

It was my brother Joe's suggestion that since we have the complete story of the Russakoff background in Pop's Memoirs, we should have a sketch of Mom's family.

The first time I met any of Mom's family was when she and I arrived in Paris in June, 1937. All the family came to Gare St. Lazare to meet the boat train and it was only after the excitement had quieted down, since Mom had not seen any of her people for ten long years, did we learn that that very morning Aunt Dvosé's husband had been buried.

In that year, 1937, there was still a fair-sized family. Mom had a brother and two sisters in Paris. There was Uncle Alfred Simkin, his wife, Rose, and their teen-age daughter, Helene. There was René Simkin, Uncle Alfred's son by his first marriage, and his wife, Berthe. Next, there was Aunt Dvosé Sandler. Her children were Gaby (husband, Maurice Bialek; daughter, Fernande); Juliette (unmarried at that time but later married to Georges Pliner); Jacques (wife, Rose); Katy (unmarried then but later married to Roger Tellier). Then there was Aunt Pashe Schinkar (husband, Lazar; son, Joseph, married to Marcelle; son, Simon, married to Rose.)

Uncle Alfred was the intellectual in the family. During World War I he had served as an interpreter; he knew several languages well. When I met him in 1937 he was speaking English comfortably, was always reading a book in English and was never without his little English-French pocket dictionary. He was a couturier by profession and had an elegant shop on Avenue Victor Hugo, not far from L'Arc de Triomphe. He designed clothes for many of England's noble ladies and told Mom me that one of his regular clients was Betty Compton, the actress and wife of

Jimmy Walker, Mayor of New York. Uncle Alfred was a handsome man -- tall and straight and with great dignity. After that visit, I never saw him again. He, his wife and their beautiful daughter were taken away by the Nazis. The only member of that family who survives is René Simkin. He and his wife have a daughter, Michele, who is married now and has a child. Rene served in the Foreign Legion, had opportunities for schooling, but finally became a part of his wife's family's fur company. At this writing, René Simkin is in his early sixties.

Mom's older sister, our Aunt Dvošé (Sandler) was a tall, attractive woman. That summer was the only time I knew her because by the time I visited Paris again, she had died. She was of strong character. Actually, all three sisters were strong. It was Uncle Alfred who was entirely gentle and trusting. As I said earlier, Aunt Dvošé's husband had just died, so her life was in an upheaval during the time we were there. Subsequently, she lived with Gabrielle and to the end of her days was adored and revered by that family. Gabrielle was her eldest daughter. She is our eldest cousin and is now in her mid-sixties. Her husband, Maurice Bialek, is a prince. Their only daughter, Fernande, married Leon Bialek, a second cousin. Of this family, it is unnecessary to write much. They have entertained any Russakoffs who have visited Paris and three of them have been in the United States.

Aunt Dvošé's next daughter, Juliette, married Georges Pliner, a widower, whose son has been working for the United Nations for many years and who lives on Long Island with his wife and twin daughters. Juliette and George had one son, Janeau, who, at this writing, must be in his mid-thirties. He is married and has at least one child. I do not know what he does for a living. During the two years we lived in Dublin and made several trips to Paris, we saw Juliette, but before our next trip

she had died. We have not seen her husband nor her son again. The "clearing house" for the Paris family is Fernande Bialek; she tries to keep in touch with everybody. The Pliners no longer keep in touch.

Aunt Dvosé had one son, Jacques. I met him and his young wife, Rose, on my first trip in 1937. Their son, Claude, was born soon after. Early in France's occupation during World War II, Jacques and Rose were deported and Claude, a very young lad, was taken by the Bialeks. When they realized their lives were in danger and they were forced to flee, they decided that Claude would be safer with Katy, Aunt Dvosé's youngest daughter, and her husband, Roger Tellier, because Roger was not Jewish. So, Claude remained with the Telliers. At the time of our most recent visit to Paris in June, 1966, Claude was in business with Roger Tellier, who operates a successful body shop enterprise. Claude is married and has one child.

Mom's other sister, Tante Pashe, is the one I came to know best. She was small and looked very much like Mom, but she didn't have Mom's gentleness. Her life wasn't easy. She and her husband earned their meagre living by operating a small laundry where they did much of the work themselves. On that first visit I often went to that little laundry and it was heartbreaking to watch those people work. Aunt Pashe and Uncle Lazar had two sons, Joseph and Simon, for whom they did everything they could. Joseph became an expert in working with precious metals and stones (he set a 34-carat diamond once for the Aga Khan). Joe was an intellectual and a faddist. He enjoyed beauty and enjoyed sharing lovely things with us when we visited him and his family. He was a faddist in that he ate only those things which he was convinced were healthful, and, he lived with a careful program

of exercise all his life. His wife, Marcelle, is a charming woman and his only son, Francis, after putting in several years in Algiers, is finally trying to complete his education. At this time, he is about thirty. We had a beautiful evening with this family in June, 1966. In mid-1967, Joe died very suddenly.

