

A Living Memorial in their own words

The Dawidowicz Family

Yehuda Leib and Reizel (Aronovich)

Dawidowicz were residents of Vilna, in what is now Lithuania when the war started. Yehuda Leib was a furrier. Reizel was an interior decorator. They had two children, Yochelle, who was born in March 28, 1922 and Regina who was born February 19, 1927.

Yehuda Leib was the youngest of five siblings and the only son. Two of his sisters left Poland before World War II. Mildred, first came to Boston, MA, where her aunt lived then settled in Holyoke, MA. Yochel went to Palestine. Her family found it difficult to start anew and returned to Vilna, but after their store was vandalized they returned to Palestine permanently.

When the Nazis invaded Vilna in 1941, they took over the Kailis Fur Factory outside of the ghetto and started a slave labor camp to manufacture uniforms for the German army. Kailis workers/inmates were given special certificates that allowed them to settle in the factory building together with their families. Yehuda Leib, his wife Reizel and their daughter Regina were sent there as was Taibel, Yehuda's sister, who was a seamstress along with two of her sons, Aaron and Yankel.

On September 6, 1941, when Vilna's Jews were transferred to the ghetto, Kailis workers attempted to stay in their workplace. Their special certificates did not help them and they too were forced into the ghetto.

Yochelle met and married Aaron Singer in 1940. After Aaron joined the Russian army, Yochelle returned to Vilna with her daughter, Pesia. From there she and her daughter were moved to Kaiserwald concentration camp near Riga and then to Stutthof concentration camp in Germany with the rest of the family. It was in that camp that Yocelle saved Regina's life. Regina was holding Pesia in line as guards "selected" prisoners. Yochelle took Pesia from Regina and asked a cousin to carry her. Yochelle and Regina were ordered to go to the work line while the

cousin and Pesia were ordered to the other line, never to be seen again. Regina was sent to Germany where she survived until the war ended. After liberation she found Yochelle and Aaron.

In 1948 Regina met and married Leon Smolarz at the Wegscheid DP camp in Linz, Austria. They moved to the Holyoke/Springfield area in 1949 where they each had family. Regina's Aunt Mildred moved to Holyoke, MA before the war and married Nathan Smith. Leon's cousins, the Rothmans, lived in Springfield. Leon and Regina had three children, Larry, Rosalind and Sharon. See *Smolarz* page for Leon's story.

Regina's sister Yochelle and her husband Aaron Singer also survived. The Singers remained in the Soviet Union with their two children, Rose and Isaac until they moved to Poland in 1957. They immigrated to Toronto in 1960.

The fate of the rest of Regina's family is as follows: Regina's parents, Yehuda Leib and Reizel were murdered in Stutthof concentration camp in 1944.

Yehuda Leib's parents, Yitzhak and Sheina died in a concentration camp. Reizel's parents, Yitzhak and Base and Reizel's sister Biela Aronovich were murdered in the Ponary forest in 1942.

Gershon Aronovich, Reizel's brother married Yehuda Leib's sister Bune. They had two sons Aaron and Avraham. They were all murdered in the Ponary forest in 1943.

Avraham Rudnitzki was murdered in the Ponary forest in 1942. Taibel and two of her sons, Aaron and Yankel, were murdered Ponary in 1944. Their third son, Shmeika, escaped from the Vilna ghetto and fought against the Nazis with the Russian army. He settled in Israel after the war and lives in Jerusalem today with his wife and their son Wolfe.



This portrait of the Dawidowicz family was taken circa 1935 in Vilna to send to Mildred (Dawidowicz) Smith, who had left Vilna and settled in Holyoke, MA. Four siblings are grouped with their families around their mother, Sheine Dawidowicz, seated in the center.

Bune is on the left in the back row with her husband, Gershon Aronovich and their sons Aaron and Avraham. Yochel, second from left in the back row, is standing behind her husband Chune Sharafan. Their son, David is on his father's lap and Tzvi is standing next to her.

Taibel, third from right in back row, is standing behind her husband, Avraham Rudnitzki. Their son, Yankel is standing next to Taibel and Shmeika's is standing in front of his father with his arms folded across his chest.

Yehuda Leib, Sheine's only son, is seated on the far right. His wife, Raizel, is standing behind him. Their daughter, Yochelle is standing next to Raizel and their younger daughter, Regina is standing in front of Yochelle.