

# *Dianne and Leighton Siegel*

***This family history is for our children,  
our grandchildren and beyond.***

**with lots of pictures.  
Version 2 – September 2016**



*Our family snowmobiling on the Langjokull Glacier in Iceland,  
August - 2016*

*It is important to know the family that came before  
you and how we all fit together.*

*This is a short version of what is a more in-depth history found at:*

[www.zshistory.org](http://www.zshistory.org)

with many family photos also at:

[www.siegelphotos.net](http://www.siegelphotos.net)



Dianne and Leighton Siegel

Grandma Dianne and Grandpa Leighton send you all our love.

**1) Grandma Dianne (Ziskin) b. 6/15/1941 and  
Grandpa Leighton Siegel b. 7/3/1937 (married  
2/6/1966)**

- i) Pam Siegel b. 8/8/68 m. Jon Passman b. 4/11/67 (m. 4/27/96)
  - (1) Abraham b. 1/27/99
  - (2) Jordan b. 10/28/00
  - (3) Eve b. 2/22/04
- ii) Lesli Siegel b. 8/8/68 m. Mike Marasco b. 11/25/65 (m. 8/27/00)
  - (1) Sophia b. 9/16/02
  - (2) Andrew b. 5/24/04
- iii) Jeffrey Siegel b. 6/30/72 m. Andrea Onell b. 6/1/76 (m. 6/20/03)
  - (1) Ezra b. 2/7/08
  - (2) Zoe b. 9/6/09

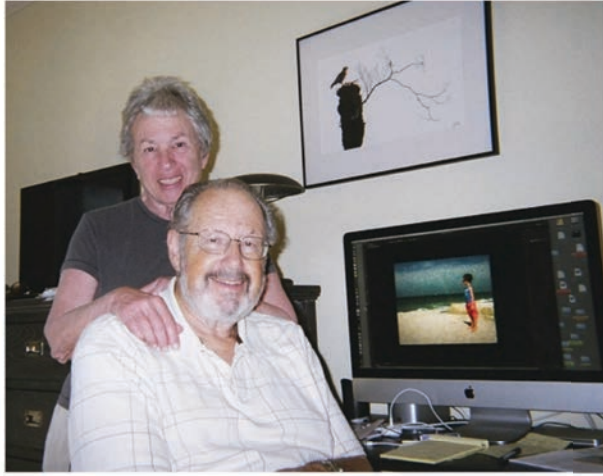


**Wedding Picture February 6, 1966**

Grandma Dianne (Ziskin) and Grandpa Leighton Siegel met at the University of Minnesota in 1962. I (Dianne) was an undergraduate and Leighton was in medical school. We dated, but after he graduated Leighton moved to Sacramento, California to do an Internship and I went to Europe for the summer. We didn't see each other again until 1965. I had just returned from graduate school at Berkeley, California and Leighton was passing through between the two years in the United States Air Force and the start of his Otolaryngology residency at the University of Maryland Hospital in Baltimore.

It was Rosh Hashanah and the Siegel family was celebrating with the Ostrin relatives. My good friend, Karol (Mudita) Ostrin called and said "come over, an old friend is here." So I did. We dated about three weeks in October before he left for Baltimore and then we talked on the phone every night. We got engaged in Baltimore over Thanksgiving and I flew to Maryland with the ring. We were married February 6, 1966 at the Beth El in Minneapolis. The reception was at Brookview Country Club where my parents belonged. We had a short romance and lived happily ever after!

**Some photos of all of us along the way!!!**



**Leighton and Dianne's Family history**  
For our children, grandchildren and beyond





**Pam and Lesli as newborns and as adults**

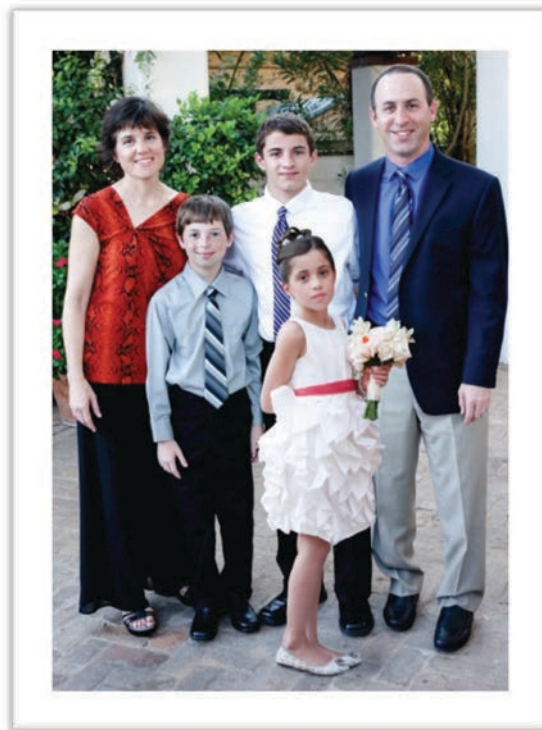


**Jeff at age 2 in 1974 and in 2013**



**All our children in 1986**

## 2013 Photos





## **A Few of many Family Vacations**



1992 Colorado and in Telluride, Colorado 1988



Costa Rica in 1998 and Aspen Colorado in 1991



North Shore of Lake Superior in 2011 and Alaskan Cruise in 2008

**Leighton and Dianne's Family history**  
For our children, grandchildren and beyond



**Family on a Black Sand Beach in Iceland, 2016**



**All our Grandchildren in 2009**



**Our family in Chicago - 2016**

**Leighton and Dianne's Family history**  
For our children, grandchildren and beyond



## **Grandma Dianne (Ziskin) Siegel**



Grandma Dianne Dale at ages 2 and 3.



