

DR. PAULINA SHMILKINA GINSBURG was born on October 13, 1913 in Zvinigorotka, Ukraine (100 miles from Kiev). Her father, Chaim Shmilkin, 1877 – 1943) was a merchant (mainly flour) and her mother was Esther Friedman Shmilkin (1890-1984). Before the revolution they were well off but after the October revolution the business and home were taken away and the family moved a few miles away to the town of Boguslav, where Chaim was forced to work on a collective farm (*kol'khoz*). Paulina recalls as a five-year-old pre-revolution that there were pogroms and it was very dangerous for Jews – she remembers being terrified seeing Jews being hung in the town square. Paulina's maternal grandparents were religious Jews and secretly celebrated the Passover traditions, illegally baking their own matzo. In 1927 Paulina went to Kiev to finish school and after working for a year at a knitting factory she was admitted to medical school.

Paulina met her husband Naum, in 1932 who was also attending medical school. They married Dec. 2, 1934, and had their first child, Isaac in 1936. Paulina graduated medical school in 1938 as a pediatrician. Naum had graduated in 1936 and they lived separately while he had a job in the town of Old Oskol, while she finished her degree. They reunited in Old Oskol but moved back to Kiev in 1940 for Naum to attend graduate school. On July 5, 1941 when the war broke out Naum enlisted in the army and sent Paulina's extended family (parents, sister, son) east by cattle car where they eventually ended up in Stalingrad and then by ship up the Volga river to Astrakhan. When the Germans bombed Astrakhan in 1942 the family took a ship and went East to Uralsk, and then to Guryev, and finally to a little village of Rayevka in Bashkiryeve, near Ufa, to live with maternal aunts. Paulina was able to find a job in a clinic in Buguruslan where the family spent the rest of the war years until 1945. Life was very difficult with the entire family living in one room with illness and not enough money or food.

After the war the Paulina and her parents and Isaac, moved back to Kiev where Paulina worked at the Kiev Regional Children's Polyclinic and Hospital. Naum was still in the Army and stationed in Weimar Germany where the family was reunited in May, 1946. Life much easier there with both food and a large house to live in. Paulina gave birth to her second son, Boris in 1947. Paulina was able to work at the hospital training laboratory in Yenna, under a famous doctor Professor Ibrain. Despite an easy life in Germany, Paulina and Naum and the boys moved back to Kiev in 1948 to be with Paulina's parents and sister and family. Now three families were living together in a single apartment. They had to share a kitchen and bathing facilities with anti-Semitic neighbors who were harassing them and writing to the KGB. Paulina and family lived in these miserable conditions until 1953 when they first moved to Dnepropetrovsk and then in 1954 Kharkov where they lived until they left the Soviet Union in 1989.

In Kharkov, Paulina worked in a clinic (anti-Semitism prevented her from working in a hospital which she would have preferred). The opportunities for Jews in the Soviet Union were limited and things came to head for the Ginsberg family when the son Isaac was kicked out of college in 1976 due to anti-Semitism. Paulina's granddaughter, Anna initiated the emigration move by getting an invitation letter from a friend in Israel. Unfortunately, this invitation included everyone but Boris and so they got an invitation from the US. Ironically, Boris was late with his papers and could not come (he eventually did emigrate to Israel) Naum was originally reluctant to go both because of his health and his high position as a director of a medical college but was convinced it was the right thing to do for the family since anti-Semitism restricted their opportunities in the Soviet Union. They were granted the right to emigrate and moved to the US on September 28, 1989 by way of Vienna, and Italy (for a month). Paulina misses her son Boris and her grandsons who are in Israel and hopes someday that Boris will come to the US.