

## **The Rare Film that Uncovered the Story of a Family that was Obliterated**

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For many years Arieh Bomzon held on to a film that his father's cousin recorded when he visited Plock (pronounced 'Plotsk') in Poland in 1937. However, only when the project "Collecting Remnants" intervened, did Arieh and other family members set out on a journey following the steps of the people who appear in the film – and even discovered a (female) cousin who was living in the city.

*Yuri Yalon*

No one in the Bomzon family fully understood the significance of the film and the photos from the period of the rise of the Nazis. Nevertheless, the second generation did know that the film was about family members who lived in Plock, Poland, however only after a meeting with people from *Yad Vashem's* project "Collecting Remnants", did family members set out on a roots journey, which eventually discovered a riveting family story, about the family, almost all of whom perished in the Holocaust.

Arieh Bomzon, a resident of Karkur, started the journey about a year ago when he met with representatives of *Yad Vashem* who came to collect family photos. Bomzon, born in 1947, the only child of Julius and Bella, grew up in a house where they did not speak about the Holocaust. He asked to donate prewar photos of his father, Julius (Israel Avraham) Bomzon family, from the 1930s, while he knew little of the people who appear in the photos. He also related to representatives from *Yad Vashem* that he has a DVD, a copy of a movie made by one of his father's cousins, Herman Keller, in 1937 in Plock. Movies from those years are rare and raised an interest.

Bomzon was unable to expand on the film, however, following questions raised by the people from *Yad Vashem*, he decided to further investigate the matter. He contacted his cousin, Susan Mouckley, Keller's granddaughter living in Canada, in whose hands is the original film. Bomzon arranged contact between the *Yad Vashem* people and another cousin, Sandra Brygart Rodriguez, who lives in USA, who is also the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Sam Brygart, another cousin of Arieh. The cousins decide to set forth on a joint roots trip to Plock where they visited sites which appear in the 1937 movie and in photos.

Remember them All

When they visited Plock they retrieved evidence from the town archives of the extensive family that lived in the town since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the time of the Holocaust. They visited the town's old synagogue which today is a museum of the Jews of the town, and they visited the houses of members of the family. At the Jewish

museum they met a man whose family lived in the building where Sandra's family lived. He hurried home and brought her a certificate that belonged to the family. During meetings that they held in Plock the family discovered the story behind the movie and the photos that they held.

They discovered that Herman Keller left Plock in 1913 and emigrated to the USA after his mother, Helen Keller-Frydman, died in 1911. In order to renovate his mother's gravestone Keller returned to Plock in 1937 with his son, Norton, who was Bar Mitzvah age, to visit Plock, with a movie camera and a still camera, He documented the ceremony at the cemetery and the family gathering without knowing that within a few years this movie would become a tragic documentation.

Of the extensive family which lived in Plock for many generations and which can be seen in the movie and in the photos only three cousins survived: Julius Bomzon, Arie's father, Sam Brygart, Sandar's father and Israel Cynamon, who arrived in the Land of Israel before the war. During their trip they watched the movie and reviewed the photos again and again, until they managed to identify almost all who appeared in the movie and photos..

In one of the photos Julius is sitting around a table around with six close family members: on the right, his maternal grandfather, Chaim Josek Zelezniak; his grandfather's third wife, Fajge Goldman; Julius Bomzon; his brother Isaac-Yaacov (Kuba-Bomzon); his sister, Hannah Bomzon; his father, Leib Bomzon; and his mother Taub Bomzon. The only one to survive was Julius. In another photo where the family are sitting around a table outside, after the ceremony at the cemetery in July 1937, they identified Julius's parents, Taub and Leib, his sister, Hannah, his uncle Lajzer Breygart, cousin Lajzer Cynamon, Julius's grandfather Chaim Josek Zelezniak, and one of Lajzer Brygart's nieces Breighart (name unknown).

For the family the highlight of the trip was a meeting with a (female) cousin who has been living in Plock for 50 years. "We found her as a result of the testimonies that the Yad Vashem people found, of two sisters whose mother's maiden name was Bomzon", related Arie Bomzon, "It transpired that the sisters were in Russia before the war, and thus survived. At the end of the war they returned to Plock, and the cousin that we met she was the granddaughter of one of them and she had no idea that members of the family had survived the war and she had not heard of us, the second generation."

As though the 'Shiva' (period of mourning) had Ended

"The trip in September to Poland was very emotional", he concluded, "only after the trip did I understand our family's loss, most of whom were murdered in the Holocaust. It was important for me to be there and to see where they all lived. For me it was closure. When I returned to Israel I felt that I had finished the "shiva". I would like to thank *Yad*

*Vashem* who helped me discover new details of my extensive family.” The original movie will soon be deposited within *Yad Vashem*’s framework of “Collecting the Remnants”, the national project to preserve items from the Holocaust.

To arrange collection of items contact (Israel) 02-6443888 [collect@yadvashem.org.il](mailto:collect@yadvashem.org.il)