Grandma Dianne graduated High School in 1959.

I (Grandma Dianne) was born in Minneapolis on June 15, 1941. I grew up in North Minneapolis, first in an apartment on the corner of Vincent and Golden Valley Road and then when I was in the second grade we moved to a house at 1526 Queen Ave. N. The family eventually moved to a house on Texas Avenue South in St. Louis Park, but I had left home by that time.

My brother, Alan, was born in 1946, five years after me, and my sister Ellen, was born in 1953, twelve years after me. I shared a room with my sister Ellen and her doll, Tootles. Tootles had her own bed as she was the size of a two year old. Tootles moved out of our basement just last year (2015) and went to a new home where I am sure she is very happy.

We were one of the first families on our block to have television (black and white only in TV's early years) and all the kids in the neighborhood would come over to watch. There weren't very many programs – Howdy Doody, Milton Berle and sometimes just a test pattern.



**Muntz TV, 1953**

I attended Willard Elementary School and it was just across the street from our house. I next went to John Hay Junior High and later North High School. We walked to all of our schools and when in elementary school we came home for lunch. My brother Alan went to Hebrew school because he was the boy in the family. Girls had just started to attend, but I didn't get to go. We belonged to Beth El Synagogue, which was just a block away. I had several jobs in High School, although taking care of my young sister Ellen was my main responsibility. The first job was in a downtown department store in Minneapolis demonstrating wind up toys, which were new on the market at that time. A typical example would be a rabbit that played a drum. The second was cashiering in my uncles' grocery store, Ne Plus Ultra. When my father bought a grocery store I was a seasoned cashier. My best job, however, was being a legal secretary. I had taken typing and shorthand in high school and worked for two lawyers the summer between high school and college. The pay was good and I had all the money I needed to go to college -- \$1000 for all four years at the University of Minnesota.

I lived at home until I was 22 and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1963 with honors and a degree in Psychology. I then went to the University of Berkeley graduate school receiving a Masters Degree in Social Work in 1965. I was fortunate to have been awarded a Firestone Scholarship for graduate school. I came back from California in 1965 and went to work at University Hospital but I didn't love the job. I re-met grandpa Leighton that Fall. After we dated and married, I moved to Baltimore to be with Grandpa while he did

his residency in Otolaryngology (ENT). Pam and Lesli were born in Baltimore in 1968. While in Baltimore I worked for the Jewish Family Service and had a foster care caseload. When the girls were one year old, I went back to work part-time and did home studies of families wanting to adopt babies. In 1970 we returned to St. Paul. Pam and Lesli were 2 years old. Jeff was born in 1972. In 1974 I took a one-year temporary position at the St. Paul Jewish Community Center to develop services for seniors in the Highland Park area. I left 31 years later after becoming the Director of Adult Services for many years. I loved this job and I felt it was important community work.

Once in St. Paul, we rented a house on Sargent Ave. Shortly thereafter we bought our first house at 1615 Hillcrest in Highland Park where we were living when Jeff was born. In 1976 we moved to Mendota Heights at 727 Woodridge Drive. We lived there until 2015 when we finally downsized (sort of) in order to move into a twin home nearby in Lilydale, MN.

I became interested in family history when my mom and I read about some ladies who were collecting family histories of Jewish families from North Dakota in order to write a book. My mother grew up in Devils Lake, North Dakota. She didn't want to bother, but told me to put something together. Well, I did and more than 30 years later I am still working on it. Meanwhile, the original ladies never wrote their book.

### **Grandma Dianne's siblings and their children**

My sister Ellen was previously married to Barry Steinman and they have three children: Maury, married to Amy Toles, Shelby to Sean Wesenberg, and Dana. All of Ellen's children live in Minneapolis. Ellen helped me raise our children and Shelby and Dana helped Pam and Jeff raise their children. At various times Shelby and Dana were nannies for the Passmans. Shelby and Sean have one son, Oscar, born in 2015 and Maury and Amy have Edythe Rose born in 2016. Dan Hernandez is Ellen's long time partner. Ellen and Dan have a house in Tucson, Arizona.

My brother Alan is married to Bonnie Chez, originally from Hibbing, MN. They have two children, Adam and Amy. Adam is married to Anna Valento and they have one child, Maeve, born in 2015. They live in St. Louis Park, MN. Amy lives in Portland, Oregon. Alan and Bonnie are Florida residents dividing their time between Naples and Minneapolis.



