

I am Charles Shooock, born November 4, 1903. My Jewish name is Batzalel Ben Tzvi Shooch. My birthplace was Wlodimiretz, Russia/Poland. My mother's name was Goldie Freidel. Her father's name was Haron Cooperman. Her mother's name was Hinda. My mother had three brothers, Yakov Moshe. His children are Joseph Haim (D), Tzivia Pomerantz Schnider (D), Fannie Jaffe and Minnie Forman. The second brother's name was Zalman Cooper. His children are Pinchus (D), Celia Sosnick, Fannie Cooper (D), and Sally Eiselman. The third brother's name was Shmerl (Sam) Cooperman - - Tante Baile's husband. Their children are Irving (Sonny) Cooperman and Sylvia Nicholson. Their were also cousins on my mother's side named Lipovsky (Danny and Ann). My step-mother's mane was Zlatte Bas Eliezer Rodizewsky.

My father's name was Tzvi (Hersh) Shooch. His father's name was Yakov. His mother's name was Esther Feige. He had three brothers, named Moshe and Efroim, and a half brother named Shaie. Shaie lives in Los Angeles. The children of the first two brothers remained in Europe and I don't know what happend to them. Tzvi also had three sisters, Yentl Mostuk who had three children - Moshe Moscovitz (he died in New York several years ago) and Rivka Sheeskin (husband's name Israel Sheeskin (D)). Their children are Jack and Lenny Sheeskin and Zelda Berry. Yentl had two more sons Batzalel and Yosef. They remained in Europe. The second sister was Hia Lazarow. Her son was Moshe Lazarow. He died several years ago. Their was also Tante Baila Birnman whos husband's name was Yosel Birnman. I was at their wedding. Tante Baila was the mother of Esther Cherner - husband's name Leon Cherner. (She was formerly married to Morris Jewler (D)). Tante's son's name is Jake Birnman, wife's name Lillian. Tante's third child is Sylvia Littman - husband's name Sam Littman. The fourth child is Betty Eig - husbands name Dr. Blaine Eig.

My wife's name is Fannie Bessie. Her father's name was Yale Taitelbaum(D), and her mother's name was Libby Perlin (D). His father's parents names were Yossie and Cherna Taitelbaum. They were also the parents of Leib, Aaron, Gadalie, Yitzhok Taitelbaum and Sarah Wolok and Mindel Burka. The outstanding personality in that family was Grandma Cherna, the Bobbe or midwife.

Cherna, about whom I wrote the following article, which is pringed in the Memorial Book for the city of Wladimiretz is as follows:

I remember when I first started to go to school (hader) - the good news came that a little boy was born into one of the families. The Rabi (teacher) put away the ruler with which he enforced order, and sat down to write the customary psalms which they used to wrap around the ropes of the hanging crib to protect the child from evil spirits. The tense atmosphere in the school room was relaxed and changed into happiness when we were told that we were all invited to the home of the new born to participate in the customary prayers for the little boy. Late in the afternoon the Rabi's assistant lined us all up and we marched to the home of the new born. We all entered and called out all together in a loud voice "good evening to the mother and her son". The assistant teacher wrapped the papers on which the Rabi wrote the chapters of psalms around the ropes of the hanging crib and started to lead the choir of children in the singing of the Shmah, which is the customary prayer for the occasion. After this was finished, we again in unison called out very loud, "good night to the mother and son". In order to leave the house we were again lined up in single file, because at the door was stationed the Bobbe Cherna. Her apron tucked in to the waist was filled with pumpkin seeds, filberts, and candy of which each of us received a handful together with her blessing: "You should increase and multiply and may the blessing of God be upon you". Bobbe Cherna knew all of the children by their names. Many were related to her but the portions of the goodies given out were equal. If it happened that she did not recognize one of