The other son is Simon. He is the one who makes handbags -- and most of them are artistic and masterful creations. He is a colorful man; he loves nothing more than to tell stories. With us, he always talks English (it improves every time we see him). He learns it by watching gangster movies -- his favorites, so his English is all slang and out of the side of his mouth. It's very funny. He and his wife, Rose, have one daughter, Claudette, who is married to an artist and has two children.

In 1968, our Paris family is small. The older generation is gone; we are now the older generation. Of Mom's nieces and nephews - our first cousins - the only ones left are Gabrielle Bialek, Katy Tellier, René Simkin and Simon Schinkar. Our second cousins are Fernande Bialek, Janeau Pliner, Claude Sandler, Michele Simkin, Claudette Schinkar and Francis Schinkar. They are all married with the exception of Francis Schinkar.

Correspondence and contact is maintained only with and through Fernande, Madame Léon Bialek, 6, Boulevard Ornano, Paris 18e, France.

Even though I was the only one of Mom's children to have had the privilege and pleasure of meeting any of her sisters and brothers, I find it difficult to try to describe them; I didn't know them well enough. There were only the two sisters, but Uncle Alfred was not Mom's only brother. One lived in Russia and although many times our parents tried to help him, obstacles were always put in the way by that

government. He was much older and is certainly not living. We know little about his family. Another brother died many years ago.

Probably one reason it is difficult for me to be objective about these two aunts and Uncle Alfred is that Mom always idolized them and passed along this adoration to us. When I met them and found that they were people and not angels, I think I was a bit shocked. It didn't take long for me to realize, however, that they were genuine and dear people and that even though I had just met them for the first time, I felt close to them.

All members of the family lived through or perished because of the Nazi occupation. The story of this dreadful time will never be known in its entirety. Uncle Alfred, who had served his country brilliantly in World War I, trusted his government and the official who told him that it would be safe for him and his family to remain in Paris. They remained, but they were not safe. The Nazis took all three of them away. Jacques Sandler's wife, Rose, would not sit idly by; she joined the underground to work for freedom. She and Jacques were apprehended and deported. Their son, Claude, was a little boy at that time.

Some of the family went into hiding for two or three years and didn't know if others were alive or dead. The Bialeks fled to the South of France. The two men were picked up and would have been sent to concentration camp but for a stroke of miraculous good luck when Roger Tellier got them off the truck which was ready to roll!

When the war was over and those who had survived finally got back to Paris, there was still another "war" to be waged and won. Their homes and businesses had been taken away and were being occupied. There were long and discouraging legal

battles before they got back what was left of what was rightfully theirs. In this battle for them to get back on their feet, the young people in our family should know that our parents played a most important part. As soon as France was liberated, our parents started sending packages. All week every week Mom would assemble the things which were to go into them -- dried milk, canned foods, chocolate, rice, cigarettes, dehydrated foods. Sunday afternoons were devoted to this project. Mom would pack, I would fill out the government forms and Pop would bind. It was painstaking work. The size of the box was prescribed; the cost of the contents had to remain within certain limits; the binding had to be perfect. Mom's packaging and planning were perfect; Pop did such a careful job of binding that many times his fingers bled. I hope I did a good job with the forms. Every Monday morning, Pop carried ten boxes to the post office on his way to the store.

It wasn't until years later -- 1950 I believe -- when we were in Paris on our first trip after the war that we learned that many of the packages had never reached the family. But some did -- enough of them so that the Paris family told us that Mom and Pop had saved their lives.

February, 1968  
Elisabeth Russakoff Golden

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*...yman zmkim*  
*our zay-de Chaim Ki-ve*  
(Mom's Brother)

Rose = Alfred Simkin = Fanny

Rene = Berthe

Helene

\* Michelle = ?

(Mom's Sister)

Dvose = Abraham Sandler

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Gabrielle = Maurice Bialek

Fernande = Leon Bialek

Juliette = Georges Pliner

\* Janeau = ?

Jacques = Rose

\* Claude = ?

Katy = Roger Tellier

Mom's Sister)

Pashe = Lazar Schinkar

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Joseph = Marcelle

Francis

Simon = Rose

Claudette = Hubert ?

Emmanuelle

Guillaume



Our Mother, Manya Simkin Russakoff, was the youngest in her family.

\* I do not know Michelle's husband's name; I do not know the names of Janeau's or of Claude's wives; I don't recall Hubert's surname. I believe that Michelle, Janeau and Claude have at this time (February, 1968) one child each.