

Meer Kuyavskis With His Friends



This is I with my friends from the camp, who came back to Lithuania after war. All of us miraculously survived Dachau. From left to right: Mordukhovich (he has lived in Israel since late 1940s), I and my friend Gelmont Darfon. To the right is my friend Golberd, he has been living in Israel for a while. The picture was made in Kaunas in 1946, before friends' departure to Israel. Kaunas.

Americans liberated us from Dachau on 27 April 1945. By that time I was absolutely despondent. I became numb- having neither fear, nor joy when I saw the Americans. I even did not come up to them as I was indifferent. I was in We were housed in the former barracks for soldiers. We were fed very well, were given cigarettes, chewing gum, cigars. Americans talked us into going to the West, America, Canada. Many people decided to leave. I just dreamed of finding elder brother hoping that they survived the war in Soviet Union. When I was in the camp, I met some Jews from Lithuania, who lived in Kaunas before war and I decided to go with them. In autumn 1945 we took the train to Lithuania. It was strange that they even did not watch who was getting on the train. Though, we had to stay in the barracks for a while. We were called for interrogation for several times.

In postwar Kaunas all Jews who had survived the war, came to the synagogue. We were temporarily allowed to live there. I had nothing- no money, food. All I had is just a change of clothes that we were given in the Germany. I was astounded by friendly attitude of Kaunas Jews. They helped us the best way they could, they had a pretty hard living after war. People brought food, clothes to the synagogue. They tried to help us find work. My pals from the camp with whom I came to Kaunas, found their relatives and moved in their place. I tried looking for a job. I was assisted by one Jewish doctor, who was working in Kaunas hospital. He recommended me to work in the hospital as a tailor. So my apprenticeship in ghetto was very handy for me now. I had a lot of work in the hospital- I had to sew bed linen, clothes, robe, furniture covers. There were some patients who were about to recover and they helped me with my work. I lived in a small room in the hospital. There was a bed, sewing machine, table and a chair. It seemed a luxury to me at that time. I had meals in the hospital as well. Besides, I was paid money for my job.

I started looking for my brothers right after my arrival in Kaunas. I sent letters in many places- Red Cross, central search bureau, but they had no information on Kuyavskiy. If brothers looked for me, we might have met, but they decided that Benjamin and I died and they made no attempts in finding us. I understood that I was left alone in this world.

I had worked in the hospital for a year, then started working in the atelier as a tailor. I was pretty good money there. My skills got better and better and soon I became a good cutter of men's and ladies' garment. I had my own clients and had a rather comfortable living. I rented an apartment from one Jewish lady. It was not far from my work. In couple of years I went to work to the factory, where I was promoted to the foreman. At times, I went to the cinema, dancing, to the recreation center for the machinist. At the dancing party I met Stephania Vakayte, a young Lithuanian lady. I liked her instantly. Stepha and I started dated and fell in love with each other. In 1949 Stepha and I had our marriage registered.