

## Chapter 2.

### My Mother's Father's Family in Nemirov in the 19th Century

The oldest member of my mother's father's family of whom I heard stories and of which I have recollection is my grandfather's Shaiyeh's father, my great grandfather, Elyeh (Eli). He lived most of his life in Nemirov before emigrating to England, specifically London. The family name in Russian and/or Ukrainian was Ubogu (pronounced oo-bawg-oo).

I say he lived most of his life, not all of life, in Nemirov, because my grandfather was not born in Nemirov, rather in a village called Zhornish, perhaps a one day journey away to the northeast (See Maps 1, 2). But I expect it was not far from Nemirov. I never heard it spoken of as being remote, in another world like Kiev or Odessa. Also, I sometimes heard it said that my grandfather Shaiyeh had lived in Kharkov as a child implying that my great grandfather Elyeh had reason to have settled there when my grandfather was still a boy. Nevertheless, it seemed that Elyeh did live most of his life in Nemirov, was probably even born there, and married my great grandmother, Khawva (Khava, Eva) there.

Khawva, my great grandmother and Elyeh were related, probably first cousins. My great grandmother's family name was Marinsky, so if they were first cousins they were the offspring of a brother and a sister respectively. Apparently marriage between closely related members of these two families was not uncommon, so the story went. My grandfather's family was referred to as being "geknipt in gebihnden" [knotted and bound].

I have no idea when either Elyeh's or Khawva's were born. I can venture a guess based on what is at best fragmentary information, and come to a not improbable conclusion. My grandfather Shaiyeh died aged 62 years when I was a freshman at Union College in the Spring of 1931. This would imply that he was born in 1869 or perhaps 1870. He was the oldest child of Elyeh and Khawva who were very young indeed, and very likely still in their teens when they were married. Elyeh was probably less than twenty years of age, perhaps even sixteen or seventeen. Often I heard it said that Khawva was just about thirteen years old when she became a bride.

The story is that they married so very young because it was customary to do so among Jews in the Ukraine during the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, my grandfather Shaiyeh would always tell the story, perhaps not without a taint of exaggeration and some repugnance, that his mother married when she was thirteen years old and that he was born when she was fourteen. Regardless of whether it is

true that she bore a child at fourteen, Elyeh was probably not much older than her when they were married, perhaps a year or two older, fifteen years or sixteen years old or so.

At any rate, if Elyeh did become a father when he was still in his teens, sixteen to eighteen perhaps, then he was born that many years before my grandfather: viz., 1869 minus 16 = 1853; or 1869 minus 18 = 1851; in fine, approximately in the early part of the decade of the 1850's. Khawva's date of birth must then be in the same decade. If my calculations are correct, then my mother's paternal grandparents were contemporaries of my father's father, my grandfather Yankel "Bahlaboos" Markman, of whom I speak later. They were all born before the end of serfdom in Russia. My grandfather Yahnkel would always tell me that he remembered "pahnshineh," serfdom. The serfs were freed in 1861, so he may still have been a young boy when this took place.

It is important to explain why my grandfather's Shaiyeh's parents married at such an early age. This was not an uncommon practice among the Jews of the Pale of Settlement, including the Ukraine where Nemirov is located. Russia took over the Ukraine in one the partitions of Poland near the very end of the eighteenth century. Almost immediately, the liabilities and persecutions of the Jews began, especially the government policy of converting their newly acquired Jews to Christianity, specifically the Russian Orthodox Church. Jews were subjected to military service. In fact, a special type of service was fashioned for Jews, namely that of the "cantonists" who after having been kidnapped as children and raised by peasants were required to serve twenty-five years in the army. I related something about this when I recounted the stories told my grandmother by her grandmother Libeh.