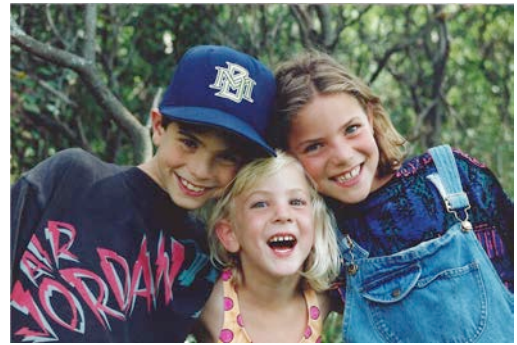
Left to right: Dan and Ellen, Dana, Maury and Amy, Shelby and Sean



Oscar Wesenberg age 1 plus



Edythe Rose Steinman



Maury, Dana and Shelby Steinman





Amy, Alan, Bonnie, Maeve (b. 2014) Anna and Adam - 2015 Holiday Card



Adam and Amy Ziskin in 1981

## **Grandpa Leighton Siegel**



**Leighton Gene Siegel as a young boy**

Grandpa Leighton was born in Hopkins, Minnesota on July 3, 1937. He lived first in Minneapolis and later in St. Paul. For a short while he also lived with his Ostrin grandparents and Aunt Adeline (Cohn) in North Minneapolis because his father, Clarence Siegel, had gone to Denver to be treated for tuberculosis and his mother, Rose, went with him. The family also lived at Battle Lake, Minnesota for a bit, when his father, Clarence, ran a Tuberculosis sanitarium there. Clarence later went into medical practice in St. Paul after receiving his Boards in Internal Medicine. Grandpa Leighton went to Horace Mann and Mattocks elementary schools and then Central High School in St. Paul. Their St. Paul houses were at 1749 Hillcrest and then on the SE corner of Davern St. and Highland Parkway.

Canoeing in the boundary waters with his buddies, fishing, and playing chess were activities that Grandpa Leighton liked. He was also a camp counselor at an early JCC day camp. He loved to ski and encouraged me to learn so we could go skiing as a family.

Grandpa Leighton went to the University of Minnesota undergraduate and Medical School, interned in Sacramento, California and then spent two years in the Philippines at Clark Air Force Base as a Captain in the United States Air Force. He then went to the University of Maryland in Baltimore, to do his ENT residency. Upon returning to St. Paul, Grandpa joined the Ear Nose and Throat department as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota and went into half time solo private practice in St. Paul. He had a large grant from the University to study a condition called Idiopathic Sudden Deafness. As his practice grew he left the University, except for teaching medical students, and devoted more and more of his time to his private practice. Eventually Steve Liston, who he had worked with at the University, joined him as his first partner. The practice grew and grew taking in more partners and merging with a similar Minneapolis group. By the time he retired his group had grown to over 22 Otolaryngologists.

Grandpa Leighton had an affinity for technology and we were one of the first families in the neighborhood to actually own a computer. It was an Apple II and the year was 1979. It was quite revolutionary for households. (IBM said personal computers would never sell.)



Apple II computer

He taught himself to program and created several programs including math programs for the children, a checkbook program long before but much like Quicken, and invented the first computerized audiometer to test hearing. The audiometer was marginally successful in the marketplace. Next he invented what was later called Navicare, an Operating Room staff and patient-tracking program for hospitals. A company was formed; the product was marketed as, “**Navicare**,” and eventually sold to Hill-Rom, much to our delight, as it provided a very nice retirement nest egg. It is still being used, though it’s concepts were cloned by other companies, and is very much appreciated by hospital staffs at a number of institutions.

We both love to travel and were fortunate to have visited 48 countries as I write this. We took a long trip every other year when the children were young eventually graduating to a trip or two every year. We loved to travel in Asia and some of our most exotic trips were to Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, India and China. We brought a fair amount of art back from the places we visited and Grandpa Leighton took tons of pictures.

For the many years after retirement we spend our winters Naples, Florida where we have a lots of fun and all of our children and grandchildren come to visit and enjoy with us. Initially we rented but finally purchased a condo in 2011 that we love.



Leighton at about age 2



High School graduation 1955 and Medical School Graduation in 1961





Family at Leighton's 2005-retirement dinner.

Left to right:

Leighton, Dianne, Lesli & Mike Marasco, Andrea & Jeff Siegel, Jon & Pam Passman

## Physician of the Month: Leighton Siegel, M.D.

Leighton Siegel, M.D., has always enjoyed scientific gadgets and puzzles. Other people might have turned that lifelong interest into fiddling with the latest version of Rubik's Cube or building new stereo systems at home. Not Siegel. He has melded his love of invention with his passion for medicine.

A self-taught whiz at creating computer software, Siegel's most recent venture is an operating room tracking system using computers and monitors. The system will soon be tested at United.

The pragmatic inventor traces the origins of this system to what otherwise would have been a very ordinary conversation at an airport. "I was sitting with Dr. Tom Koelz, an anesthesiologist. He was describing a problem: After starting a case, he wouldn't know if another operating room was ready for him or if some other pressing OR business was waiting for his attention. While talking, we were looking at the airport monitors, and the idea for using computers and monitors to track patients and physicians came to me."

The resulting tracking system is the first of its kind in the nation. The monitor will show where each patient and each physician is—whether in pre-op, surgery or recovery. It will also note when surgeons have seen patients and when patients are ready for the next stage of care. In spite of the substantial amount of information on the monitors, the screen is

easily read because computer graphics are employed, whenever possible, instead of text.

Prior to this project, Siegel created a software audiometer program that allowed a computer to test a patient's hearing. Originally,

the software was designed to train audiologists to perform hearing tests. "But as I completed this project, I wondered why I couldn't use this equipment to test real patients. The audiometer I developed has more capability than any other available. As well as testing patients, it keeps its own data base."

