

Dunaevtsi, Ukraine, Saturday, 7/22/01 6:30 AM  
(writing about Saturday, 7/21/01)

Yesterday was the day. It's hard to describe the wild ride my emotions took. We spent the day in Nova Ushitsa. Besides my family, Anna, Ilya, and Kostia piled into Peter's VW van, and we picked up Tatiana on the way. The road from Dunaevtsi to Nova Ushitsa passes through some of the most gorgeous pastoral land I've ever seen. When Bubbie spoke of the beautiful place where she grew up, she spoke *emes*. No wonder she thought New York was dirty! As we pulled close to town, I tried to look for the hill from which the turn of the century postcard picture<sup>1</sup> was taken, but there are now too many trees.



On the way to Novava Ushitsa.



More views on the way to Novaya Ushitsa.

The town as seen from the main road was somewhat nondescript. A mix of old and new. The new are mediocre Soviet-era buildings. First drive through town was a bit of a letdown, to be honest. Tatiana had set up a meeting with a woman named Grinberg. (We think that was her maiden name.) She is 90 years old, which means she was about 10 when Bubbie and Zeydie left. Her memory was sharp and she remembered many of my relatives who stayed behind. I wrote an email to my parents and brother last night with many of the details.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova, M. Wiener, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, New York (1999), photo1051, p. 538.

<sup>2</sup> I subsequently was able to confirm most of the family information related by Manya Grinberg. There were some specific details, *e.g.*, the story of how Misha Aizen escaped, which were incorrect in specifics, but it is remarkable how much Manya Grinberg did remember from events that took place half a century ago. I am leaving my emails and



The entrance to Novaya Ushitsa.



Novaya Ushitsa bus stop. (Photo taken a different day.)

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journal much as I wrote at the time, inaccuracies and all. A big part of this experience for me was sifting through the information and figuring out the story of my family.

It's hard to describe how exciting and moving it is to hear the name Izen spoken by someone here in the Ukraine – not with a “Oh, I think I heard of them” but with a “Oh yeah, I knew them” as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. Grinberg didn't remember my grandparents, but she did tell of six[?] siblings, three of whom emigrated to Israel. Still trying to sort out how this fits into what my parents know of our relatives. Stupid me – I didn't bring our family tree with me because I never dreamed I would actually find a trace of my family. All I expected was to breathe the same air and see what they must have looked at. Maybe my parents will write back today. Of the three who remained, two – Rivka Izen and Boris Izen (feels odd to write these names. Maybe I should be writing Aizen or Айзен as they did) survived the war. Rivka had evacuated to Siberia. When she came back after the war, she married a man named Коган – Kogan. They had a son, Misha Kogan who emigrated to the U.S. I promised Grinberg I would try to find him. Grinberg also told us (with Anna's help interpreting) of Rivka's brother Boris. Boris lived with his brother Nuchum in a house on the main drag. (We saw it!) Boris survived the war as a soldier in the Red Army. Sadly, his first wife, his daughter Zella (a pupil of Grinberg's in 1933), and most of his children lie in the mass grave. But there is a bright spot. One boy named Misha ran away into the forest and was found and hidden by Ukrainian peasants from the nearby town of Ivashkovtsy in their cellar. Misha was also one of Grinberg's students. Grinberg didn't remember the Ukrainian family's name, but Grinberg's daughter said to just ask the authorities in town, “Who saved Misha?” She thought it was common knowledge in Ivashkovtsy. Grinberg was close to Boris and helped care for him when he came back from the front. Boris (A)izen married again, a woman named Malke who was from Moldova but survived by evacuating to Kazakhstan. Sadly, Malke died in childbirth. Afterward, Boris went to live with Malke's sister Lisa.

Boris' son Misha (A)izen also married a woman named Malke, or Муся – Moosya in Russian, and they emigrated to the U.S.

We learned all this in an emotionally charged meeting in a little room. To hear of these lives while looking into the face of this very old lady who was remembering her friends, my relatives, from a different world. It was hard to tell who was more moved, she or I.



Manya Grinberg and me.