the boys, she would say: " Sonny whose child are you?". When she was told the name of his parents, she would call out "My dear little friend, I didn't recognize you, look how you have grown" and giving him a caress of lovingness she would say "you are a big boy already". Although as a mid wife, her knowledge and methods were primitive, many generations were born under her service and supervision. In case of difficulties or complications, people resorted to prayers and other rituals which were considered as remedies, but no one ever thought of consulting a greater authority than Cherna even though there was a medical doctor and a trained nurse in the city. As the years went on I grew to admire, respect and love this wonderful old lady because I learned that Cherna did not exactly work for personal gain. The purpose of her work was mainly to perform a good deed. If a woman had no relatives, Cherna then served as a mid wife, mother, nurse and maid. When Bobbe Cherna because of her age and eye trouble that developed, could no longer perform her daughter Brindel Burka took over and she followed in the footsteps of her mother. As stated, her son Yale was the father of my wife Fannie. She also has a sister Pauline Bodzin whos husband's name is Sam. There children are Joel, Eugene, Henry and Cherna Kowalsky (Husband Eugene). Aaron Taitelbuam's (D) children: Dr. Meyer Taitelbaum and Zelda (D). She was married and had two daughters. Gedalia Taitelbaum(D) had three children: two sons and one daughter. In addition to Fannie's sister Pauline, there are three brothers: Max who's wife is Anne. He has three sons by his first wife. They are Leonard, Gerald and Eddy. William - wife's name Sylvia. They have two daughters, Susan Rose (husband Marty) and Carol Gallant (husband Bruce) The third brother is Joseph whose wife's name is Dorothy. He has two children by his first wife. They are Larry (married) and Merryl Schwartz (husbands name Mark).

I had one brother Morris (D) (Moshe Zalman) Shooock. His wife's name is Lily Mendlbaum Shooock. Their children are Goldie (Goldie Freida) Hutt. Husbands name Arnold. Their children are Steve, wife's name Susan and Ellen. Morris had another daughter - Marlene Hyatt husband's name Jaye. They have four children - Howard, Mike, Craig and Susan.

My wife Fannie and I have two daughters: Freeda Shooock Wolf (Goldie Frieda). Husband's name Harvey (Tzvi Dovid). His Fathers name is Abraham Wolf and his mothers name was Frances (D). His step mothers name is Ida Wolf. Freeda and Harvey's children are Ronald (Rauven Isor) and Cindy Ann (Tzivvia) Gilman - husbands name Stuart. There was another son, Denis (Dov Manus) (D). The second daughters name is Sandra Sclar (Chiah Cherna). Her husbands name is Morton (Mayer Yakov) His fathers name was Reuben Sclar. His mothers name is Eva Sclar. They have three daughters: Lori (Libby Reizl), Ami (Chanah Marim) and Robyn (Rivkah Bath Tzion).

I was born November 4, 1903 in Wladimiretz, a small town in Russia-Poland. A town like that was called a Shtetel, and this one was no different from any other Shtetel. Life went on quietly, nothing very much happened, except maybe the big fires that used to break out from time to time. The Jewish people lived in troubled circumstances, but were refreshed by the Sabbath and Holidays. Their strenght was built up by prayers and trust in God. For the people of the community it would seem that the hand of an artist had selected and placed each one in his station to play out his role in the ongoings of the daily life of the community. Various types of men that I remember could not look or act differently than their appointed vocation. Chonic the rich man looked like you would picture a rich man to look Efroim the porter and grave digger looked like he was formed for his occupation. If Efroim would have had Chonic's wealth he still would have looked like a porter and grave digger. Many still remember Wolf the water carrier. While he was carrying two big buckets of water from the public well to one of the