Men were normally drafted into the army at the age of 21, except "only sons" who were exempt as also were married men. In order to avoid falling into "goyishe hent" [gentile hands] in the army and be subjected to inhuman treatment and, God forbid, forced to eat non-kosher food, desecrate the Sabbath, not put on tefillin every morning, and, the worst calamity of all, being forced to convert to Christianity, early marriage of children in their teens was encouraged. The child bridegroom became a married man and so was not subject to conscription.

My grandfather Shaiyeh never gave this as the reason why his parents had married so young. I doubt if he ever knew the historical reason for this practice when he would tell the story that his mother was about fourteen years old when he was born. This was probably an exaggeration and not exactly true. The consummation of these early marriages was delayed until after the bride and groom had reached puberty.

According to the stories told me by my grandfather Shaiyeh, he was the first born and also had three sisters, Oodyeh and Boonyeh and Shayvah. My great grandmother Khawva died very young and in childbirth I was told. I had only remembered two of my grandfather's sisters, Oodyeh and Boonyeh. Esther reminded

me of the third sister, Shayveh, whose name I now vaguely remember, but nothing else about her. My great grandfather Elyeh married again and had a number of children with his second wife, Bayleh. I do not know how many others there were, but I knew two them, one rather well, my grandfather's brother Sam Bodie, and another only in passing during a very short visit, a sister Mahryam, a.k.a. Muriel Koenig, Muriel King. More about them later.

My grandmother Soohreh Dintsyeh apparently had less than affection for her father-in-law whom she always referred to as "Elyeh Mehrder [Eli Murderer], not that he was a murderer, God Forbid! He was, however, so it seemed to her, a very demanding and severe person. Just what had prompted her to add that epithet to his name I never found out and never asked why. But he was someone in another legendary world that existed long before I was born. His daughter-in-law, my grandmother, must have had reason to judge him to have been a stern person and with whom she did not get on.

As I mentioned already, he lived in Nemirov and was a tailor. I do not know if he was a ladies' or mens' tailor. But he must have been progressive in his trade, and also probably well off economically. He bought and installed a sewing machine in his "rah'bo'tchek" (workshop) probably in the late 1870's or early 1880's when my grandfather Shayeh was still a little boy. Doubtlessly, it was a Singer Sewing machine imported from England and also among the first sewing machines in the workshops of the Nemirover tailors.

I know very little about my grandfather's three younger sisters, that is the children of Elyeh's first wife Khawva. The sisters married in Nemirov, had children there. Two of the sisters, Oodyeh and Boonyeh, including their families emigrated to London, probably after 1903 when my grandfather Shaiyeh and my mother arrived in New York. Elyeh also emigrated to London with his second wife, Bayleh, and their children who were all younger than my grandfather and his sisters.

I already said above that I got to know one of them very well, Sam Bodie, my mother's "fehter Shmeel," who came to America just before the First World War. As a child before emigrating to America, my mother knew her aunts Boohnyeh and Oodyeh quite well. What little I know about them, I learned from my mother. Boonyeh married in Nemirov and had three sons. All or one or two may have been brought to England as infants. One son, William whom I got to know when I was in London in 1968 and again in 1972, may have been born in England. I am only guessing because he was in his late 50's or early 60's when I first met him.

Boonyeh's married family name was Malamud, which her son Charles, the physician, changed to Marian. Another son was OOsher (Asher in Hebrew) whom I never met. He moved to the United States and did not keep in contact with his mother and brothers. William took the name Black, because he had been apprenticed to his uncle, I believe OODYEH's husband whose family name was Shvahrts [Black] and had tailoring establishment named Black and Sons.

My first contact with Charles and William, was by correspondence in 1939 before I attended the summer session at the Institut d'Art et d'Archeologie of the Sorbonne in Paris. At the time, I was working on the Ph.D. in art history and archaeology at Columbia University. I wrote them I was to be in Paris for the summer. They invited me to come and see them when I had finished taking the course. I left for Italy and Greece in August thinking I would go to England before leaving for home. However, for various reasons, the most urgent perhaps being the outbreak of war in September, I did not make any special effort to go to England after my return to Paris. When I was back home, I had a letter written by Charles saying that they were disappointed that I failed to see them. I still remember him writing that he is a physician who cuts flesh and William is a tailor who cuts cloth. Later on, when I did finally get to London, I learned that William was a very high class tailor who operated on Saville Row.