At one point, Grinberg asked my children to come close so she could see them better. She said my Becca, also a Rivka Izen, looked a lot like Rivka ((A)izen) Kogan. She told us how thrilled she was that we had come to visit. Besides Grinberg, Grinberg's daughter, her daughter's ex-husband, and her granddaughter were in the room. I have to confess, I barely recall them. My feet were not on the floor, I was so focused on what Grinberg was saying. She spoke mostly in Ukrainian. She also spoke Yiddish, but had trouble understanding my attempts to speak directly. Neia said that her ex-son-in-law, who was visiting to see his daughter, was taking it all in and was very moved. Grinberg said that the subjects taught in her school were math, history, Russian, and Yiddish. No Hebrew. She also told her daughter which houses to show us.



Rivka (Becca) Izen with Manya Grinberg.

Grinberg's daughter put on a babushke to come with us because she was going to a cemetery. On the way, we stopped at Boris (A)izen's house. Then she pointed out the house her mother said Bubbie and Zeydie probably lived in across the market square.

At the bottom of the main drag to the right, there were once three synagogues, one for the rich, one for working people, and one for poor people. Tatiana thought my family would likely have gone to the working persons' synagogue. The buildings of the rich and working persons' schuls are still there. From the poor schul, only the foundation remains.



Rich persons' schul in Novaya Ushitsa. The sign says Optika magasin – Optics shop



Working persons' schul where Zeydie probably had his Bar Mitzvah.



A second view of the working persons' schul.



Foundation where the poor persons' schul used to stand.

The turn to the left at the bottom of the main road (opposite to the direction of the schuls) eventually led to the cemetery. I forget if there were any more turns. As we got close to the cemetery, Grinberg's daughter decided she didn't like the idea of going to a cemetery on Shabbes and preferred to return, so Peter left us and drove her home.

We visited Rivka's grave in the Jewish cemetery. She died in 1955. The cemetery could not have been in a more lovely location. It was on a hillside overlooking the Ushitsa River. When we were walking up the road to the cemetery, we passed a spot with ducks and geese with ducklings and goslings, and a tethered horse and cart out of "Fiddler on the Roof", and a Ukrainian fishing in the river. Twenty or thirty meters further along was the cemetery on the hillside. A few houses along the road. Off to the left was a house with a thatched roof. Twenty or thirty meters further along was the cemetery on the hillside, above the road to the left. Unlike the cemeteries in Khmelnytsky or Kamenets-Podolsk, the grass here was nicely cropped. Probably thanks to the locals grazing their cows and goats here. High up in the cemetery, a cow was grazing. Higher up still, a goat or two – unsung workers keeping Jewish cemeteries neat. We also saw a Ukrainian worker tending a grave down the row from Rivka's. Rivka's stone, like other Soviet era stones, was written in Russian. The newer graves are higher up. There is one area with intact old stones in a stand of trees up and to the left as you face the cemetery from the road. Other old stones, or pieces thereof, have survived here and there.

Dunaevtsi, Ukraine, Monday, 7/23/01 6:30 AM  
(still writing about Saturday, 7/21/01)

*Powerful thunderstorms rolled through for most of the night. The air is cool. Roosters crowing far away. The local cocks sleep late and are active in the afternoon. A little bit of thunder rumbling in the distance. Yesterday, we went to Shargorod. Today we'll go to Medzhibozh and Letichev. Back to our day in Nova Ushitsa.*

Most of the stones lower down are old and most, but not all, are desecrated. There are pockets of older Hebrew stones. Higher up is the section of more recent graves. A Ukrainian worker was maintaining one of the newer graves. Anna called me from the new row. As Grinberg's daughter had promised, here was the grave of Rivka (A)izen Kogan. Rivka's stone, like other Soviet era stones, was written in Russian. The newer graves are higher up. There is one peaceful area with intact old stones in a stand of trees up and to the left as you face the cemetery from the road. Other old stones or pieces thereof have survived here and there. All stones face uphill, so that families visiting their loved ones looked out at the same peaceful valley that I saw. I said a quiet *kaddish* for Rivka and left a stone on her monument.



A farmhouse and avian residents on the uphill side of the road to the cemetery.



Farmhouse with a thatched roof on the way to the cemetery.