homes to ear a few cents, he would start up with his beautiful voice to sing Hasidic and Liturgic melodies. You cannot imagine a quiet afternoon without the voice of Wolf ringirgin the air. He was also a volunteer of the burial committee and though he was not too bright, he made himself very useful and he was very proud of both associations. At times when he carried his two buckets of water and sang his melodies, he would suddenly stop and say to one of the passers-by, "hey, if you die, we will make you a beautiful funeral." He was shot by a Natzi because he disobeyed an order that he did not understand. One more like that was Osher, although he was a very quiet man. His occupation was also carrying water, but mainly chopping wood for heating. Money was of small value to him. The most important thing in his life was old newspapers. He said that when the Messiah will come and the dead people will come to life, and all the Jewish people will be gathered in Israel, he will spread out the papers so his mother will not have to step on the cold wet ground bare footed. If it happened that he thought that he did not receive the amount of papers he expected, he would say: "wait, next time I come to chop your wood, I will not bring my sharp axe and will chop your wood with the dull axe." Many of the men had trades from which they made their living, but were known for their additional deeds and talents. For instance, Itzhok Goldberg, the shoemaker, kept his house open to any way-fairer, and a meal and a place to sleep over night was always available. No charge. Velvel the leather seamster was the cantor in one of the Shuls, and used to sing out the holiday prayers most beautifully. No charge. Shlomo the tailor was also a clarinet player, and would play at weddings of poor families. No charge. Meyer Wolf the carpenter was also a book binder and he kept the Holy books of the Shul in good repair. No charge. My grandfather, Aaron Cooperman and my father Hersh Shooock, used to dress up every Purim as army officers and call at every home in town to receive a donation for the poor who did not have enough money to prepare for Passover. There were men who gave their time to take care of the several

Shuls, the public bath houses, and other community projects that had to be cared for. Some of the more intellectual people decided that it was necessary to establish a Yeshivah - a school of higher learning. Before that the education of the children was done by private teachers. First you went to Reb Ephrim or Reb Yisroel. There you learned the alphabet up through reading fluently and they finished where you could read the Bible (Chumesh). Then you advanced to the school of Reb Hensch, who taught the Bible in depth, with interpretations of Rashi and Hinkelos. He was also an artist and drew pictures of how the Tabernacles looked and how the Holy Ark was constructed, and others. He used to roll his cigarettes and smoke one after the other from a cigarette holder. When he knocked out the stuff from his cigarette holder and did not roll a new cigarette, we knew it was time to go home. A more advanced teacher in that field was Reb Borach Hershel's. He was a quiet and polite man, spoke to the boys softly, and made it easy for the boys to understand what he wanted us to learn and know. Every day he used to appoint one of us to go to his home where his wife Esther Sarah had ready a teapot of hot tea, wrapped tightly in a large towel so it would not cool. And in a separate napkin a large poppy seed cookie. It was a pleasure to watch the Rabi enjoy the tea and cookie. We, the boys, used that time to do a bit of mischief. (Maybe this is the reason why up until today I like poppy seed cookies with my tea). But when the Yeshiva was established, teachers were brought in from out of town. The chief was Reb Hershel from Rochvolofke. A nice quiet man and a great Talmudic scholar. Then we had Reb Peretz Holoveska from Dombrovitz sort of a wild man but of great knowledge. He used to sit on the podium and his feet were on a chair. He did not use any book or paper at all but delivered his most complicated Talmudic lectures by heart and he kept his eyes closed. However, if any disturbance in the class occurred, he would strike with his stick at the right one. We could never figure out how he knew if his eyes were closed. Then there was Reb Zelman from Rovno. A neat

and gentle man; he did not have a stick, but he had a kerchief. He read his lectures from the Gemora Book and the boys were usually quiet and attentive eager to learn from him. If any disturbance happened, he would place his kerchief on the Gemora and close the book. He would not say anything or move until everyone came to order, then he would continue. The Yeshiva only existed for a couple of years. It was closed for lack of funds.