Siegel has also published medical papers based on his inventive designs. When two children died as a result of aspirating plastic pins that hold wrapping bows together,



Leighton Siegel, M.D.

3M came to Siegel for a better pin design. The pins had to be safer. They also had to work in the old bowmaking machines. Siegel solved the problem by designing air holes in the pins so a person could breathe even if the pins become caught in the larynx. In addition, barium was added to the pins so they would show up on X-rays. "This is a good example of how industry and medicine can work together effectively," he notes.

In spite of his inventive bent, Siegel would never dream of abandoning his practice in favor of a career as medicine's Thomas Edison. "I'm a caregiver," he notes. "That's what's most important to me, and being a physician means being the ultimate caregiver."

*Continued on page 7*



## Physician of the Month

*Continued from page 6*

### Dramatic Results

One reason Siegel enjoys otolaryngology is because it often produces swift and dramatic results. A stapedectomy is one example. Patients, usually in their twenties or thirties, come to the OR barely able to hear someone shouting at them. After the operation, which replaces hardened bone with plastic and wire, they can hear immediately an ordinary whisper. "For almost every condition we see, something can be done and usually quite promptly and effectively."

New technology has radically changed Siegel's specialty in recent years. Instruments such as the endoscope and the flexible bronchoscope help the ENT surgeon work in spaces previously difficult to reach or observe. "The kinds of procedures I did during my training program, we don't do very much any more; and much of what I now do, didn't exist then."

Special centers exclusively for outpatient surgeries were rare when Siegel began his career. The new Day Surgery Center of United and Children's Hospitals will be a particular boon for him because so many of his procedures are outpatient surgeries. "I'm not only pleased with the medical and technical support provided by the new center but also with the entire environment which will help create as positive an experience as possible for the patient," he notes.

### Natural Choices

Medicine was a natural choice for Siegel. His father was an internist, and a number of his uncles and cousins were also physicians. Siegel attended the University of Minnesota for undergraduate work and for medical training. He interned at the Sacramento County Hospital, followed by service in the Air Force from 1963 to 1965.

After a year of military duty, his commanding officer told him, "We're short an

otolaryngologist, and you're it." It was a fortunate break for Siegel. "After six months, I knew this was what I wanted to do," he comments.

After completing his residency training in 1969 at the University of Maryland, he became a teacher there. His career as a full-time instructor lasted about a year. Siegel became discouraged with academic politics, so he left the university to enter private practice. While he enjoys the greater freedom his practice affords, he continues to teach part-time at the University of Minnesota where he's a clinical associate professor in the Departments of Otolaryngology and Family Practice.

### Coming Home

Siegel loves working and living in St. Paul. After living on both coasts, Siegel decided there was no place like home and returned here in 1971. During the past two decades, Siegel has served as chief of surgery at Bethesda Lutheran Hospital in St. Paul and as chief of staff for Children's Hospital of St. Paul.

Siegel has been married for 25 years. His wife, Dianne, is a social worker who is director of adult services at the Jewish Community Center of St. Paul. She too, says Siegel, is also primarily "a caregiver." The couple have three children, including twin 22-year-old daughters. One daughter is an industrial engineer; the other is involved in human resources consulting. The couple's 18-year-old son attends Pierce College in Los Angeles. The Siegels enjoy the out-of-doors, including downhill skiing, fishing and travelling. Siegel also loves photography and currently has an exhibition of his South American photographs at the Ramsey County Medical Society.

The versatile and quick-thinking Siegel is kept stimulated by challenges of all kinds—whether it's riding a raft in Sumatra with his wife, facing tough questions from medical residents or dealing with difficult cases. "If I can see just one unusual case a day, that's enough to keep me going."

## Grandpa Leighton's siblings

**Grandpa Leighton** has two younger sisters, Andrea and Carolyn. Both families live in California. Andrea was married to Dr. Rob Karsh, who died in 2015 and they have two children: Jonathan and Julie. Jonathan was previously married to Jen Axen. They have a daughter Maya. Julie is married to Dr. Dan Chinn and they have two children, Benjamin and Olivia.



Carolyn and Elliot Mittler



Julie, Andrea, Jonathan and Rob Karsh 1982



Andrea, Julie and Jonathan (back)  
Benjamin, Olivia and Maya 2016



## ***SOMETHING ABOUT OUR FAMILY HISTORY***

As we go back further on the family tree, we know less and less about the generations, but we do know some things that I would like to share. For some people we have pictures. For some we have stories and for some we have just names, but each one came before our family and each is important.

A little history: Russia banned Jews until 1772. In 1772 Russia acquired a large area of Poland containing many Jewish people. By the laws of 1795 and 1835 the Russian Government limited its new Jews to the newly annexed areas, since known as the "Pale of Settlement." This large area included the communities of Kovno, Vilna, Vitebsk, Minsk, and numerous other states extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In 1882 more than 1.5 million Jews who had managed to live outside the "Pale" were forced into it, so that by 1897 there were more than 5 million Jews living in this area.

Both of our families came from Lithuania, which was then part of Russia and part of the Pale of Settlement. Nobody Jewish wanted to remain there both because of the Pogroms which was an organized massacre of Jews or go into the Russian Army because the term of service was 25 years. One way the early Jewish families avoided this was to buy names from non-Jewish families because everyone could keep one son out of the Army. Thus families might have had more than one name. The Milavitz family did this. Another method was to not take last names at all. It wasn't until the middle 1800s that Jewish families were forced to take last names. At that time names were either given to people by the authorities, or made up often reflecting their professions or place of residence. For example, Strimling, one of the family names, means a little fish. Perhaps the family lived near water.

