


June 27, 1978

TO: Sidney
 Irwin
 Abbey
 Lenny
 Barry
 Andy

The subject of family history came up and I put together some information gathered from Dad's tapes, and Irwin supplied most of it. I reduced it to writing as a prelude to discussions we had with David Shayne and his kids.

This supposedly represents the history of the family up to the arrival in the United States. I think it very interesting and I think you will find it of interest.

As to the United States history, of course, several of us have been around and we can sit down and talk about it with those who are interested.


Jerry

JS:bs
Enclosure

The family MAGID moved to Russia in the Ukraine (Kiev area) about 1780 from Silesia, which was East Germany. The family originally was Ashkenazi, who came up from the area of Italy and Greece and southern Europe. This move coincided with the czar's encouragement to get Jewish immigrants into Russia to provide a middle class, such as trades people, small businesses and so forth, since Russia under the czar had the royal class and the very poor peasant class.

The Magid family at the time had two sons. Under Russian law, all sons after the first son were taken into the Russian army. To avoid this, the second son was adopted by a childless couple called SMOLER (of which the Russian pronunciation was Smolar). This adopted son was probably born in the year 1810. He later married and had three sons, the oldest of which was named Maurice.

MAURICE married Elka. Maurice was reputed to be a scholar and philosopher and had an extensive library of books in many languages, not only Russian, Polish, but also Greek, French and so on, and because he was an unusual scholar and philosopher, it was a custom of those days for the families of rich to try to get their daughters to marry such men of learning and ELKA came from such a family considered wealthy merchants. They had actually five businesses, which were as follows:

- One was the manufacture and distribution of wooden wheels, axels, plows, wagons and so forth - all farm implements which they sold to the peasant farmers.

- A second was milling of grain for the making of breads and, in addition to the milling, they kept 10% which they sold in the finished grain product.

- The third business was eggs candling. This is an examination of eggs, grading them into different sizes, discarding the bad ones, and these eggs were then sold all over Europe. The eggs obviously were bought from peasant farmers who had chickens.

- A fourth was the manufacture of whiskey bottle straw tops; vodka being the main liquor produced and consumed by the Russians and, because they were making the straw tops, they also were distributors of this vodka.

- The fifth business was limestone, which was a whitewash and crude paint used for painting homes, barns, fences and so on.

Elka bore five sons; all born in a town called Chodorkov, which was about sixty miles from Kiev, in the county of Kiev, which is in the

heart of the Ukraine - which is also called the "Grain Belt and Bread Basket of Russia".

The children born to the other two sons of the original Magid, adopted by the Smolers, are the other branches of the Smoler family living in Boston, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles; and two of those descendants are Seymour Smoller and his brother, both of whom live in Chicago.

The five sons born to Elka and Maurice Smoler were:

1. BENZION, the oldest.
2. ALTER, who remained in Europe.
3. SAM
4. BORIS
5. HARRY

BENZION was married in Europe, as were ALTER, HARRY, SAM and BORIS. The wife of Boris was Eva, maiden name Cherniakovski; a Cherniakovski became a prominent Russian general in the second world war.

SAM was reputed to be the most progressive and smartest. He was the first to come to America, which was approximately in the year 1900. MAURICE, the son of BENZION, came in 1904 as a result of a program by the Russian kossaks against the Jews in their town, and in defending this city

and the women and children, Maurice was said to have killed a kossak, who are the mounted military police of the czarist Russians. Note ... this has been depicted in the play "Fiddler on the Roof," which is a true story. His father, BENZION, then followed to America. HARRY came later and the last of the five brothers to come was BORIS; I believe some-time around 1912 or 1914.

- BENZION had one son and five daughters, all born in Russia.
- SAM had two children, a son and a daughter, born in this country.
- BORIS had four children, all four born in Russia.
- HARRY, two children, one born in Russia and one in the United States.
- MAURICE, the eldest son of BENZION, had five sons, all born in the United States

The rest of this history of the activity of the family in Chicago since 1900 has not been recorded as yet, but there are living members of the family who obviously were present and can tell all the details of what happened to all the members of the family to this date, and will probably record all details in the near future.