In Wlodimiretz you could feel the contact with the bygone generations because there they did not call anyone by his first name only. They added his father's name and in most cases also the grandfathers name. As for instance - Pinchas, Moshe Yosl Banyamins. Or, Zelig Joshua Marim Dvare's. Some were called by their familie's nick-names, which was accepted as normal and not as an insult. For instance take the family whose nick-name was Trunkal. It is told that the first one of that family to settle in Wlodimeretz was from the Lita, which means a Lutwok. He had a horse and he talked to the horse in Yiddish. So when he brought the horse to the trough, he used to say "trunk", "trunk", "trunk" (drink). One day the Gentiles that were there said to him "why are you trunaieng, Trunkal?" And that is all it took - the name Trunkal stuck for generations. The wife of the Lutvok was an enterprising woman. She used to walk to the surrounding villages to trade with the farmers wives. When the children found out that her name was Trunkal, they ran after her calling out loud, "Trunkal". So one day she showed up carrying in her tucked apron little doughnuts, cookies, filberts and pumpkin seeds. She called together all of the children and told them if they would holler Trunkal real loud, she would give each one of them a handful of goodies. They did and then they received their reward. The next time she came, she did not bring anything but the children demanded goodies so they would holler Trunkal real loud. She said "I am sorry but I don't have anything". So they said "Well so we are not going to holler. What do you think we will holler for nothing?"

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Modern doctors often say that if you believe that something that you do or something that you take is of some help to you, it is possible that the confidence in it will result in some benefit even though the remedy itself has no value. From that we can learn of the power that was invested in home remedies. There was a whole list of them. As for instance : for a boil sour milk; drops of mother's milk for an ear ache; garlic for a tooth ache; and certain weeds for a stomach ache. "or other aches and pains there were lizards and cups (Bunkes) and a lot of other remedies. When one was not getting better from the home remedies, then it was time to consult Reb Ben Tzion Friedman, who had some understanding of these matters. He would come, put his hand on the forehead of the patient and then say " you have to call the doctor". This meant that it was serious, but they didn't call the doctor just like that. First they resorted to prayers, lighting candles, open the Holy Ark, go to the cemetery and pray at the graves of the fore-fathers, reciting the psalms. When they finally decided to call the doctor, in most cases it was to late. But that does not mean that the above mentioned remedies did not help because some did get well. The only thing that those remedies could not do is to add years to anyone's life, and they accepted the judgement of the Almighty. A traditional funeral was arranged, donations to charity were made and prayers for this sole were offered up. They sat Shivah for seven days, and there was 30 days of mourning and a year of Kadish, and once a year after that Yortzeit. I have to mention here the organization of the Night Watch, where my father was also a member. They took turns in staying over night in the house of the sick and helped in whichever way they could to comfort the sick and relive the family. I still remember when I, myself, got sick with what could have been typhoid fever. Every night one of the members of the Night Watch would come and take care of me. This shows how social minded and how ready everyone was to offer help when necessary. The sociability of the people was vivid and present all over. In the early evening hours,

couples and small groups of people walked up and down the main street carrying on friendly talks and discussions. The groups were growing larger as more people showed up in the street and then they joined other groups and both ended up on one of the porches or in one of the homes where the discussions continued unto the late hour. Women spent their leisure time on the porches mending socks or knitting and discussing all the news of the world. They knew all about everything that is going on in each one of the homes, and what each one of their neighbors was going to have for dinner. Late in the afternoon, before the evening services, groups of men gathered to discuss the news of the day and world affairs; listening to a merchant or store keeper who had just returned from the big city where he went for business; or to the commentaries and opinions of one of the more intelligent young men. If it happened that someone brought a newspaper from the big city, the important news would be read by one aloud and there were some that gave their interpretation and analysis which could lead to a big discussion. Usually there would be one of the known jesters in the crowd and he used to give his humorous interpretation that brought on laughter. The main jester was Boruch Kononitch. If he took on someone he brought on such laughter that even the victim himself enjoyed it. And Itzik Chaim Meiers, the whole year like most of the people was a quiet well behaved man, but came Simchat Torah, he became the master of the city. Early in the morning, he and Yeshua the Angel dressed up in Rabbinic garb and took a Torbe - shoulder strop bag - full of sickel pears to throw at the boys that followed them and stop to watch the boys scramble to pick them up. Then they would call out so that they could be heard by the residents "Time to go to Shul". The boys followed them again in the afternoon because they had another Torbe (bag) of sickel pears. They went to the Rabbi's house and had an argument with him about Chometz that the Rabbi bought to resell to a non Jew for him to keep until after Pasach and was never returned. Then Itzik Chaim Maiers went to Shul for the evening services

