



The Ozinsky Story

The Ozinsky Story as told by Naomi (Ozinsky) Stone

My father, Zalman Ber Ozinsky (called Salomon by his family), was born in Sviencian, Lithuania in 1892, which was part of Poland at that time. He came to South Africa in 1927, and my mother came a year later in 1928 with their three small children who were all born in Vilna - Faiwa, Yehuda and Yosef, later known as Phillip, Julian and Jossie (Joseph).

They, and at least four other related families, were all apparently sponsored by the Max and Ruben Kuritzky families who were already well established in Cape Town and involved in the meat trade and Imperial Cold Storage. This was the reason my family landed up in Maitland and where several other Jewish families settled, as they were all involved with meat, the main abattoir in Cape Town being over the railway bridge in Maitland.

My family initially lived on Main Road beyond the Koeberg Road end, where I was born in 1936. At last, a girl, my brother Meyer having been born six years earlier, also in Maitland. I was and am still called Bobbie among my family, which was a corruption of Bobba, as I was named after two of my parents' grandmothers who shared the same name, Nechama, but this was changed to Naomi when I went to school.



*My three brothers in Vilna prior
to arriving in South Africa.*

Nurse Gloucester was the midwife who attended at my mother's home birth, and I was told that Janey Levin, a friend of my mother, was also present at my birth. She was born in Whitechapel, London, and was a semi-permanent presence in our kitchen at 1 Lawrence Road where my memories of the 1940s and 1950s begin. Gossiping, teasing me, and always critical but amusing as well, and a matchmaker, and later she became a sort of relative when my brother Julian married her niece, Mary Epstein, from Exner Ave in Vredehoek. The Levins lived over the bridge and later moved to Main Road. Their children were Solly, Mark and Aubrey.

My mother was a housewife, always cooking and baking, frequently with an attendant audience sitting around, maybe knitting, and greeting me on my return from school. She made teiglach, big and small, filled with raisins or dates. She also made her own lokshen, kreplach, challah, bagels, "stuffed monkey" biscuits, lekach, putchar, chopped liver, cholent with kishke, kneidlach, and the usual traditional foods associated with the chagim, like hamentashen for Purim and blintzes for Shavuot. I remember her rolling out the lokshen dough to a very thin sheet and then hanging it to dry on the back of a chair, with a covering linen dishcloth. My mother never visited anyone without taking biscuits or challot to them.

My brothers often took me along with them on picnics to the Glen, to Newlands for rugby matches, and hikes along the Pipe Track or Table Mountain, but I remember an episode one Friday when my mother asked Meyer to take some freshly baked challot to her nephew, Natie Hurwitz, and his wife, Molly, who lived in Upper Grey Street in Oranjezicht,

She asked Meyer to take me with. I must have been about six or seven. This involved taking the train to Cape Town, and then a bus towards the closest stop at the Booth Memorial Home.



Ozinsky siblings, erev Rosh Hashanah.

BACK: Jossie, Phillip, Julian

FRONT: Naomi (Bobbie), Meyer

I look cross because I was told off for dirtying my shoes before the picture was taken.

(September 1940)

Meyer was furious and refused to take me, but had finally to relent. As a punishment for having me shlepping along, he made me walk from the Cape Town station up The Avenue, and then uphill on Orange Street, and not only that, but he on one side of the road and me on the other.

Like most families, we had a Black maid, but I do not remember any interaction with her - a sobering reflection of those apartheid days.

My parents spoke Yiddish mainly, but reverted to Polish or Russian if they wanted privacy. My father sang songs in Russian and sometimes played the violin, and he was keen on chazonos music. Most Sunday nights were reserved for the women playing rummy and the men playing chess or klabberjas or some other card game.

My father died in 1966 and my mother later moved to Marais Road in Sea Point, and her final years were in Highlands House. She died in 1979.

Very few of the Jewish women and mothers worked outside the home, and most were involved with Bnoth Zion. The only woman I know who worked was Ray Wallace. She was married to Joe Wallace, and sadly they had no children.

I remember many other family names.

Mrs Urdang and her daughter Ray and grandchildren, Selma and Ian, who lived at the top end of Lawrence Road.

The Seidles who lived in Royal Road. Their son Hymie was a civil engineer and a contemporary, or slightly older friend, of my brother Phillip, and he later lived in Kimberley.

Philip and Ethel Kawalsky, and especially their youngest son, Leizer, who was a contemporary of my brothers, Phillip and Julian, and a frequent visitor.

“Der Blinde Chazzan”, the wonderful Cantor Immerman who sang at simchot and spoke, always finding a connecting link to the occasion.