House with a Podolian style roof below road to the cemetery.



More Podolian homes below the road to the cemetery.



The Ushitsa River.



Looking back on the Ushitsa River Valley and the road to the cemetery.



Almost there. Anna leads the way, followed by Becca, Ilya and Kostia, and Tatiana.



The Novaya Ushitsa Jewish Cemetery. Postwar graves are to the rear.



*Kaddish* for Rivka Kogan



Grave of ריבא בנימיונא קוגאן – Riva Benzionovna Kogan  
(née Aizen).



Post-Holocaust section of the Novaya Ushitsa cemetery.



Cemetery maintenance: human and bovine.



Did the trees protect the stones from the Nazis? The Petliurans? Or were the trees just recent arrivals?



A pair of gravestones standing together.

Left: Buried here 1884, an important man, Reb Mendel bar Yaakov Hacoanim, died 19 [of ?], תנצבה  
 Right: Buried here 1884, an important man, Reb Moshe Aharon bar Yisrael, died 2 Av, תנצבה  
 תנצבה = Tihye Nishmato Tzura Be'tzror Hachayim = May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life.

I have never seen such a peaceful spot for a cemetery. The stones all face uphill, so that visitors look down on a lush, green valley. There were a lot of Jews here. This was a place we lived and thrived. Tatiana said that at the turn of the century, there were around 1000 Jews in a town of about 2500<sup>3</sup>. It moves me greatly to know that my ancestors rest in such a place.

We spread out looking for other (A)izen's. The newer section was easier. Anna, Ilya, Marina, and Tatiana read Russian easily. I'm slower, but I've got the alphabet down too. The Soviet era stones are largely in good repair, but they have no Hebrew. They are simple monuments with a diagonal slanting top. Nothing to mark their occupants as Jews but the names of the people and their location in a Jewish cemetery. We spread out looking for (A)izen's, and the others called me over when they found older stones with readable Hebrew. We never did find any, but we didn't search exhaustively.

*January, 2002: Actually, we overlooked the grave of *Наум Борисович Айзен* – Naum Borisovitch Aizen that was smack in front of us. I discovered this when looking at photographs from the trip. I think I must have mistaken the leading A for a Δ, which is a Russian D.*



*The grave of Naum Borisovitch Aizen, discovered in photo (3 pages back) after returning home. Below the dates: “We remember. Love. Grieving wife, children, grandchildren.”*

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<sup>3</sup> From Art Hoffman: The shtetl of your bubbe is included in the Podolia database as Nova Ushytsya. Alternative names are Litnowcze and Novaya Ushitsa. The Jewish population in 1845 was 725; in 1897, it was 2213; and during the period 1921-1930, 1844. The town was one of the 12 uyezds (districts) of the Podolia *Gubernia* (province) during the period of the Russian Empire before the Revolution. During the Soviet period and now the Ukraine, it is in Khmel'nitskiy *oblast*, and it is one of the *raions* or county seats of that *oblast*.

The sun was very bright. My kids were bug-hunting but were getting kvetchy from the heat, and Kostia was sitting on Ilya's shoulders in the shade of a tree. To be honest, I didn't feel all that sorry to be leaving. I knew my family or I would be back sometime to look more carefully, as will other Jewish sons and daughters of Nova Ushitsa. As I started back, I noticed a bunch of intact stones in a small cluster of trees at the top left as seen from the road. I went over for a look. No (A)izen's, but a beautiful, cool place.

On the way back from the cemetery, a horse and cart out of "Fiddler on the Roof" were tethered in our favorite spot by the stream. (The Ushitsa isn't exactly the Mississippi.) Too photogenic to be ignored. Jack saw it too, and we did our best to help keep Kodak® out of bankruptcy. Then back to the little shop right at the entrance to the synagogue yard, where we bought drinks.



A horse and cart by the Ushitsa River, transported from the pages of Sholem Aleichem.



Another installment of "The Goats of Podolia" on the way back from the cemetery.