and he got up on the Bimah and started to set prices on all commodities for the next year. A cord of wood which usually sold for a Rubel would sell for 40¢; a pound of beef which usually sold for 40¢ would sell for 15¢ and no more. That was the way he set the prices for all commodities in a serious tone and with great authority. He warned all the store keepers and merchants not to over charge. We, the boys, looked up to him with great respect and admiration. The next morning you could see him again as ever a quiet ordinary man on his way to the village to trade with the farmers.

Laib Taitelbaum, Bobe Cherna's son, was another one of the great jesters that I liked to follow. So, one Sunday he met one of the farmers from where he used to live and said to him "did you bring me a gift?" "No Laibunu, what could I bring?" "I came here on foot." "So what, at least you could have brought a sack of potatoes, a gallon of honey, a measure of poppy seeds and a few dozen eggs. Sure. How else; do you think it is nice to come empty handed?"

During World War 1, there was no cloth available for garments, so the people used to buy from the soldiers canvas used for tents and make clothing out of it. There was a stamp on the canvas, warning that this may not be used for civilians. But the tailors managed so that the stamp fell under the lapel. Laib was walking on his way to the village wearing a Jacket made out of such a canvas and met up with two Army Officers. They stopped their horses and called him over. "The jacket you are wearing is made of canvas that is government property" one of them said "and civilians may not use government property". "But this canvas is o.k." Laib said, "Whis is this canvas o.k.?" "Because it has a stamp" and he lifted up his lapel and showed them the stamp. "So that is just the point, the stamp confirms that this is government property and you may not use it." "No honorable Sirs, you are mistaken, it is the other way around. If there is no stamp, we cannot use it, but this one has a stamp. Let me explain it to you, for instance, I go into a store to buy a package of tobacco. I know if the package does not have a stamp I cannot buy it; but if it has a stamp, it is okay. Believe me, that before I bought the

canvas, I made sure that it had a stamp. Here it is, see for yourselves." After listening to the monologue, one officer said to the other, "let's go. Some dumb Jew, he can't understand the difference between an excise tax stamp on a package of tobacco and a warning stamp on a government canvas." Laib dropped a smile into his beard and continued on his way to the village. The Polish soldiers which were stationed in Wladimeretz, when Poland became an independent country, had a hobby to catch a Jewish man off the beat and cut off his beard with a dull knife. So one day they got hold of Pinchas the Angel (father of Nathan Rossen, Detroit). They were going to take off his beard, so he said to them "Sirs, may I ask you a question? Are you Catholics? If so, you no doubt have seen many images and pictures of Jesus; do you remember ever seeing a portrait of him without a beard?" They agreed that Jesus had a beard and decided to let him go. The same Pinchas later came to the United States and worked as a collector for some company. One evening he was walking because of his business on a dark side street. He had a sum of money on him and he realized that he was being followed by two suspicious men. He slowed down until they came close and then turned around and said to them "Could you please do an act of kindness and give me a nickel for car fare? I am completely broke and it is far to my lodging?" The men realized that they were dealing with a pauper, and they did him a favor and gave him a nickel and let him go catch a street car. You had to be either smart or lucky to stay alive. I was lucky. One afternoon I was going to Shul which was only across the street and I saw one of the town's young man running, turning the corner, and a Polish soldier chasing after him. Not knowing what was happening, I decided to run back home. But the Polish soldier not realizing that the one he was chasing turned the corner, came running after me into the house, his rifle trained on me hollering that he was going to shoot. My step-mother, Zlate, came running and stood in front of me facing the soldier. She said quietly: "What has he done? He just left the house this minute." The soldier stepped to the side of me, looked up and down, turned around and walked out. My luck was that I was not wearing boots, because he was chasing the other fellow to

