee vet mihr farlahzigen die shteeb." (She will foul my house with lice.) It seems that my mother's hair, after days and days in the steerage of the steamer that had sailed from Rotterdam to New York, had been infected with nits, head lice.

Continuing with my maternal grandmother's other siblings whom I knew as a child and whose roots went back to nineteenth-century Nemirov. There was her brother Leepeh, my great or grand uncle (I am unsure which term is correct) who had light colored eyes, blue-grey, which stood out dramatically. He was rather dark complexioned, almost swarthy, so one would expect his eyes to be brown. As a matter of fact my grandmother's eyes also were the same color, blue-grey, and she also was dark complexioned. My sister Esther says my grandmother's eyes were "speckled." The one time I remember seeing Leepeh, I believe it was in his flat somewhere in Brownsville, he was wearing a black Derby hat, the type which the English call a Bowler hat. Actually, I never saw him bareheaded so I do know what the color of his hair was, or for that matter if he had any at all. The reason I make this aside is that my great grandfather Shmeel, I was told, was bald, or had very little hair on his head. So it very likely that Leepeh may have been bald. But baldness is supposed to be inherited through the female, and it is interesting that two of my mother's brother, my Uncle Davey and Uncle Benny (more about them later) were partially bald.

Returning to Leepeh, I have no idea what his trade was or how he made a living, his "parnooseh;" perhaps a tailor working in a "shop" as did so many thousands and thousands of immigrant Jews who spent their lives at sewing machines in the garment factories in the "clothing district" along 7th Avenue and the west 30's in New York, that is Manhattan. I have no recollection of his wife or of any of his children. It would interesting to look for the name Pilch, the family name, in the New York, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island telephone books and try to find some of his descendants, probably members of the fifth generation after Shmeel Libeh's.

My grandmother Sooreh Dintsyeh's other brother who came to America and who lived in Brownsville was Elkooneh, Elkanah in Hebrew. Him I knew very well and even his children, but whose names I no longer know. I do not remember if I ever was in Elkooneh's house. I probably saw him for the last time in the early 1920's, certainly before 1926 when we moved to Empire Boulevard in Crown Heights.

He did not marry a girl from Nemirov. His wife was born in Hungary. This was most unusual, for almost all the immigrant Nemirover preferred to marry girls from "der heym," from back home, as did my father. Elkooneh was the youngest of Shmeel and Eedis' children. He arrived in this country, probably about 1905 or 1906, as a young man and unmarried. My father and Elkooneh were very near in age and had been friends back in Nemirov. When Elkooneh and his other cronies would play cards Saturday afternoons, my father would take a nap because he had no interest in card playing. The card playing often took place in my mother's house where her father, my maternal grandfather, Avroom Shaiyeh, had his "rabohtche," workshop. Elkooneh was one of the tailors who worked for my grandfather, his brother-in-law. Elkooeh's Hungarian wife had a brother who was slow witted, that is he would be considered retarded today. I heard him mentioned in connection with one of Elkooneh's daughters who also was slightly mentally retarded, that mental retardation was in Elkooneh's wife's family. I do not remember the name of Elkooneh's mentally retarded daughter who once came to visit us when we lived in Essex Street between 1917 and 1926. I was probably no more than ten years old at the time. I still remember her telling my mother with horror in her voice about a certain man whom she met and who she said, "He wanted to ruin me." I had no idea what that was.

Elkooneh had other children to, a boy about my age and a son about the same age as my uncles who at the time were in their late teens and early twenties. This young man never had a steady job it seems, nor did he have a trade. He was not overly bright, but not retarded. In those days Brownsville was not too far unlike a small town where many people knew each other, or at least had heard of each other. Around Brownville Elkooneh's son was known by a nickname, humorous and only slightly deprecative, which unfortunately, try as I might, I cannot recall other than that it was descriptive of his character.

So much for my great grandfather's children and some of his children's children., and to return to the recollections I have of him from the stories I heard from both my mother, who knew him as a child, and my grandmother who left Nemirov n 1905 and never saw him or her mother again.

