

RG-50.030.1027

Interviewed 1 May 2019 in Chicago

Summary by Joseph Bradley

Yefim Chudnovsky was born on 18 August 1935 in Zvenigorod (Zvenyhorod), Ukraine.

Family

Father: Israel Moiseevich Chudnovsky, born 1885 in Zvenigorod

Mother: Manya Efimovna neé Letuchaya, born (n.d.) in Lysenko, a village near Zvenigorod. She was his father's second wife

Father and his first wife (no name) had 4 sons: Nikolai (b. 1910), Boris (b. 1911), Yakov (b. 1915), and Leonid (b. 1919), and 1 daughter: Asya (b. 1913). Yakov, Leonid and Asya lived with Yefim; Nikolai and Boris moved to Kiev.

Father's mother Katya lived with Yefim.

Mother's older brother, Yitzak, had 3 daughters: Dora (b. 1924), Manya (b. 1926), and Nina (b. 1929). They lived in Kiev.

Father's two sisters emigrated to New York (in 1913) and Mexico (in 1927).

Father's cousin Zina (Zisl, Aunt Zina) was a typist in Kiev and visited Yefim's family on holidays with her son Boris (b. 1921) and Raya (b. 1926).

Before the war

Father worked in a workshop run by a society for the blind. Among other things he made matzo. Mother was a seamstress. Yefim describes his house. Yefim's parents and grandmother spoke Yiddish, but Yefim spoke Russian. Zvenigorod was a shtetl and had a Jewish school. Relations between Ukrainians and Jews were good before the war; a Ukrainian woman helped Yefim's mother with housework, and Yefim played with Raya, David and Boris Gudrosul (?), who lived across the street. His half brothers Yakov and Leonid joined the army.

WWII

Yefim describes his family's evacuation in June 1941. Aunt Zina, her husband Lev (Lyova) and daughter Raya evacuated with Yefim and his parents and sister Asya on two carts that they bought at the town market from gypsies. In Fall 1941 they ended up at a dairy farm in the village of Bokovskaya, a small town in Rostov oblast. They settled in a house with other evacuees. Yefim's father and uncle Lyova worked on the farm; his mother, Aunt Zina and Raya worked as seamstresses. On 11 July 1942 the Germans entered the town and began running the dairy farm. Yefim's father was taken prisoner, Uncle Lyova and Raya fled along with the retreating Soviet army, and Yefim, his mother, his sister and Aunt Zina hid in different houses, cellars and in the forest. The Ukrainian police never captured them, but once a German soldier caught Yefim but he let him go. During the Soviet counteroffensive after Stalingrad in the winter of 1943, Yefim's father escaped. Fighting raged nearby as the Germans were in retreat, but the family continued to hide in cellars. During shelling of Bokovskaya, his father and sister Asya were killed. When Bokovskaya was liberated, Yefim remained with his mother and Aunt

Zina. In September 1944, Yefim started school. In 1945, they returned to their home in Zvenigorod; Raya also returned. Jews who had stayed in Zvenigorod, including grandmother Kaya, were killed. Yefim's half-brothers Leonid and Yakov were missing in action and presumed killed.

Postwar

Yefim describes postwar life, the death of his mother (1948?), the return of his half-brothers Boris and Nikolai, his education in a vocational school, his move to Kiev and employment as a metal worker, his time in the Soviet army, his difficulty finding housing and employment due to discrimination against Jews, his marriage in 1961, the birth of his son, the marriage of his son, the births of his grandson Sasha and his granddaughter Michelle, and his immigration to the U.S. in 1992.