take away his boots, but since I didn't wear boots why do I have to be shot? What better luck can there be than to save your life? Outside of wisdom and luck, it took a lot of inner strength to be able to get along under the difficulties created by the circumstances, and also economic conditions. A lot of it may have come from strong belief and devotion to G-d and prayer and songs of the prayers. My father's house was on a corner. The other three corners were Shuls. The difference between them was that each one was of a different Hasidic dynasty, therefore followers of different Rabbis. The custom of prayer and the melody or sing-song was because of that difference in each one of the Shuls. When our windows were open in the summer months, I could sit in the house and listen and know for sure who was praying; whether he was from one group or the other. But later I learned all of the melodies and up until today if I hear one praying, I can guess of which Hasidic group he is, or his parents were.

It is also worth mentioning that in Wlodimeretz, as in many of the small towns there was a free loan society where some of the people who could afford to invest some of their money without receiving any interest, and some who needed a loan could receive it without paying any interest. There was no such thing as a bank. But savings accounts that paid some interest could be opened in the post office. The post office did not make any loans even for interest. To a poor store keeper or in case of illness the free loan society was a great help to some people. There was also the custom that when a woman baked chales - bread - for Shabas, she baked an extra one to give away. There also were some women who used to come to collect those chales and deliver them to homes where no chales were baked because of obvious reasons.

There was a fire brigade of volunteers and they had some equipment that was hand operated and primitive. But it was better than the old method of two lines of men from the water pump or well to the fire, where one line was transferring one bucket from one to the other till it reached the fire and the other line was returning empty buckets by the same method. This fire brigade had hand pumps, a barrel mounted

on wheels and a horse and still they could only put out a small fire that has just started. After the fire got going, they were helpless. If you remember that we are talking about a town of framehouses and straw roofs, you can understand what it was like. There is no talk about insurance. Who could afford an insurance premium?

If a dispute between two people reached a point where they could not settle it themselves, even with the help of the neighbors, then it became necessary to go to an arbitrator. Each one of the parties would appoint one man and the two would agree on a third one, and their verdict was supposed to be binding. The next highest tribunal was the Rabbi. If it already went that far the two parties involved had to comply because the Rabbi judged according to the law of the Torah and there is no higher authority, although there was a regular court in the city.

Besides the night watch that used to help the families of the sick, there was another institution of night watch. They were the civilian patrol that walked the city streets a whole night, guarding not so much against thieves but to alarm the people in case of a fire. If a fire did break out, they would rush to the church steeple and start ringing the bells to a certain sound which everyone knew to be a fire alarm. There was no one to appoint these watchers, for every night they took turns in the following manner: There was an official stick which they carried and which was the emblem of their authority. When they served out their turn which was one night, they handed the stick to their next door neighbor, and he would notify the neighbor on the other side of him and the two were that way deputized and that is the way the official stick traveled all around town and every one served his turn. If for some reason one could not make it, he could pay someone to fill in for him. No one ever thought of defaulting on that obligation.

It may be interesting to tell how the Rabbis in the small towns made a living. He never charged for his services. If there was a salary, I don't know, but it could not have been very much. So the city gave him certain exclusives, such as selling Shabas candles, yeast and coal oil. No other business establishment that belonged to a Jew would stock any of these commodities. The Rabbi himself never participated in the business end of his household. He was in his study learning th Talmud or he was occupied withsome other Rabbinic duty.