At the top end of Lawrence Road near the Shul there was a cluster of Jewish homes – the Karks (Oscar), Bubs (Ralph), Boobs (Taube, Benny), Singers (Marigold, Bernie).

Then in Coronation Road, the Langs, (Jacques, Eve, Hymie), Joffes (Maurice), Buchinskys (Masha, Julius, Harry), Samsons (Charles, Eric), Barrons, Kramers (Eunice and Barbara),

Silberts (Sam, Doreen, Masha), Louis Odes (Michael), Margolis family.

Further up were the Alpersteins (who later moved to Observatory), Immermans, Schwabskys (Max), Geffen, Mendelsons (Alec), Bergers (Harold, who married Taube Boob), Harold Cohen, the Gootmans (Bessie who married Louis Maisel, Becky who married my brother Phillip, Maurice who married Audrey Reiff).

I remember a family, possibly a widow with several children, who had a shop, maybe a dairy, somewhere on the south of Coronation Road, and from whom we bought white cheese which hung in a muslin bag. After World War II the family emigrated to Cuba where she had a brother. This all sounded very exciting and exotic to us as children.



My mother, Rachel Ozinsky, second from left, with the Schwabsky sisters (ca. 1930s).

The Frumer family who lived on the south side of Main Road, made heating appliances, like boilers.

In and around Patton Street were the Peltz family, “Big Bella”, Bessie, Rose and Anne, and their orphaned cousins Rachel and “Small Bella”.

The Stoltzmans (Sylvia, Dorothy, Leslie, Jack, Benny), Bledin, Braude, Groll (Rachel and a brother), Zieff (Issy, Isaac, Masha, Solly).

The dentists were Dr. Koonin and Dr. Jackson, and their sons Alfred Koonin and Mervyn Jackson.

The doctors were Dr. Sieff (Percy was his nephew) and Dr Swade.

Pharmacy was Bernard Barron. His wife Hilda, Alice Kramer, and Janice Odes’s mother were sisters.

Haberdashers were the Bledins.

Fish shop was Margolis.

Mens outfitters was Buchinsky.

Brooklyn and Milnerton families also attended the Maitland schools or Shul – the Horners (Judy, Jack, Ruth and Joey), Plotkin (Cecil, Deborah), and Waldmans (Ivan and a younger brother Hymie).

The local bioscope was the Grand but I do not remember going there, though I must have.

My father was keen on the circus, and he took me frequently. At that time it was held on a large vacant site on the corner of Coronation Road and Koeberg Road. Before the circus opened to the public, there were the caravans and assorted animal cages set up in preparation, and the usual crowd of children looking on.

Until probably the age of eight or nine, I played in the road with the immediate neighbouring children. K-I-N-G spells King, hide-and-seek, skipping rope or Oranges and Lemons, rounders, marbles.

I have several memories of the Shul - the boys playing Bok-Bok (Bok-Bok staan styf, hoeveel vingers op my lyf?), while we girls just hung around watching.

Erev Simchat Torah there was a custom of welcoming to Shul the Maitland sons and daughters who were engaged to be married. The brides-to-be were presented with boxes of chocolates by one of the younger girls in the congregation. The lid of the box had a special blue printed photo of the Shul and a suitable message. The fiances were probably given the honor of carrying the Torah for one of the Hakafot.

In the ladies' section upstairs, we young girls did a lot of talking, discussed the appearance and hats of the women, and made comments about the men and boys downstairs, while every now and then maybe reading the odd page of the Siddur or Machzor, but joining in the singing.

Beside the Yom Kippur recollection of my father and the repeated Avinu Malkeinu, I remember walking up Lawrence Road to the shul on erev Yom Kippur and meeting up with Masha Zieff on the Patton Street corner, and both of us eating a roll of Rowntree's wine gums, as the last food to pass our lips before the fast.

Another memory of Yom Kippur is of elderly Mr. Kramer standing behind the bimah for the whole of the Yom Tov. I always thought it was in memory of his son who died during World War II, but apparently he died after the war.

Earlier, when much younger, I remember being invited on Yom Kippur to eat lunch with sisters Ruth and Margaret Hoffman at their Samson grandparents' home, a large house on Main Road.

Cheder after school at the Talmud Torah hall on the corner of Patton Street and Coronation Road was an accepted institution. We had a succession of teachers. I recall Reverend Efron and a Mr. Smolensky. The boys and girls were together and it was hard-going. I read and wrote Ivrit and had a minimal vocabulary of sorts, and even remember having to read the Rashi script, but it was a chore. Somehow the tuition was not successful.

