

Creative Art

Cute photos that Arthur Shattil staged not only won contests but contributed to lost branches of the family becoming reacquainted.

Art started winning contests when he was a teenager. In 1932 he won a car given away by Walgreen Drug Stores by filling in an entry blank and purchasing three packs of chewing gum.

In the 1940s he took a photo of his then infant son, Sanford, intently sitting in front of a typewriter with a pencil over his ear and seemingly typing with his fingers and toes. Sanford doesn't remember how his dad got him to cooperate.

"All that early training did not help since I still use the hunt and peck method for typing," Sanford recalled.

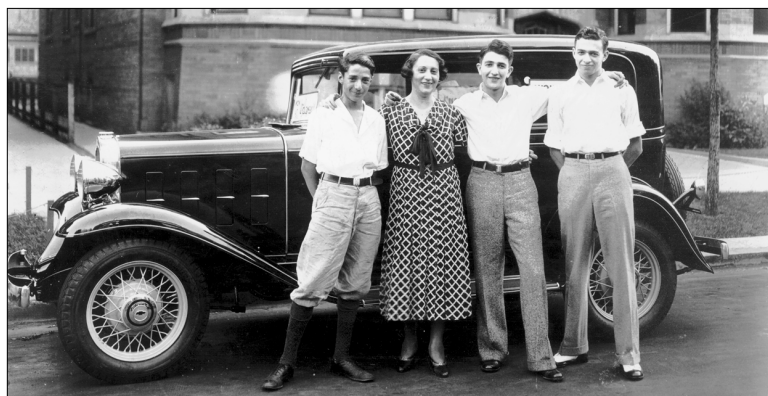
Another photo was a picture of cats sipping milk from a glass via straws.

"I think he once told me he put honey on the tips of the straws to get the cats to cooperate," Sanford wrote.

Art entered the same photos in contests over the years and won countless prizes.

Meanwhile, in Rhodesia, Esme Schattil Newfield, came across one of Art's unique photos, according to Esme's daughter, Valerie Koff.

"My late mother, Esme, was not only a cat lover but she was also a subscriber to the American Ladies Home Journal



Arthur Shattil (second from right) stands in front of his prize with brothers Melvin (left) and Siegfried (right), and mother, Ann.



and would look forward to her magazine each month," Valerie said.

She was paging through the magazine and came across a cute picture of a cat wearing a sombrero and winking. She looked at the name of the photographer, Art Shattil. Shattil is not a common name so she wrote to the editor and explained that she had been a Schattil. She knew that the family had gone to America and asked if they could give her Art's address.

Ladies Home Journal forwarded her letter to him. That was the start of the contact as Art replied to her and indeed, he was her relative. They started to correspond and a few years later Esme's sister, Leslie, came to the USA and met the family in Chicago.

Sanford doesn't remember Art taking many more photos while he and his sister, Sherry, were growing up.

"But these early ones do indicate a flair for the artistic that seems to run through the family," Sanford said. "The artistic genes remain silent in my case, but fortunately they were passed on to [my son] Jason, who is an accomplished jazz pianist known throughout the mid-Atlantic area."



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

May, 2000

50 relatives expected at reunion in San Francisco

The descendants of Mordecai and Miriam Schattil will gather on October 20, 21, and 22, 2000 for the first time in 120 years. Early responses indicate that about 50 people will attend the reunion, which will be held in and around San Francisco, California, USA.

Local kin will host receptions, dinners and presentations where family members can catch up with long lost relatives, meet newly found cousins, discover family lore, enjoy the presentation of a whimsical Schattil Family Anthem, and sample the Lithuanian cuisine that drove our ancestors out of their homeland.

Reunion highlights include a Friday evening Kaddish and dinner, presentation of an illustrated family history and tree, show and tell, oral history sessions and a contest of skill and cunning pitting the

artists against the doctors.

Accommodations for the weekend can be arranged directly with your relatives in the San Francisco Area (book early to avoid disappointment) or through the Reunion Committee, who will offer a choice of group-discounted rates at a hotel near the reunion events or week-long stays at nearby condominiums.

Family News

Elliot Stewart, son of **Ron and Sherry (Shattil) Stewart**, will marry **Amy Jennifer Gadlin** on May 22.

Send family news to: Ron Shattil, 9200 Skyline Blvd., Oakland, CA 94611 USA, ron@shattil.com

My 1995 visit to Lithuania searching for roots

By Victor Dubowitz

When I attended the meeting of the Baltic Pediatric Neurology Association in Palanga, Lithuania, in 1995, I thought I would trace my roots while I was there.

I accordingly spent an extra four days in Lithuania prior to the conference. Rachel Kostanian at the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, helped me plan the trip and also arranged a taxi to take me to the various places as well as an English speaking guide with expertise on archival matters.

I arrived in Vilnius on Wednesday and planned to spend the rest of the day plus the next exploring Vilnius and environs, the Friday visiting Kaunas (Kovno) and the Saturday heading for Paneves, Siauliai (Shavl), and Telsiai (Telz), and spending Sunday in Telz and environs, and visiting Plunge (Plungyan) and Klaipeda (Memel) en route to Palanga, for the opening of my conference in the evening.

My paternal grandfather, Nathan Dubowitz, came to South Africa in the 1890s from a small town, Pasvetin, north of Paneves. My guide, Regina Kopilevich, a physicist by training, but now a professional archivist and genealogist, thought the most useful source of births and deaths records for Pasvetin would be the synagogue records for Paneves, which she had available from 1850 to 1920.

After a meticulous search, she was unable to find a single Dubowitz (although there were quite a few Schattils recorded (Mum's maiden name). She then thought of looking through first names, Nechama, the son of....., but I had no knowledge of my

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Creative Art

This award winning photograph, along with others on the back page, was taken by Arthur Shattil. Art's pictures helped reunite two branches of the family.