While the others rested, Neia, Anna, and I walked across the market square to the blue house that Grinberg thought was Bubbie and Zeydie's.<sup>4</sup> The right half was painted blue and had a more recent front. On the right, wooden doors opened to a root cellar. Anna explained who we were and our interest in the house to an older woman and her daughter who lived there. The father and uncle of the older woman had purchased the house from the Zigfelman (Зигфельман) family. It was neat seeing the 70-year-old Soviet documents showing the sale. The Zigfelmans had used the house as a bakery, and the older woman remembers that they sold bread and matzoh. The Zigfelmans moved to Kamenets-Podolsk after they sold the house. Our theory was that they bought the house from the (A)izen family when the (A)izens emigrated. It would be interesting to find documents to confirm this.



The blue house across Market Square.



The blue house. The left side, now in disrepair, sports the original pre-war façade.

<sup>4</sup> I have not been able to confirm that this was an Aizen house, and now believe Bubbie and Zeydie lived elsewhere.

The Ukrainian brothers split the house over the walkway through the middle that leads to the back. The left part of the house is now closed and in disrepair. The left façade and the gate remain as Bubbie and Zeydie saw them. The back was closed off. The owner, Lyudmila Sadlii, invited us in. She showed us where the oven had been, and where there had been a staircase down to the root cellar. Later, in the root cellar, I found the bottom half leading into the ground floor ceiling. The owners took us down the alley between the halves of the house and opened an ancient lock to an unused back portion. Inside there was a built-in cabinet door with a Magen David on it. We spent a lot of time in front of the house speaking to the mother (the daughter of one of the brothers). She too knew the Aizens and the story of Misha. She had been good friends with Rivka. She let us explore the root cellar. She said that at one time, there was a network of tunnels that connected the cellars of many of the Jewish houses, and went down to the river. Anna was interpreting the whole time. Words can't describe what a wonderful job she does. The Jewish *getta* in Russian/Ukrainian was across the main road, from the top of the market down to the river.

*8:15 AM. Just ate breakfst. Anna brought up some cold milk – she gets it fresh from a local farmer and boils it – and some fresh currants, washed in boiled water. I put the currants on muesli we brought from Hungary.*

I asked how Lyudmila felt when the Nazis were in town. She said she was scared. After the Nazis (everyone here call them the “Fascists”) slaughtered the Jews, they said there would be a second round, meaning the Ukrainians. Many Ukrainians hid. We took pictures and Anna took their addresses down in Neia’s book. Neia had a mitzvah and was writing down names and important details that I’ve been consulting as I write these thoughts down. I was in no state to record details. I was just absorbing the scene.

*Neia just woke up, and she’s looking up the name of the Ukrainian family.*

Lyudmila Sadlii said that she now had relatives in America, meaning us.

It is impossible for me to reconcile the commonly held view in the U.S. that most Ukrainians during WWII were anti-Semitic, and were only too glad to let the Nazis take care of the Jews for them. The things my eyes see and ears hear from Jews and gentiles – body positions, smiles, warm conversations, stories of older times – all point in a different direction. It’s well documented that



Lyudmila Sadlii, her friend, and me.



Lyudmila providing Anna with details.

there were unspeakable acts committed by individual Ukrainians, and there is still an element in the Ukraine akin to American skinheads who might draw a swastika on a memorial even today, but they are not typical of the people in the Ukraine. Leo, Ilya's cousin in San Francisco, spoke of a glass ceiling in the Soviet sports organization that affected his advancement. Still, in talking to people about the past, or just plain asking people for directions, there hasn't been a change of expression or body language as the person realized we were Jewish.

*–have to get ready to go.*

Dunaevtsi, Ukraine, Tuesday, 7/24/01 7:00 AM  
(continuing to write about Saturday, 7/21/01)