We are the lucky ones: Our ancestors came to America and made new lives for themselves and for us.



Photo of Jewish Vendors taken in Vilna, Lithuania – 1890s

On the following pages, you will find pictures and a little information about **Grandma Dianne**'s parents, grandparents and great grandparents. There is much more information to be found at web sites created by Leighton and Dianne on [www.siegephotos.net](http://www.siegephotos.net) and [www.zshistory.org](http://www.zshistory.org).

**Grandma Dianne's parents were:  
Pauline Wilensky Ziskin and David Ziskin**



**Pauline 1931 High School Graduation**



**Dave as a young adult**



**Pauline and Dave married in 1937**



**Family picture taken in 1986**

My mother, Pauline, also known as Baubie, was born in 1913 in Devils Lake, North Dakota where her father and grandparents had homesteaded. She had three sisters and one brother Marian (Ovitz), Rozella (Karol), Bess (Barenbaum) and Sid (Wilensky). After graduating high school, she and her sister Rozella, who was just a little older, moved to Minneapolis. The family wanted them to meet other Jewish young people and find husbands. Mom had a

scholarship for college, but the family couldn't afford more schooling for their children. She went to work for JC Penney as a bookkeeper and worked there until she married. She met my father, Dave, at a wedding. Pauline's parents, Herman (Chaim) and Ida Wilensky moved to Minneapolis during the 1930s after all the children except for Bess had left North Dakota. Bess graduated from North High in Minneapolis.

### **A Story**

Life in Devils Lake was very different from what we know today. The Kelly Street house was the only one that the Wilenskys owned, but had rented several other houses earlier. The Kelly house was distinguished by its almost total lack of closets. The house had running water, but it couldn't be used for drinking. One of Sidney's chores was to bring the drinking water from the pump on a nearby corner or from the Kesslers, the neighbors across the street, who had a good artesian well. Grandpa Rubin lived with the family later in his life. On Saturday evenings he would settle into the bathroom for his weekly bath, which would take four hours. It was unfortunate if anyone needed to use the bathroom during this ritual. Such an event would necessitate a visit to one of the neighbors. Rainwater was collected in a cistern and used for hair washing.

All the Wilensky girls shared one bedroom and one closet. Uncle Max (Ida's brother) built the only closet in the room. The design of the house was such that Mrs. Prosser, the boarder, had to walk through the room that Sid and Zadie (Grandpa) Rubin shared in order to get to her room. (Most everyone had a boarder and this boarder, moved from house to house with the family.) The house had a big kitchen and a big round table. As was common for the times, there was an icebox with ice delivered by the iceman, a coal furnace with a coal shoot for shoveling the coal, a milkman who put the milk directly into the refrigerator and of course, no one ever locked a door.

Grandpa Rubin kept a cow in a nearby empty lot. It was a Passover cow. He fed it special food so that the milk would be kosher for Passover.

My father, David, was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He and his family moved to Minneapolis when he was about 9. Dave went to school only through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He and his brother, Jack, then quit school to go to work to help support the family. They sold newspapers and he learned upholstery. By the time he married my mother, he was selling coin machines including some for cigarette machines and pinball. That business, called Silent Sales, didn't last, and he then bought a bar, called the Famous Bar and later sold that. He tried other things including selling Muntz Televisions.

Dad eventually bought a grocery store. His brother in laws, Tony Barenbaum and Sid Wilensky, already owned a grocery store and taught him the business. The first store was on 15<sup>th</sup> and Lyndale Ave North and it was called Tony's. We all worked there from time to time. We sold a lot of penny candy. Eventually, the city bought the property to widen the street and the next store was on 34<sup>th</sup> and Hennepin and it was called Von's. Dad was about

70 when he sold that store, claiming he had been robbed too many times and he refused to have a gun of his own. There is now a Dunn's coffee shop in that space.

My father, Dave, was my biggest supporter. He believed I was perfect. Everyone should have someone in their life that thinks they are perfect and that was my Dad. He was a very gentle man. My mother, Pauline, was both a mother and a great friend. She loved to golf, play cards and when she was about 50 or so, she decided to go to work. She became a very successful real estate agent and did that for many years. Her satisfied customers would come back again and again when it was time to buy a new house. She was a terrible driver although I don't remember her having any accidents. Her real estate clients always insisted on driving themselves.

From my father, Dave, I learned kindness and gentleness. From my mother, Pauline, I learned that I could follow my dreams, even if they differed from what others thought. Both of my parents were very supportive of my pursuing a graduate degree as long as I could come up with scholarship money, which I did. In my growing up and in my community, most women were not seeking careers. The expectation for women was that they get married before leaving college and I went in a different direction and was really lucky to have my parents' support.

Pauline and Dave eventually had a condo in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which they loved. One of their passions was golf and they had been founding members of Brookview Country Club, which eventually became a Minneapolis city course, but not in the early years. We always hoped there was a golf course in heaven, so that my Dad could keep playing and laughing with his buddies. Mom still played golf in her 90s and I played with her at times. She was better than I was, even at that age.