One of my early memories at cheder was leaning over pretty Reeva Efron who had a long sharpened pencil in her hand, and I accidentally knocked her hand and the pencil point lodged under the skin of my right palm, which remains visible to this day, and a lasting memory of her, as sadly she died not long after.

Our Pesach seders were traditional and were held in our home, with many relatives, and my father at the head of the table, with two enormous feather pillows to the side.

The evening before, we searched for chametz by candle light, searching for those small bits of bread that had previously been placed on windowsills in all the rooms, and then swept up with a feather. I remember "shlogn kapores" with a live fowl waved around my head, while a bracha was recited. Later, the fowl was dispatched to a non-Jewish neighbor, as was the wine collected from the saucers when the 10 makkat were chanted. We actually poured a bit of wine into the saucer with each plague, and afterwards this was topped up into a bottle. Only much later did I encounter the custom of just dipping the finger into the wine glass and then tapping the saucer

each time to transfer the single drop of wine – minimal wastage. To this day, although I like birdwatching and enjoy the dawn chorus of birds in the trees outside my home, I could never hold a bird in my hand because of its fluttering movements that remind me of that medieval practice.

Every year on the morning of erev Pesach, I was dispatched to the home of Reverend Kaufman to collect a small bowl of charoset. I very much liked his daughter, Ray, who had married a lovely former British soldier, Nat Goodman, and her elderly father was very gracious and formal. They lived on Ferndale Drive, near the railway station.

My early schooling was up the road at the Maitland Primary School where Mr. Ross was the principal, but the only teacher I remember was Miss Rowbottom in the early grades. Later I attended the Good Hope Girls Seminary High School, where my very good friend Janice Odes, who lived at the top of Station Road, was in the same class all the way through.

I walked a fairly long way to the Holy Cross Convent in Coronation Road for piano lessons. As is many a similar story of nuns teaching children, my teacher was cold and horrible, hitting my knuckles frequently with her short baton. After a year or two I so hated the thought of continuing, and for a few months I packed my music case, walked off every week toward the Convent, but instead I deployed to the library, which was to the side of the Town Hall and park. This continued for several weeks, or maybe months, when at last she made contact with my mother, and it all came out that I was a truant. That was regrettably the end of my music career, because I really would have liked to continue music lessons somewhere else.



Naomi, Phillip, Meyer, Leizer Kawalsky (mid-1940s).

I recall the silence of the library, everyone whispering, but the female so-called librarian was distinctly non-communicative nor active in suggesting books, and I just wandered around and took out whatever fiction I had heard talked of or read about in the newspaper. There was no guidance or involvement on her part.

I don't recall ever having homework. I remember a few Saturdays, maybe after or instead of Shul, going to the office of my adored relative, Wolfie Kuritzky, on Main Road near the Buchinsky Outfitters shop, to man the small premises and answer any phone calls while he went off somewhere. I cannot recall what the business was (possibly property), and he would kindly give me some pocket money as payment, even though I was only there for maybe an hour at the most.

My brothers were all active in Habonim, as was I, although my activities were all in Hope Street in the Zionist Hall near my Good Hope School. There are photos of Julian as a madrich with his Gedud Dan¹ on a hike - Joffe, Lang, Samson, Taviansky, Buchinsky, Mendelson,

¹ Gedud Dan was the name of my brother Julian's Habonim group.

Stoltzman, Plotkin, and others a bit older.

Phillip and Jossie went to SACS, and Julian and Meyer went to the local Maitland High School.

Phillip was a civil engineer, and he worked for the Council under the City Engineer, Solly Morris, and in whose department the excellent road system in Cape Town and to the northern suburbs was initially laid out in the late '40s and early '50s. Phillip served with Machal² in the 1948 War of Independence, and on his return to South Africa he married Becky Gootman, also from Maitland, and in 1957 they went on aliyah. He and Harold Kowarsky (ex Johannesburg) founded an engineering firm, Tavton, and they built several bridges in Israel, as well as other construction projects. Philip died in 1997, but Becky is still alive at 103, and living in the same Shikkun³ flats in Ramat Aviv that was originally built by Rassco⁴ between 1956 and 1958.

Becky's sister Bessie was married to Louis Maisel, who was also involved in the meat trade. Her brother, Maurice, was a contemporary of Meyer.

Julian enlisted in the military in World War II, and was involved in aerial photography. He wanted to study dentistry after the war, but at the time Wits was the only school for dentistry, so reluctant to go to Johannesburg, he worked as a photographer at Martin Gibbs until his marriage in 1947. He was involved with several other photographers in covering the Royal Family's tour of South Africa in 1947. Later he joined his father-in-law's Albion Printing Press in Paarden Eiland, and later still, he opened his own printing business, OzPrint, on Sir Lowry Road. He loved sailing and had his own yacht, Redwing, and was one of the first Jewish members of the Royal Cape Yacht Club. He died in 2009.