Search for roots leads to Holocaust memories

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grandfather's fathers first name!

So on the Friday night in Vilnius I phoned Auntie Annie in Capetown to ask her the first name of her grandfather, but she had no recollection. I then phoned Ben Maiman, son of Sarah, sister of Nathan, who he brought out from Lithuania after the turn of the century. He had no recollection either. I then phoned the font of all genealogical knowledge, Jean in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, who said it's quite obvious, just look at Nathan's tombstone.

I had visited the grave in Beaufort West in December and fortunately had a photocopy of the photograph with me. And there it was...Nechama bar Shimoin. (my oldest cousin, son of Jack, my father's eldest brother, was called Simeon, presumably after him).

So, Regina scanned the records for the birth of a Nechama bar Shimoin, who died in Beaufort West in 1932 at the age of 58, and would thus have been born in 1874. No luck. So we headed off the next morning for Paneves and Pasvetin, with the excellent taxi service of Regina's sister, Dina, a pharmacologist, doing a bit of daylighting in her spare time.

Paneves is quite a big town, and like many others in Lithuania, noted for the bulldozing of its Jewish cemetery by the Russians, who used the broken up tombstones as building material in the construction of a theatre, many of the Hebrew inscriptions still being visible on fragments of the granite.

Driving from Paneves toward Pasvetin, I could imagine myself driving to Beaufort West. The countryside is flat and the roads pretty straight. I entered Pasvetin on an unpaved road and was immediately struck that it is small, in a rural setting, surrounded by farms. The main street ends after a couple of hundred yards in the small square, with the church on the northern side. There were a few brick houses around the square, possibly inhabited by the Jews, whereas most buildings, as in most towns are of wood.

The population before the war was about a thousand with about 100 Jews. There was



Victor Dubowitz holding a root found in the cemetery. He took it home to make into a sculpture.

a wooden shuhl, but a couple of days before the German invasion in 1941 there was a massive fire in the town, started accidentally by some school children, which destroyed most of the buildings, including the shuhl.

Regina spoke to several of the townsfolk, most of whom were of post-war vintage, and had no recollection of the name Dubowitz. We then visited the Jewish Cemetery about a mile outside the town. It was unfenced and completely overgrown, but now protected since the Lithuanians after independence from the Russians started protecting such sites. There was a notice in Hebrew and Lithuanian. Regina and I wandered in through the thick undergrowth and in the far side away from the road we came across a few tombstones. Within minutes of starting to look a bit more closely at some of the fairly simply granite stones, Regina called out, "Congratulations, it is a Dubowitz."

And there it was, with clearly legible Hebrew lettering, Shimoin bar Jaakov Dubowitz. So Jack was named after the grandfather of his father, Nathan. A few stones away, Regina called out, "Here's

another one." It was Libshe bat Kalman Dubowitz. So my father, Charley (Kalman) was named after his father's grandfather on his mother's side. According to the Hebrew dates, Shimoin died in 1915 and Libshe in 1925. We were unable to find any other Dubowitzes. There were also a few more gravestones with more ornate lettering but most were of the simple form with a semicircular top and plain lettering. Some were badly weathered and couldn't be read.

After this unexpected, somewhat dramatic and extremely emotional experience, we headed back to town and Regina tracked down the two oldest inhabitants. Valia Pivurjena, was 82 and lived in Pasvetin since 1929, and was born about 6 miles from Pasvetin. She recalled a Dubowitz Maike (Michael), born 1916, who used to milk cows with her. His family owned cows. Maike lived where the cafe now stands on the main road and the shuhl was nearby. The big fire on 13 June 1941 destroyed most of the wooden buildings. This was a week before the German invasion.

She recalled the Germans put all the Jews in town in the brick school building then took them to Joniskis, where they were killed. One 16-year-old Jewish girl Maryte (Miriam) Schneider, survived the shooting and was looked after by the local priest, Dishetsky. She was still alive. One Pasvetin resident, a pharmacist, Gandel, survived the war.

We then drove to Joniskis to track down Maryte. There is still an old wooden synagogue building in Joniskis. On inquiry, Regina was told that all the Jews had been taken from Joniskis to Zagare, further north on the Latvian border, where there was a Jewish ghetto and were massacred there. Maryte was apparently still living there. We then drove on to Zagare and tracked down Maryte's house but it was locked. The neighbour said she did live there but was ill and in the hospital— in Joniskis. We then drove back to Joniskis, went to the hospital, and there she was, recovered from pneumonia.

The story she told was that she and her family had indeed been taken by the Germans to Joniskis and on to Zagare. An edict came from the Germans that all the Jews were to assemble in the town square on a particular day, as they were being taken to labour camps. The night before she had a visit from a Lithuanian chap she knew who was a



Telse

projectionist for the cinema He told her that she shouldn't go to the square the following day but should come to his house as it would be safer. She decided that she did not wish to accept the offer as she felt she had to go with her parents to the labour camp.

The following day the Jews assembled in the square and were all shot, mainly by the Lithuanian militia. Her mother was already wounded but she was still unhurt when the chap came and took her away. He took her to the deputy commissioner of police and asked him to take her into his employ as a maid, which he did. However, after about three days rumour got round that a Jewish girl had escaped and she was tracked down and put in the prison. There she was visited by the priest who heard her story and contacted the local priest.

He then concocted a story that she was in fact not Jewish, but had been born to a poor peasant couple, who could not afford to rear her and brought her in to the employ of the Shneider family who later adopted her. He produced the appropriate false birth certificate and documents, which were accepted and that is how she survived.

After the war she married a man from Latvia and had four children and several

grandchildren. Her married name is Tiesnisiene.



A sign tower outside the town of Telse