Many years long years after the war while on Sabbatical leave from Duke University in the Spring of 1968, I believe, I met William for the first time. This was when Malvina and I travelled the length and breadth of Spain where I was studying the mudéjar architecture. We went on to Italy briefly, to Israel for almost a month, then for a few days in Greece and on to England for a week or two before returning home. It was then that we met William and learned that in meantime since 1939 his brother Charles and mother Boonyeh had died. I did see him once again, in the summer 1970, when I was on my way back from Israel where I had participated in an archaeological excavation at a site in Meiron near Sefat.

William was a most unusual and literate tailor. He collected first editions of the works of twentieth-century American authors. He had what looked like an old fashioned "chiffonnier," a clothes cabinet, full of books of this sort. I thought he was a member of the Royal Academy, though he disabused me of this notion. At any rate, he lunched there frequently and invited me there on one occasion. He was welcomed by the doorman and other people in the lobby with great warmth leading me to conclude that he was a member of that august British institution.

My grandfather Shaiyeh, as I have already mentioned, the eldest of Elyeh's children, also had a number of siblings, children of Elyeh's second wife, Bayleh. I very rarely heard her name and learned it from Esther after I had finished the first draft of this book in mid-February of 1995. How many children there were from this second marriage I do not know, but I did know two, especially one, my grandfather's brother referred to by my mother and her brothers and sister as "der fehter Shmeel" or simply as Sam Bodie. I knew him rather well, especially when I was already a grown man. He was always impeccably dressed, a typical English gentleman in long double-breasted winter coat with a velvet collar, and invariably wearing a black Derby hat.

He had emigrated to the United States before the outbreak of the First World War when I was still a very small child and came to stay with my mother and father

until he got settled. I do not remember anything about him from that time. We lived in a flat in a tenement house on Snediker Avenue where my sister Esther was born 27 January 1914. Sam Bodie probably lived with us at the time. According to the story my mother told me, he had arrived with a wife who was an extremely beautiful woman and whom he divorced later on.

He made his living as a designer of women's clothes. He must have had some artistic talents for he once told me that he had attended art school in London when he was a young man. He was born in Nemirov and was older than my mother, born in 1890 He was perhaps a year or two older than my father, born in 1886 and was, I believe, at least five years or so older than my father, and so, his date of birth must be 1880 more or less and at least ten years later than his brother, my grandfather Shaiyeh.

In the 1920's he operated a dress factory in New York. His older brother, my grandfather was probably was not a partner judging by my grandfather's character. He could never be a "boss" and lord it over workers in a New York shop or get involved with complicated financial matters. He was a craftsman above all and so probably was an employee in Sam Bodie's shop. According to Esther, my uncle Julie, still in his teens also worked for Sam Bodie. The factory produced a very fashionable and expensive line of ladies' beaded silk dresses. I remember my mother had such a dress. It sparkled in the light. Beaded silk dresses were in great vogue at the time.

Sam would create the designs and my grandfather would transfer them to the cloth prior to the next step, that of sewing on the myriad numbers of tiny little beads. I do not know exactly what the process was, but the designs were imprinted on the cloth, perhaps by stencils, in ovens of some sort. My grandfather sometimes burned himself while working at the ovens where the designs were imprinted on the cloth. To alleviate some of the discomfort he was experiencing, my grandfather would sometimes roll up his shirt sleeves and uncover the burns on his forearms.

