

Alex Strauss

Originally Marion Strauss, born in Shemesh, Eastern Galicia 1928; Shemesh, population of 50,000 to 60,000, large Jewish population, three synagogues, castle with gardens in the city, eastern side of city were pre- World War I fortifications built by the Austrians to protect from Russian attacks; grandfather and second wife, Samuel and Sophie Strauss, grandmother was Matilda Strauss (deceased); five sons and one daughter; all lived in Poland, nine cousins, grandfather's business was selling material for men's suits, all five sons completed medical degrees, daughter lived in Katowice, 1939 Poland divided between Poland and Russia, family lived on Russian side, Uncle Pincus Strauss sent his family east to Shemesh, sent to Urals, 1942 general amnesty and family went to south to Flunza, Russia where they spent the war; his youngest uncle, finished medical studies Bologna, Italy in 1938 and then to Alexandra, in Victoria, Australia and then to Melbourne, Australia. Other uncles, one studied in Warsaw, one in Berlin (eldest, Henry Strauss)(died in the Warsaw ghetto) , one in France and his father studied in Vienna, SS soldier who had been a patient took one uncle and his family from the Warsaw ghetto to Shemesh, another patient betrayed the family and they were shot by the SS; father met his wife in Vienna; 1929 moved to Bessarabia, Russia then became Romania, worked for Jewish welfare society, father was an eye specialist, diagnosed cataracts on patient and successfully operated, then had a private practice, lived nicely until 1940 when Russians occupied; lived in a town situated on the River Dniester, empties into Black Sea, went to Romanian school until the age of ten, Rachman, grandparents name; widowed and remarried someone with the name of Frank; went to Jewish school a couple of hours a week; after 1940 no more religion for Jews when Russians came; in 1935 no longer able to practice eye specialty; fluent in French as well; since 1934 visited grandparents in Poland and saw anti-Semitism; in the late 1930's in Katowice saw large huge Nazi swastika flags, much more in Poland than in Romania; 1940 – Russians arrived and began transporting people to Siberia; feared that until June 1941 when the war began in Romania, Nazi-Romania pact that Germans would not invade; moved with mother to Odessa; Jews put in synagogue and burned; atrocities in Bessarabia; non-Jewish spouses turned in their Jewish spouse; father joined them in Odessa; 1941 - Germans surrounded Odessa; in summer left with parents by ship at 6:00 AM to Crimea; boarded trains (cattle cars); did not know where they were going; on train for 3 ½ weeks; ended in a town about an hour outside Stalingrad (Archida); got to Stalingrad; there for 2 to 3 weeks; train at 6:00 AM told they were going to Tashkent; traveled about 300 to 400 kilometers and train stopped; put on another train with Communist people for a few days; ended up in Siberia; father began work in hospital; mother worked in a kindergarten, he was in school; contracted scurvy; when Germans came anti-Semitism increased; had to join Communist party; father arrested because he spoke against the Communist; 1944 – father transferred to newly liberated Poland; took many trains and ended in Rolf where they stayed for a few weeks; then to the town of Stree, Poland for 3 months; children taken to military camps to learn rudimentary skills; at 16 taken into the Russian Army; taken to the front September 1944; in Army for three months; January 1945 released from Army; father transferred to Shemesh (now Poland); father opened private office; received letters that if they do not leave a member of the family will be killed, open pogroms on the Jews; 1945 left for Katowice to find the Hagenah; gates between Poland and Czechoslovakia opened; put in jail in Prague for one night; then in displaced persons camp; Czechs made the Germans in Sudetenland wear armbands; father went to British Embassy to look up relatives in London; received permit to go to England; stayed for 10 months; August 30, 1946 arrived in Australia; September until June was peaceful and free; 1947 moved to their own house; 1959 married, Fay Bilonsky, two children, son 33 (computer programmer/analyst)and daughter 32 (economics); 1971-1974 lived in Israel