My mother, Eva, Khawveh Bahsyeh - Khava Batya in Hebrew, described the house where her grandparents lived many times. It was located on the outskirts of Nemirov where probably very few if any other Jews lived. It was a "goyish shteebl," [gentile house], that is a typical small Ukrainian peasant house. Probably no more than one room, possibly with an "alkyer," an ell or an alcove to one side. There was a large post in the middle of the room, a support for the attic above. The floor was earth, that is the house did not have a wood floor. On the exterior, on both sides of the entrance door there was a low bench built into the wall, a "prizbeh," where family and friends could sit, the weather permitting. Sitting on the prizbeh in Nemirov was a metaphor for gossiping.

The typical peasant house, and more likely than not my great grandfather's too, was built of logs, adzed or axed more or less square in section which were set at intervals upright into the ground to form a timber framework. A channel or rabbet was cut on two sides of the vertical posts in which shorter, partially dressed or undressed, thinner logs were inserted horizontally along with a mortar known as "vahlkyes" in the spaces between each. The "vahlkyes" were made of clay, leyhm, straw and even horse manure and water which were then mixed and kneaded by stamping the mixture with the feet. Once well-mixed or kneaded, the material was divided into manageable lumps. As each filler log was rammed into place along with the vahlkyes, really a mortar, it was then pounded down with a "dubeena," large wooden mallet, until the soft and malleable vahlkye-mortar was forced out and cover the surface of the horizontal log inserted in the rabbets. In this manner the space between the massive roughly dressed upright members of the framework was filled. After all the spaces between the uprights were filled, the entire wall surface, both inside and outside, was then coated with the same material as the vahlkyes, a clay mortar. Doubtlessly a plate of heavy timber was installed to tie the upright posts together and to provide a purchase or a seat for the rafters and purloins of the roof. The roof was covered with thatch, probably wheat straw or something equivalent.

The interior of the houses was usually a simple open space with large man-sized built-in brick and clay oven in one corner. The oven was covered with a plaster of clay and whitewashed. The stove reached up to just under the ceiling leaving enough room for two or even three people to sleep there. It was a nice warm place. The chimney flue sometimes circled around the ceiling before emerging from above the roof. The baking area and the floor of the oven was about midway up the height of the oven. The oven was fired with a bale of wheat straw which was consumed at very high temperature. It heated the bricks and clay of the oven which remained hot for some time. This was a form of radiant heat and far more efficient than convection heat from cast iron stoves or steam heat radiators and even better than forced-air heating so common today.

Some sort of ceiling joists were installed to support the attic space just under the rafters and the thatch of the roof. The attic, "boidem," was reached by a ladder and was used as a storage place as well as a larder for such food staples as flour, salt sugar, potatoes and other comestibles. A standard comment when the question of the impossibility of preventing someone from doing something foolish or undesirable was, "Vee avehk nehmen dem leyter fin di kawts az zie zol nisht arawf kreekhen oif'n boidem." [Like taking the ladder away from the cat so she will not climb up to the attic.] The cat could jump up to attic and needed no ladder.

The details of construction I give above were told me by father on more than one occasion. In fact, I first heard and learned the word "vahlkyes" at the fiftieth wedding anniversary of my paternal grandparents, Yahnkel Balaboos and Bahsyeh, Batyah, in 1922, when my aunt Nehkhawmeh, my father's eldest sister and the

eldest, made a speech in which she related how my grandfather had built his first house and my grandmother had helped "treyten di vahlkyes mit di fees," treading or stamping the vahlkyes with her feet.

My great grandfather Shmeel Libeh's "shteebl" (small house or cottage in Yiddish) or "khata" (Ukrainian for hut or small house) must have very likely been like the peasant house I describe here. But it had a very distinctive character in that right in the center of the room or the house there was a single thick post, very likely as a support for the attic floor. My grandmother Soohreh Dintsye told me that it was her chore to renew the sand on the earth floor each Friday in preparation for the Sabbath. She would buy a measure of yellow sand from the peasant who made a living selling sand for refreshing the earth floors. In addition to the yellow sand, my grandmother would also get a bit of red sand which she used to spread in a circle or band around the post.

My great grandfather Shmeel was inadvertently involved in an incident that shocked and scandalized the whole of Nemirov, the infamous details of which were broadcast far and wide over the whole of Russia. So I was told by my grandmother and my mother and father too. The *cause celebre* was a trial of a group of bahlhagoohles, coachmen, draymen, who, though innocent, were convicted of crime they did not commit and sent into exile to Siberia. The fame of the Nemirover ganoohven, thieves of Nemirov, and their leader Berel Kardooner had become part of the Jewish folklore in nineteenth-century Ukraine and Russia. This incident must have happened before my father and mother were born, before 1885 or so, and so my parents had heard of it from their parents who were present when the incident took place.