*It's a foggy morning today. My hay fever was very bad during the night, perhaps because all the rain has raised the mold spore count. I woke up at 2:00 and lay awake for a long time. My thoughts churned around the theme of returning with a weed whacker, or a Jewish youth group, and cutting the weeds in all the old cemeteries. Will have to think about this some more during the light of day. With modern tools, it would not be so difficult to put the cemeteries in a state of order. Once the weeds are cut back, perhaps we can arrange for Ukrainian goats or cows to graze in Khmelnitsky, Kamenets-Podolsk, Medzhibozh, Shargorod, and all the other shtetls where Jewish graves are lost in the mass of weeds. Then arrange an annual maintenance visit. It would be a real mitzvah, and as this visit has done for me, it would strengthen the bond of young American Jews to their Jewish roots. It would be a shot in the arm for the struggling Jewish Kamenets that remain. Teenagers tend to be rebellious, and perhaps some idealistic young visitors might choose to rebel against the materialistic, complicated ways of modern America by adopting the agrarian or small towns ways of their forbears. The beauty of the farmland here beckons. Even if that doesn't happen, I'm sure that those who come will take away much from their visits.*

I got to climb down into the root cellar. There was a lot of new sand on the way down, perhaps to stabilize a slope that was getting too muddy. Inside, it was cool and dark. Lots of stuff down there, including potatoes. The wood posts and cross beams supporting the floor above were really pretty. Neia noticed it too when she followed me down. I took two low-light time exposures – hope they come out. Neia's camera has a flash but she was out of film.

After we said our goodbyes, Neia, Anna, and I went back to the main road, but we couldn't find Peter/Петро/Пемя's van. Walked down to the schul and up to Grinberg's house, but no van. We decided to go back down to the schul area to wait. Bought some drinks and were waiting outside for a few minutes when we saw Ilya coming down the hill for us. Turned out they had parked just above Grinberg's house. Go figure.

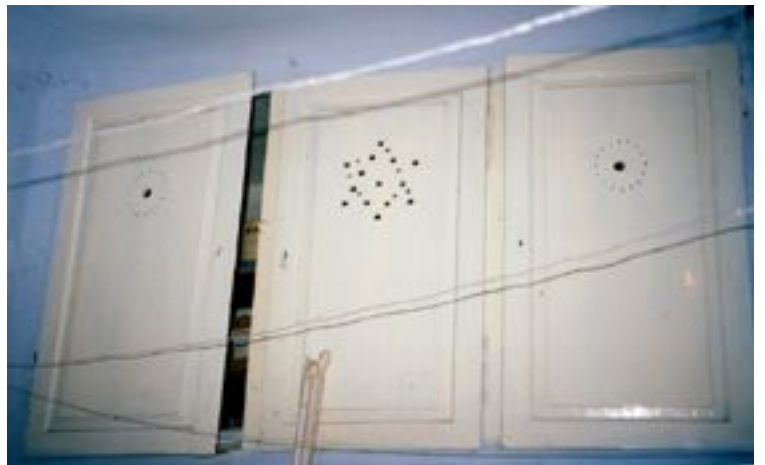
The last thing we saw in town was the place Bubbie went dancing. The last question I had asked Grinberg was whether there was a place where young people gathered to socialize and dance in the old days. They danced outdoors in an open lot alongside the main street. There is a building now standing on part of the spot. Bubbie told my mother in Yiddish of dancing with her friends and being fetched by her father to come home and do some work – I'll see if I can get my Mom to write that story down. When I knew Bubbie and Zeydie, they were old, but we have an engagement picture of them taken just after Zeydie came back from the Tsar's army during World War I.



Window through which the Zigfelmans sold bread when the house operated as a bakery.



Alley separating the halves of the blue house.



Built-in cabinets.



The root cellar below the blue house.



Low-light picture inside the root cellar.



Looking down the main road of Novaya Ushitsa to the Ushitsa Valley. Manya Grinberg's daughter is on the right. The big market square is on the left. The courtyard with synagogues is at the bottom of the road to the right, and the road to the cemetery leads off to the left. Peter's white VW Vanagon is parked in the shade. The SS established the Jewish ghetto on the right-hand side of the road.



Home of Boris Aizen from 1946 to 1983. Before the war, he lived in the big family home of his father, Benzion (Benya) Aizen. His sister, Rivka Kogan, lived in the left half of the house until her death. Afterward, Naum Aizen and his family moved into the left half. The home was purchased from a Jewish man named Sherman who returned from the war to find he had lost his family. Boris moved to Chernovitz in 1983, and he died in 1984.



Manya Grinberg identified this as a third Aizen house, but I have not been able to confirm this.