When Sam arrived in this country he was surprised to learn that my grandfather's family name was Marinsky. My great grandmother's family name was Marinsky which my grandfather adopted when he and mother arrived at Castle Garden on the Battery in New York. This building served as an entry point for immigrants before Ellis Island. The family name in Russia was Ubogu (OO'bawg'oo) which had been Anglicized to Bodie in London by my grandfather's younger siblings, the children of the second marriage. I do not know exactly when the American branch of the family legally changed the name to Bodie, it must have been sometime in the 1920's. I know my uncles Benny and Davey had shortened the name Marinsky to Marin. But for Sam Bodie that was not acceptable and he prevailed on my grandfather and my uncles Benny, Davey and Julie, who was still too young to have a voice in this decision, to change the family name to Bodie which in sound was nearer the original name of Oobawgoo. At the same time, my grandfather's given name Shaiyeh, which had been translated at Castle Garden to Sam, was also

changed to Charles. His complete name was Avroom Shaiyeh, Abram Isaiah, but he was rarely ever referred to as Avroom.

Jewish immigrants would have been full of disbelief if they had been told their Hebrew names, Biblical ones especially, had equivalents in such a goyish language as English, Abraham Lincoln excepted. Charles is certainly no translation of Shaiyeh and I assume that Sam Bodie thought that two brothers with the same name would be confusing, especially since Sam was not a correct English version of Shaiyeh, the Yiddish version of the original Hebrew Yeshaiyah, the English of which is Isaiah. At least his name, Sam or Samuel, was the correct version of the Hebrew Shmeel [Shmuel]. And so, the choice of Charles must have been picked as a compromise for Shaiyeh.

The same sort of dilemma in the choice of names occurred in the case of my father who on arrival in America also became Sam Markman; and in my case when I was born in Brownsville in 1911, I became Sidney. My father's Hebrew name was Nethan'el Bentsion (Ben'tsee'on). The second half of his name was only used when he was called up to the Torah and is still used when I am called up. He was simply known as Sahnyeh, which is a shortened version of the Hebrew Nethanel, the "th" in Hebrew is pronounced like an "s" in Yiddish and the name is pronounced Ne'sahn'el and then shortened to Sahnyeh in Yiddish. He should have been given the name Nathaniel, but to Jews Nathaniel sounded like such a goyishe name. Nor was the English version of the Hebrew well known among the immigrants, and so Shanyeh became Sam, a proper Jewish name.

I was named Shmuel Dahvid in Hebrew, in Yiddish Shmeel Doovid, and should have been given the English equivalent name of Samuel David. Instead I was named Sidney. The name David was never entered on my birth certificate, that is not until 1939 when I did so myself. I was going to Paris and so had to have a passport. In order to make application one needed proof of birth. So I went down to the Board of Health in Brooklyn and got my birth certificate. Not only was my second given name missing, but my first name was listed as Louis! Dr. Maurice Dattlebaum [always pronounced Taitelboim] who attended my mother when I was born, lost patience during the discussion of what my name should be in English. It should have been Samuel, but this was impossible because my father already had that name. The name Louis (Loo'yeh I suppose) was probably mentioned in the debate of what my name in English should be. Without further ado, he registered my birth under the name Louis Markman. I went through some travail to have this corrected and now if you ever see my birth certificate you will note that there is a space that is blacked out and the name Sidney David inserted before the name Markman.

To return to my remembrances of Sam Bodie, my grandfather Shaiyeh's younger brother, my mother's uncle and my great uncle. During the great Depression, between 1929 and the outbreak of the Second World war ten years later, he fell on what I now guess to have been hard times. He seemed to have settled down

somewhat and left off being the "big spender" he had been thought of by the rest of the family who by comparison were far from well-off. For example, in the early 1920's he drove a red Stutz two-seater roadster with a spare tire fitted into each of the front fenders. It was certainly one of a kind on the streets of Brownsville when he visited my grandparents.