## MORE OF GRANDMA DIANNE'S FAMILY HISTORY

### Wilensky Branch - Grandma Dianne's maternal Grandparents

- 1) Dianne Ziskin Siegel b. 1941 m. Leighton Siegel b. 1937
  - a) Pauline Wilensky b. 1913 d. 2006 m. David Ziskin b. 1908 d. 1988  
(DIANNE'S PARENTS)
  - i) Ida Rubin Wilensky b. 1886 d. 1949 m. Chaim (Herman) Wilensky  
b. 1882 d. 1972 (DIANNE'S GRANDPARENTS)

### DIANNE'S GRANDPARENTS

**A STORY:** My grandfather, Herman Wilensky, came to New York in 1901 from a small town called Elizabethgrad, where Jews experienced terrible pogroms. He began by working in New York as an apprentice in the sweatshops. On the way to the United States, he had the unfortunate experience of meeting someone in Liverpool who took his money for a ticket and then disappeared. He worked a year in Liverpool, saved his money again and bought another ticket to New York. He was in his late teens when he came to New York. His ship's record indicates that he sailed from Hamburg and arrived at the Port of New York in May of 1900. He sailed on the Auguste Victoria. He had \$5.00 in cash.

Many immigrants were working in the sweatshops. *(A factory or workshop, especially in the clothing industry, where manual workers are employed at very low wages for long hours and under poor conditions)* Many at that time became ill with consumption (Tuberculosis). Herman was afraid of contracting the disease and so when the opportunity to move West came his way, he left to become a homestead farmer in North Dakota.

At first Herman got a job on Davis Rubin's farm helping with the harvesting. There was then a second free land grant program taking place in North Dakota at this time, 1905. Herman was given a land grant at Tyoga near Williston. Plans to marry my grandmother, Ida, were already in the making. He worked the land during the summer and returned to the Rubin farm during the winter. After five years, when the homestead farm became his, he sold it and moved to Devils Lake where he opened a tailor shop of his own. Unfortunately, he also sold the mineral rights on his homestead property, and later oil was discovered there, but it was too late.

At first Ida had a millinery shop (made hats) in Devils Lake, North Dakota. Later she expanded her business to ladies' wear. Herman's tailor shop moved to the back and Ida's goods were sold in the front of the store on Main Street.

Herman (Chaim) and Ida Wilensky moved to Minneapolis in the 1930s after all of the children except for Bess, the youngest, had left Devils Lake. There, Herman (Chaim) continued to do his tailoring well into his later years. I remember playing at my Zadie's apartment while he sewed. He would give me the empty thread spools and they made great toys.



Chaim and Ida Wilensky - wedding picture



Chaim and Ida Wilensky - later in life

## ***Even more about the Wilensky branch***

### **Parents of Chaim (Herman) Wilensky –My Great Grandparents**

- 1) Dianne Ziskin Siegel b. 1941 m. Leighton Siegel b. 1937
  - a) Pauline Wilensky b. 1913 d. 2006 m. David Ziskin b. 1908 d. 1988 (DIANNE'S PARENTS)
    - i) Ida Rubin Wilensky b. 1886 d. 1949 m. Chaim (Herman) Wilensky b. 1882 d. 1972 (DIANNE'S GRANDPARNTS)
      - (1) Anna b. 1858 d. 1938 and Abraham Wilensky b. 1855 d. 1922 (DIANNE'S GREAT GRANDPARENT)

The parents of Herman Wilensky came to New York arriving in 1902. As stated before, the conditions in Elizabethgrad in the Pale of Settlement were very bad for the Jews as there were many pogroms. They briefly went to North Dakota to join Herman in Devils Lake. But it was too cold and they returned to New York. Abraham and Anna had a pickle business on the East side of New York and Abraham also stated that he was a peddler.

### **Parents of Ida Rubin Wilensky – My Great Grandparents**

- 1) Dianne Ziskin Siegel b. 1941 m. Leighton Siegel b. 1937
  - a) Pauline Wilensky b. 1913 d. 2006 m. David Ziskin b. 1908 d. 1988 (DIANNE'S PARENTS)
    - i) Ida Rubin Wilensky b. 1886 d. 1949 m. Chaim (Herman) Wilensky b. 1882 d. 1972 (DIANNE'S GRANDPARENTS)
      - (1) Bessie Waslowsky Rubin b. 1855 d. 1919 m. Davis Rubin b. 1854 d. 1936 (DIANNE'S GREAT GRANDPARENT)



**Bessie Rubin**



**Davis Rubin**

**A STORY:** When Davis Rubin came to North Dakota in 1893, it was a territory, not yet a State. He left his wife and children in Russia and 8 years passed before he was able to send for them. The original homestead was very large and was located between Starkweather and Edmore, near Devils Lake. Davis' plat was at least twice the 160 acres each homesteader was given. It was possible to purchase the land before the five years elapsed for \$1.25 an acre and that is what he did. When his wife, Bessie, came to North Dakota, she also homesteaded an adjoining piece of property. Bessie claimed to be divorced in order to own additional property in her own name. This was a common strategy for families in those days. Davis began by working on other farms in order to earn money for his property as well as earn some extra money. The Historical Society of North Dakota printed a letter from Davis Rubin who by then owned a furniture store in Devils Lake. This letter gives some insight into the conditions under which the immigrants existed. Davis's letter is reprinted below exactly like it was printed:

*"I settled in 1892. I took a homestead and bought land (a quarter section. I got money from the Jewish Society of New York at six percent. We got money from the local banks at twelve percent and a bonus of ten percent, so can't wonder a Jew couldn't farm. Baron de Hirsch founded the first Jewish settlement. He was a millionaire and left money for these settlements. He built them homes and got them farming outfits, but most of them left in '88 or '89. There was no donations. When I come in 1892 all the colonial settlers left except three or four. Most of the Jews that came in the 90's made good. The colonial settlers had a rabbi and everything in their religious line. But there was very little or no improvement in the county and very little to do. When they threshed, they slept in the straw piles and drank slough water, and they decided most anything would be better than farming, so they left. The Jewish Relief (Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Society) would lend \$500 to \$800 on a quarter section of land. My home was in Overland Township, T. 857, R. 62, Section 30". Signed Davis Rubin"*

Bessie Waslowsky Rubin (my great grandmother) arrived in Philadelphia in 1900. According to the 1900 Census she was born in April of 1855. It took Davis Rubin six months to go to Philadelphia to meet her and bring her and their children back to North Dakota.

Bessie and Davis had eight children, four survived and all four eventually joined the parents in North Dakota. Bessie and Davis had two sets of twins. However, of those two sets of twins, only my grandmother Ida survived. Twins reappear in future generations, Grandpa Leighton and I have identical twin daughters, Pam and Lesli and cousin Jon and Sarah Adelman from Winnipeg had fraternal twins.



## ***ZISKIN BRANCH - Grandma Dianne's paternal grandparents***

- 1) Dianne Ziskin Siegel b. 1941 m. Leighton Siegel b. 1937
  - a) Pauline Wilensky b. 1913 d. 2006 m. David Ziskin b. 1908 d. 1988  
(DIANNE'S PARENTS)
    - i) Etta Levin Ziskin b. 1878 d. 1951 m. Oscar Ziskin b. 1872  
approx. d. 1936 (DIANNE'S GRANDPARENTS)

**OSCAR ZISKIN** was married to **ETTA LEVIN** while still living in Russia. Oscar came to the United States aboard the *Lucania*, which sailed from Liverpool in 1904. They listed their last residence as Krncia. Oscar was 25 years old when he came to America. He lists his birthdate as February 15, 1879 in Baliwitz, (Berlinitz) Russia and in another document he says his birthday is 1872 or 1873.

Etta came to the United States a year later, pretending to be her brother-in-law, (Oscar's brother) Cy's wife and using her passport. Oscar and Etta, like the Ziskin family before them, went to Grand Forks, North Dakota to join other relatives. Oscar was a peddler. Oscar and Etta had six children: Rose (Jackson), David, Jack, Ann (Collins), Daniel, and Mary (Karatz), all born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The family moved from North Dakota to Minneapolis in 1920. They lived in a house owned by Dr. Tom Ziskin or perhaps his father, Harris. The house was on Highland Avenue; a very nice street in North Minneapolis, not far from what is now Glenwood Avenue near downtown. The family considered moving to California where all of the other Ziskin siblings had settled, but others persuaded them to stay in Minneapolis. Oscar Ziskin and Nate Witebsky went into the clothing business together. Oscar was a poor businessman and when they went out of business, Oscar lost everything. He then couldn't work because he was ill with diabetes and Parkinson's disease. He died in 1936, a relatively young man of 63 years. The children worked to support the family. The three oldest children did not graduate from high school. My grandmother, Etta, spoke only Yiddish.



Etta Levin Ziskin



Etta, Jack, Rose, baby Ann, David (my father) and Oscar

## ***Grandma Dianne's Great Grandparents – Ziskin branch***

- 1) Dianne Ziskin Siegel b. 1941 m. Leighton Siegel b. 1937
  - i) Pauline Wilensky b. 1913 d. 2006 m. David Ziskin b. 1908 d. 1988 (DIANNE'S PARENTS)
    - (1) Etta Levin Ziskin b. 1878 d. 1951 m. Oscar Ziskin b. 1872 approx. d. 1936 (DIANNE'S GRANDPARENTS)
      - (a) Daniel Eleazer d. 1912 m. Devorah Ettleson Ziskin (DIANNE'S GREAT GRANDPARENT)

Devorah's (Dianne's great grandmother) maiden name has been said to be Ettleson or possibly Applebaum. They presumably had nine to twelve children of which five survived. Daniel and Devorah owned a small business in Russia. The business consisted of buying from the peasants and trading for other goods. They would take their goods to market and then they would trade for whatever they could, and thus they made a living. Memories of Daniel (Dianne's great grandfather) indicate that he was a mild mannered man. The family was quite poor. Daniel and Devorah never came to the United States. Daniel died around 1912.



Daniel Eleazer and Devorah Ziskin in Russia

On the following pages, you will find pictures and a little information about **Grandpa Leighton**'s parents, grandparents and great grandparents. There is much more information to be found at web sites created by Leighton and Dianne on [www.siegephotos.net](http://www.siegephotos.net) and [www.zshistory.org](http://www.zshistory.org).