Side street running south from the main street. The house picture to the left is just beyond the white gateposts.



Smaller market across the street from the large market.



Reenactment of a very old riddle in Novaya Ushitsa.



Place where Bubbie may have come to dance with other young people.

The last place we visited was the mass execution site, which was outside of town down a side road through the forest. A rectangular stone wall now surrounds the site, with low stone markings parallel to the individual trenches. The backs and sides are wooded, but the front looks over the road and out over the valley. The site was partially overgrown – if only I had a weed whacker, it would just take an hour or two to put the site in order! In the center is a monument to the Soviet citizens massacred by the Fascists. No mention that the citizens were Jewish. The monument was pyramid-shaped and topped by a red Soviet star. My family and I gathered around and said *kaddish* together for our lost relatives, and for all the other massacred residents of Nova Ushitsa. Very moving. Took some photos and headed back. As we walked back to the car, I asked Anna and Ilya whether it would be possible to replace the red star with a Magen David.

*We've been talking about this in the evening for the past two nights. I'd like to make it out of milled aluminum so it will not need to be painted, and so it will withstand casual vandalism. Ilya had the Dunaevtsi mine memorial Magen David made from sheet metal taken from an automobile body. He's going to see if he can find the aluminum stock to manufacture the Magen David. Worse come to worse, I can ship stock from the states. I've been working out the details with Ilya. Anna translates, and we find we are thinking along the same lines. For example, we both think it is best to make the piece on a vertical mill, and we are coming up with similar solutions for fixing the star with screws that can't be unscrewed. If Ilya can't find stock here, maybe I'll machine it myself in the states.*

*Anna just brought up some cold milk and tomatoes for breakfast. Jack's reading Moby Dick on the living room couch. He was running a low-grade fever last night, but his temperature's normal now. I hear life in the other room. Jack and I are going to eat, and then I'll take my shower. I got too sleepy last night before it was my turn. Roosters in the distance are doing their thing. The local guy is still sleeping.*



Memorial for murdered Jewish residents of Novaya Ushitsa  
at the mass execution site in Trikhov Forest.



The Trikhov Forest mass-murder site outside of Novaya Ushitsa. The location of the open pit graves is now marked by white rectangular borders on the ground.



Looking outward from the memorial.



In memory forever  
the citizens of Nova Ushitsa  
that were tortured and  
brutally killed by the

Fascists  
August-October  
1942.

Notably absent is any  
mention that all were Jewish.



My children learned the Jewish custom of leaving  
stones on graves during our trip to the Ukraine.



Another memorial in Trikhov forest where a smaller number of Jews were murdered.



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An interestingly carved tree near the entrance to the second memorial. No indication of the artist, or whether it has anything to do with the memorial.



Blowing off some steam: a light-hearted finish to a heavy day. The kids were throwing stickers, *i.e.*, seeds with burrs. Peter, our driver, joined in. He's a father too, and he was really gentle with the children.

*Here's the email I alluded to earlier that revisits some of the events in my journal, but also relates further details of the Aizens who survived the holocaust.*

To: Mom/Dad, Steve  
Subject: Nova Ushitsa  
Date: Sat, 21 Jul 2001 21:33:26 +0400