Despite the apparent decline in his fortunes in the early 1930's, a state suffered by countless thousands of others as well, he drove in what I remember as a monstrously large black sedan, a Rolls Royce I believe, which he had acquired some time in the 1920's, supposedly before the Wall Street Crash in October of 1929. It was much larger than my father's 1926 Packard sedan, which, I remember, cost \$2,700 in 1926 not long after we moved into the house on Empire Boulevard, which cost \$18,000. I suppose Sam Bodie chose to own and drive a Rolls Royce because of what such a car had represented to him during his youth in London. The Rolls Royce was certainly a status symbol, not only a sign of wealth, but also of nobility. He once showed me, not without some pride, how the windows in the car were moved up and down from a control on the dashboard. Power windows, I believe appeared in American automobiles for the first time in the 1950's.

This car came to signify to me a token of his former "glory" which he held on to though he now lived in a rather small and modest apartment in Forest Hills in Queens the site of the world-famous tennis club where national and international matches were played. Forest Hills was a high rent area, a commuters' neighborhood reached from New York by the Long Island Railroad. This was before the subway line was extended down Queens Boulevard with the result that Forest Hills lost its exclusive character and was built up with middle-class high-rise apartment houses. According to Esther, while he was living in Forest Hills, he was invited to some movie studio in Hollywood to work as a designer. I do not know if he ever went out there or not. There was a time during the 1930's when matters were very slack in dress manufacturing, he used to create designs for textiles. He used to render the designs on paper, probably watercolor paper, which he then sold to various textile mills.

Sam never had any children, not by his first wife with whom he arrived from England and whom he divorced later, nor by his second wife, whose name I can no longer recall and whom I knew quite well when they were living in Forest Hills. I remember her as a statuesque tall woman with a full bosom, considerably younger than Sam. My mother told me that she had been a "figure lady," as clothes models were once called. She had modelled corsets. The last time I saw Sam Bodie was in the Spring of 1939 just before I left for Paris to attend a summer course at the Sorbonne.

This brings me my great grandfather's daughter Mahryam whom I met only briefly. From Sam Bodie I had heard she was a talented and successful dress designer and had her own exclusive dressmaker's salon in London. I suppose I should use the French word "couturiere." Her given name in English was Muriel but for my grandfather, her brother Shaiyeh, and her brother Sam she was always

Mahryam. She had married a man by the name of Koenig, which she changed to King. Her establishment was known as that of "Muriel King." This type of name changing to more Anglicized and, therefore, acceptable forms is far more common in England than in the United States, where to do so would be tantamount to being ashamed of and of denying one's heritage. In England this custom does not necessarily have a pejorative connotation, but merely a way of showing that one is English, yet still Jewish. When I met her, her married name was Gracial. She had divorced Mr. Koenig/King and married a Frenchman, younger than herself. Sam Bodie never said a word about his sister's new husband and so I suspect that Mr. Gracial was not Jewish.

I never learned if she had any children, but she was supposed to have designed dresses for the members of the royal family including Queen Mary, the grandmother of the present queen. Remembering what Queen Mary looked like in her long voluminous dresses and her enormous hats I would venture to say that she was less than a model for what the "flappers" of the 1920's considered acceptable garb. But to make up for the dowdy designs executed for Queen Mary, it was said that she also did clothes for Greta Garbo and other film stars. For all I know, these stories may all be myth. But that she was a successful ladies' dress designer in London, there is no doubt. At the time I met her in New York just before sailing for France in the Spring of 1939, judging by the manner in which she received me, I concluded that the hyperbole with which she had been described to me was not an exaggeration.

Sam Bodie told me that his sister Muriel was in New York and was staying at the Ritz Hotel. The name of the hotel I mention may not be correct, but it certainly was a ritzy place some where in mid-town Manhattan. I called her on the telephone and in a very formal and even distant, impersonal manner she invited me to meet her at her hotel. When I arrived and asked at for her at the hotel desk, I was told that she would meet me in the "ladies' bar."

There I waited a few minutes before a strikingly handsome middle-aged woman, elegantly dressed wearing a sable cape over her shoulders, with dark blonde hair and dark brown eyes, high cheek bones and rather prominent nostrils entered the room and greeted me. I hardly remember the subject of our conversation, other than its tenor. Very impersonal and even cold. She evinced no interest in hearing something of her eldest brother who had died about eight years before, or her niece, my mother, let alone someone as insignificant as me.