Shmeel Libeh's was a meykler, broker, as mentioned above, who earned a living booking passengers for the coaches driven by the bahlhagooles who would customarily assemble with their coaches and wagons in the marketplace, a sort of central transport station in addition to its other functions. The story is that a their horses had been stolen. At the same time when this occurred, a very famous, or rather infamous, thief known throughout the length and breath of Russia happened to be in town, one Berel Kardooner.

The bahlhagooles assumed that Berel Kardooner was the horse thief. Also at this time, a very horrible robbery had been committed including bloody assaults, women's breasts were cut off and other bestialities, in the house and warehouse of Doovid [David] Finkel, the town magnate who owned sugar mills and stores and warehouses with valuable goods,

When the bahlhagooles accused Berel to his face of stealing their horses, he reasoned with them and warned them, "Ikh bin nit a fehrdn gawnif, ikh bin a gawnif fin brehkhn kleytn in fin s'khoires. [I am not a horse thief. I am thief who breaks into stores and steals goods.] And he warned them that if they denounced him as a horse thief and was sent to jail he would soon escape saying, "Gehdeynkt az ikh ken

aroiskreekhen fin a shpahrineh." [Remember, I and able to escape through a crack in the wall.] When the balhagooules did not desist and denounced him to the authorities for horse stealing, he was arrested and brought to trial. He in turn denounced the bahlhagool'es as being the ones who were his accomplices in the robbery and slaughter in the house and warehouse of Doovid Finkel.

The bahlhagooless were arrested and brought to court and my great grandfather, Shmeel Libeh's, was also taken in with them. As the accused were brought before him, Berel Kahrdooner pointed each out telling the court this one raped, that one broke down the doors, the other one cut off this woman's breast, and so on. When my great grandfather's was brought before him as one also suspected of being an accomplice and having a hand in the robbery supposedly committed by the bahlhagooles, Berel said "Neyn, er iz a frimmer Yeed, er iz in gawnts'n imshildig." [No, this is a pious Jew and he is blameless.]

I am relating more or less the story as I heard it from my mother and father and from my grandmother Sooreh Dintsye. The actual sequence of the events nor the exact details of what took place were never enlarged upon, because they who were telling me the story that took place when they had not yet born, except perhaps my grandmother who must still have been a child at the time.

The bahlagooles were all convicted and sent to Siberia. My father, when he was a child, remembered when they returned to Nemirov. To his astonishment, he recalled that they were still wearing the special heavy clothes and felt boots, peedyawfkes, they had worn in Siberia. They did not stay long in Nemirov because they could not readjust to life there. They and their families all went back to Siberia.

Just when my great grandfather for whom I am named in part (Shmeel and Doovid for my father's maternal grandfather) died, I am not certain. It was of course before I was born in 1911 and after my grandmother left Nemirov in 1905. He did not have a very peaceful time or freedom from care in his old age. My grandmother used to tell me that he became blind after she left Nemirov. I imagine that he had developed cataracts and so was blind to all intents and purposes. His wife, my great grandmother, Eedis (Yudith) died soon after my grandmother left. I do not know the exact details, but he could no longer live alone and so he was taken in by his two sons.

My grandmother used to recount what happened to him with great bitterness. The two sons would alternate keeping him for a specified period of time, one month each. When the stipulated time was up, the first son would take him to the other's house. Being blind, probably with cataracts, he was totally helpless and dependent. My grandmother also said these two sons were heartless. My great grandfather's end came right after he was moved in the dead of winter from one son's house to the other's, so the story goes. My grandmother repeated this story often with bitterness and sadness. When it was time to move, the brother in whose house he had been staying, put him in a small sled, shlihtehleh. The old man pleaded not to be moved

that day and that he be allowed to stay on for he was not well. He said, according to my grandmother, "Lawhz mikh zahn, hahnt gey ikh shtahrb'n." [Let me be, today I am going to die.] The heartless son did not listen and bundled the old man into a small sled and carried him to his brother's house whose turn it was to take care of their father. My grandmother told me that my great grandfather died that very day.

He must have been in his late sixties or early seventies when he died perhaps a year or two before I was born in 1911.