Dad, Mom, Steve,

We went to Nova Ushitsa today. There's just too much to write, and you'll have to debrief Neia and me when we get back. I'll just touch on a few things. The town is set in gorgeous countryside. In the town itself, we spoke with an old woman, Grinberg, who is 90 years old. She isn't in the best of health, but her mind is sharp. She knew the Izens who stayed behind. We have the sketch of the family tree of those who stayed behind. There were 5 siblings we think. I'll write their names in a second. I'm sorry I didn't bring the family tree that you made for us, but I wasn't expecting to find anyone left, let alone anyone who knew our people. I'm guessing that these 6 siblings were Zeydie's nephews or nieces, but it might have been Bubbie's side. They were Boris, Rivka, Feema, Sasha, and Voja. The last three went to Israel. Do you know of these Israeli Izens? Were these the ones who changed their names to Barzelai, or something like that? Boris was in the Red Army and he survived the war but the story of his family wasn't so happy. His wife and most of his children were killed by the Nazis at the mass killing site outside of town. There was one bright spot. He had a boy Misha who ran away into the woods. Later, a family of Ukrainian peasants hid him in their cellar. It isn't clear whether this was for a little while or long term, but Misha survived the war and married a woman named Malke (Moosya in Russian). She survived the war because she had evacuated to Kazhakstan. They eventually emigrated to America. Ring any bells? Boris Izen (I guess he might have written Aizen) married a second woman, also named Malke, but she died in childbirth. Afterward, Boris went to live with Malke's sister Lisa. Malke and Lisa were from Moldova. We have the name of only one of Misha's siblings, a sister named Zella who died in the mass grave. Grinberg was a schoolteacher. Her school taught math, history, Yiddish and Russian, but no Hebrew. Zella was in her class in 1933, and Misha was also her student at one time. Grinberg kept saying how happy she was to see us. Apparently, one of our Israeli relatives came through but didn't bother to stop by to see her and she was hurt. She was very friendly with the Izens, and took care of Boris for a while when he came back from the front.

Boris' sister Rivka survived the war by evacuating to Siberia. Grinberg said that Becca looked very much like Rivka. Rivka married a man named Kogan, and they had a son named Misha Kogan who lives in America. Grinberg asked me to try to find him. Rivka died in 1955; we visited her grave in the Jewish cemetery. The cemetery was in a spectacularly beautiful location overlooking the Ushitsa River. We took lots of pictures. Of the cemeteries we've seen, this one is in the best shape, perhaps because locals graze animals there so the grass is cropped. You'll have to see the pictures. I looked for other Izens but didn't find any. It was very hot and I didn't do an exhaustive search. Most, but not all, of the older stones were desecrated.

By the way, without my saying anything, Grinberg mentioned that one of the Izens was a furrier.

The Izens lived close to the center of town. We were directed to three houses. One where Boris and Nuchum lived, another where she thought Bubbie or Zeydie must have lived, and a third which also had Izens. Did Bubbie or Zeydie describe a large house which could have held an extended family? The front of the house opens on an open flat area which would have had a market every Thursday. There was a root cellar, and in fact many of the Jewish homes were connected underground via their cellars. The current family bought the house in 1930 from Zigelman, who ran a bakery out of the house. The family (Neia has their names and address downstairs) were two brothers, one of whom was the father of the woman we met today. We are guessing that Zigelman bought the house after our family emigrated. Part of the house has the original front and gate, and one of the back rooms is in the state it was when the house was purchased in 1930. It has a Magen David on one of the cabinets. The woman we spoke with today said that Malke Izen was her best friend. I can't tell you how friendly and warm she was. I think the across-the-board perceptions we in America have about Ukrainians are off base. Some Ukrainians did horrible things, but many did not. I asked the woman who was 12 when the Nazis came, what she thought when all this was happening. She said she was scared. After the Nazis massacred all the Jews, they said that there would be a second round for the Ukrainians, and many of them hid, including her.

At the time Bubbie and Zeydie left, Nova Ushitsa had about 1000 Jews, and 2500 people overall.

Two of the three schuls are still standing. Why three schuls? One for the rich, another for those that worked, and a third for the poor. Tatiana thinks that our family is likely to have gone to the workers schul. It is now a bar. Only the foundation of the poor people's schul remains.

One last thing. I found the place that Bubbie must have gone to dance with her friends. There was a kind of center outdoors where young people gathered to dance and socialize. I think they still do. There is now a building on part of the spot.

We also visited the mass grave site. There is a monument to the Soviet people massacred by the Fascists on the site - no mention of Jews. There is a red star on top. I'd like to replace it with a Magen David.

Gonna sign off. It's been a wild, emotional day for me. You'll see the pictures, but you'll have to come here yourselves if you want the full effect.

Love,  
Joe

Plano, Texas, Tuesday, 3/28/05

Today, as I am editing my travelog, I learned more of the green monument. "The three victims buried in this grave were brutally killed in the winter 1942, long time before the common execution. So, one night in ghetto, a group of drunk Nazis burst into houses and jeered at people. They captured the three, took them to the forest, ordered them to dig a pit. Then they killed them."