

Interviewee: Jaime Kaplan

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Interviewer: Daniel Bargman

Jaime Kaplan was born in 1942, in the colony of Monigotes, province of Santa Fe. His father arrived in Argentina from Poland, and his mother came before WWII from Rumania, with an aunt. The parents met and married in Moisesville. Maybe they arrived before 1930. The rest of their family who stayed behind in Europe, was wiped out by the Nazis except for 2 maternal aunts they discovered later, living in Israel. Jaime's father first lived in Rosario and then took over a farm in the colony his younger brother was supposed to work, given to him by the Jewish Colonization of Argentina (JCA.) Jaime finished the elementary school in Monigotes in 1955 and then moved to Rafaela, at the age of 13, to go to high school. Monigotes then had started to lose its Jewish colonists because the parents wanted a better future for their children, and sent them to study to the larger cities. Another reason for the exodus from the colonies was the politics of the JCA not to give more lands to the colonists, even when the children grew up and formed their own families. Also, it was difficult to make a living from the harvests because they were under the influence of droughts, locust, torrential rains and hurricanes. For that reason Jaime's parents moved to Rosario in 1957, and he moved with them. His older brother was studying Medicine in the province of Cordoba, but transferred then to Rosario. The parents took over a business that had belonged to an uncle. At the age of 21, in 1963, Jaime went back to Monigotes, to the field that the father had never given up. Its dairy farm had been operated by a local non-Jewish family. He did not live in the farm but in the town (2 rows of houses only!) which was 10km away. In that period, out of more than an original hundred Jewish families, only 10-12 remained. In 1977, when Jaime left a year after getting married, there were only 5 or 6. In Rosario, he opened a kiosk, but he never sold the lands of his father. He exploits them from far away, travelling there every couple of weeks. Jaime decided to leave because of the floods in those years, and for a better Jewish education for his children but the love of the land his mother inculcated in all her children never left them.