Jossie taught me how to drive, on his green Morris Minor. I remember how one had to hold the clutch and accelerator at the steep hill up from the Long Street Baths into Buitenkant Street. He was an anesthetist working at Groote Schuur Hospital, and made headlines when the first heart transplant was performed in December 1967. Jossie married Poppie Rautenbach, who worked as a theatre nurse at Groote Schuur Hospital. One of their sons was an anti-apartheid activist who managed to avoid house arrest by fleeing the country, and only returning to South Africa upon the release of Nelson Mandela. Jossie died in 2017 at the age of 90.

I remember Meyer's Barmitzvah. After the Shul service he was feeling unwell and had a temperature, and Dr Sieff, our family doctor, was called and diagnosed measles. Meyer was put to bed at home and missed the reception party, which was laid out in the Talmud Torah hall. Meyer was an idealist and went on hachshara⁵, mainly studying tobacco farming as a skill to his aliyah in 1950, and settled with his South African garin⁶ in Kibbutz Tzorah. His late wife, Batya, (Bessie Berger from Parow), died in 2009, and Meyer died in 2023 at the age of 93. Two of his children remain on the Kibbutz.

² Machal refers to the group of overseas volunteers who fought alongside Israeli forces during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War.

³ Shikkun is the Hebrew word for the collective residential buildings (like an estate) for new immigrants. These old apartments in Ramat Aviv, being close to the University, are probably very desirable nowadays for couples or sharers.

⁴ Rassco was a construction company with South African involvement.

⁵ Hebrew word meaning "preparation", used to refer to training programs and agricultural centres.

⁶ Hebrew word meaning "seed," used to refer to a group that is trying to effect social change.

I followed my brother Jossie and studied Medicine at UCT, and I was in the same class as Margaret Hoffman and another dear childhood schoolfriend, Ruth Mibashan (nee Horner), who used to live in Brooklyn. My former husband, Joe Loon, was from Parys in the former Orange Free State. He was a land surveyor and had a position in the Technion in Haifa. We made aliyah with our three small children in 1968. We attended the ulpan at Dora near Netanya, and he later married his ulpan teacher and emigrated to the States, where he died in 2014.

I lived in Haifa and worked for the Army, initially at the Haifa Recruitment Centre, then for Kupat Cholim in a department for Industrial Medicine. In 1979/80 I took a year's sabbatical to complete a course in this field in London, and I met and married Victor Stone, a solicitor, in December 1980. He recently had his 92nd birthday, and I am four years behind him. A few years after we both retired, we relocated to live in a comfortable new apartment on the River Thames in East London, with a wonderful panoramic view of London and glorious sunsets.

My two sons and their families live in Israel, and my daughter and her family live in the Silicon Valley in California. I have seven grandchildren, and in December 2024 I was blessed with my first great-grandchild, born in Seattle. Two of my grandsons are serving in the IDF, and my thoughts and hopes for Am Yisrael are for security and peace, the return and well-being of the hostages, and the end of this disastrous war.



Flanked by my parents at my UCT graduation (mid-1961).

Some photos from my brother Julian's collection



Meyer Ozinsky, Jack Stoltzman, Maurice Gootman, Sonny Frumer, Julius Buchinsky, ?



Benny Stoltzman, Cecil Plotkin, ? Mendelson, Chaim Lang, Julius Buchinsky, ?



From left to right:
BACK: Cecil Plotkin, Meyer Ozinsky, Julius Buchinsky, ? Mendelson
MIDDLE: Maurice Gootman, Jack Stoltzman, Aubrey Levin, ?, Harry Buchinsky, ?
FRONT: Chaim Lang, Benny Stoltzman



From left to right:
BACK: ?, ?, ?, ?
MIDDLE: Meyer Ozinsky, Julius Buchinsky, ?
FRONT: Chaim Lang, ?, Maurice Joffe, Benny Stoltzman



*From left to right:
?, Benny Stoltzman, ?, ?, ?, Julius Buchinsky, Chaim Lang, Jack Stoltzman*



Chaim Lang in front on the right.



Julian being shaved. Harold Kaufman sitting in front on the left.



*From left to right:
BACK: Jacques Lang, Basil Jacobson, Julian Ozinsky
MIDDLE: Herbert Saacks, Louis Geffen, ?
FRONT: Hymie Davis, Bernard Saacks, Dave Joffe*