My reaction was one of great surprise and even unbelief that I was addressing a blood relative. I regretted having put myself in a position to be patronized and merely tolerated. My *amour propre*, self pride, was offended, especially since I was trying to establish some familial ties with my grandfather's family. As we parted, she invited me to come to tea when I was in London after my stint at the Sorbonne in Paris.



I related my reactions to the visit with my great aunt, the "great Muriel King," to my professor and doctoral adviser, Dr. Margarete Bieber, at Columbia University. She was formerly professor at the University of Giessen in Germany. She assured me she knew something of the English character. She comforted me somewhat by saying it was only English reserve that I had experienced and that my great aunt Muriel King really had positive feelings about me, otherwise she would not have invited me to tea! Because of this encounter, which I considered humiliating and which I blamed myself for having put myself in a condescending position. I made no effort to go to England and meet the other members of my grandfather Shaiyeh's family with whom I had some correspondence, Charles Marian and William Black.

Almost thirty years later, in 1968, Malvina and I stopped over in London and were warmly and affectionately welcomed by William. It seems, that he and his brother Charles and his mother Boonyeh, both of whom had died some years before, had been looking forward to seeing me. I was truly sorry that I had not made the effort in 1939 to see them before returning home from Paris. The only consoling thought is that I probably could not have travelled to England in the Fall of 1939 because of the outbreak of the Second World War. It was difficult enough to find transportation back to the United States without adding the extra obstacle of booking passage through England.

During this visit William filled me in on some of the family history going back to the time the family left Nemirov and arrived in London, probably before 1910. It seems my great grandfather Elyeh left Nemirov for London with all his children, from both his first and second wife, their husbands and children, except for his daughter Sheyvah, of whom I know nothing. Those who went to London included my grandfather Shaiyeh's sisters OODYeh and Boonyeh and their husbands and children, as well as Elyeh's younger children from his second wife including Sam Bodie and Muriel King and also some others, how many I do not now, but all were still young children. Boonyeh's sons William and OOSher (Asher) were all born in Nemirov I believe, while Charles may have already been born in London.

Just what Elyeh did for a living in London I did not ask William. He probably worked as a tailor, if he worked at all. He was probably already in his sixties when he came to London and was probably retired. He lived a long life, and according to my grandmother Sooreh Dintsyeh, he outlived his son, my grandfather, who died at age 62 in 1931. Elyeh, as I have already calculated above, was at most sixteen perhaps eighteen years older than his son, my grandfather Shaiyeh. [62 + 18 = 80, or 62 + 16 = 78] That being the case, he was probably seventy-seven or seventy-eight years old when my grandfather died in 1931. He could very well have outlived him.

He must have been a very stern character and a fastidious dresser. Sam Bodie related that his mother was so dutiful a wife that she even shined her husband's shoes. My grandfather spoke very little about him. I suspect that he and his father were never very close, especially after my grandfather and grandmother

were married, probably in 1888 or so. They never saw each other again after 1903, the year my grandfather emigrated to the United States. This being the case, I was especially surprised when William Black spoke of his grandfather, my great grandfather Elyeh, who had been almost a mythical character for me. William told of an incident which reveals the old man's standards and his character. It is a simple story, yet it brought my great grandfather into the world of reality for me. One day William took his grandfather the movies, the silent movies then. During the course of unfolding of the story in the film, one of the characters steals some a penny from a blind beggar's cup. The old man got so excited that got up from his seat and yelled out in a loud voice in Yiddish, "Dyee gawn'if, geeb eem oop di pehn'eh!" [You thief, give him back the penny!] I had no idea that William could speak Yiddish, and in such accent which for me was so nostalgic, an accent that had died with my grandparents and my mother and father. I am still moved when I recall the incident.