## **Grandpa Leighton's parents were Rose Ostrin and Clarence Siegel**

Rose Ostrin was born and raised in North Minneapolis and Clarence Siegel was born in Eveleth, MN (next door to Virginia, MN). Clarence lived in Eveleth and then Virginia until he finished two years of junior college at which time he went to the University of Minnesota and then on to Medical School.

Rose's siblings were Lloyd Ostrin, Albert Ostrin, Mary Kopelovitz (died at 18) and Adeline Cohn. We just celebrated Adeline's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in Chicago (2016). Clarence's siblings were John Siegel, Ann Marans, Pearl Walt and Ben Siegel.

Rose married Dr. Clarence Siegel in 1935. They eloped because Clarence was then an intern at Anchor Hospital and it was a breach of his contract to marry. Rose's parents were aware of their plans to elope and were pleased. They kept their marriage a secret until Clarence finished his internship.

Rose and Clarence loved to dance and they won many a dance contest in their day. In the Highland house they turned a basement room into a dance studio and had an artist paint a dance mural on the wall. We visited the house a year ago and the mural is still there.



**Clarence and Rose were secretly married in 1935. They danced for many years.**

Rose was very active in the St. Paul Jewish Community. She served on many boards of various organizations and was particularly active in raising money for Israel. Rose received the Woman of Valor Award for her outstanding work with Israel bonds. She was a prolific writer and poet as well as delighting in fashion.



Clarence loved music and often played an organ they had in the house. He was an avid fisherman and had a great sense of humor.

His medical specialty was Internal Medicine with special interests in Allergy and Chest Disease. When Clarence retired from his medical practice, he and Rose moved to West Palm Beach, Florida for the winter months. Clarence was a heavy smoker and died in 1978 of lung cancer.



Adeline and Rose 1926  
at sister Mary's wedding



Clarence Siegel as a child



Medical school graduation for Clarence Siegel

## Rose Remarries

Rose married Leon Bernstein in 1986. Leon was a founding partner of the accounting firm of Laventhol and Horwith in Philadelphia. After Rose and Leon married they spent winters in West Palm Beach, Florida and summers in Philadelphia. After Leon died in 1996, Rose returned to St. Paul to be near her family and lived there for several years until her death in 2001.



Picture above from left to right:  
Elliot, Leighton, Carolyn, Dianne, Leon, Rose, Rob and Andrea

## MORE OF GRANDPA LEIGHTON'S FAMILY HISTORY

### SIEGEL BRANCH – Paternal grandparents

- 1) Leighton Siegel b. 1937 m. Dianne Ziskin b. 1941
  - a) Clarence Siegel . 1911 d. 1978 m. Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001  
(LEIGHTON'S PARENTS)
  - i) Chaim Siegel b. 1882 d. 1953 m. Pia Milavitz b. 1876 d. 1966  
(LEIGHTON'S GRANDPARENTS)



Chaim and Pia Siegel with some of their children Pearl, Ann and Isadore

### Leighton's Grandparents

**Chaim Siegel** is remembered as a man with a heart of gold and a man that was loved by everyone. He was good looking, and big and strong like his father, Mikhel Leyb. It is said that he could lift 400 pounds of salt and make it seem like nothing. Chaim, like all the Siegels, loved to fish. He was also a marvelous swimmer. He was a good husband and father and he wins the prize for having the most descendants.

He was born in 1882 in Lithuania, was the second child and the firstborn son of Mikhel Leyb and Pearl Dorf Segal. He married Pia Milavitz. It was an arranged marriage, as was common in The Pale of Settlement. Shortly after the wedding, the two of them left for the United States.

Chaim was the first in his family to immigrate to the United States. Again, like many



other immigrants before and after him, he left to escape the pogroms and Russian Army. Either in Europe or on arrival in the United States, Chaim and Pia were separated because Pia had something wrong with one of her eyes, probably in Ellis Island, New York. Chaim waited alone in New York until they were reunited. The family later moved to Superior, Wisconsin. Still later, the family moved to Eveleth and then Virginia, Minnesota where at long last they stayed. Chaim was a cattleman, buying cattle, butchering them and selling it to others in town, such as his brother Carl, who had a storefront meat market.

There are many, many stories about Chaim, some of which have been repeated in the family history on the longer web version. These memories are part of the life story of a man who was loved and respected and at the same time added his personality to the life of the town and to the lives of those around him.

**A Story:** Have you ever heard of "Siegel's Airplane?" This was the name of Chaim's truck, a wooden International Harvester that had no windshield and therefore was named "Siegel's Airplane." One day Chaim brought two gorgeous heifers into town for his brother Carl to buy. Carl went to the truck to inspect the calves and they were nowhere to be seen. The calves had escaped through some broken slats in bottom of the truck and were never found again.



50<sup>th</sup> Wedding anniversary for Chaim and Pia Siegel, pictured with Leighton at B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia, MN in the early 1940s.

## **SIEGEL BRANCH –great grandparents and great, great grandparents**

- 2) Leighton Siegel b. 1937 m. Dianne Ziskin b. 1941
  - a) Clarence Siegel . 1911 d. 1978 m. Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001  
(LEIGHTON'S PARENTS)
    - (1)Mikhel Leyb Siegel b. 1847 m. Pearl Dorf b. 1855 d. 1896  
(LEIGHTON'S GREAT GRANDPARENTS)
      - (a)Khaimas m. Frume Yakhne (LEIGHTON'S GREAT GREAT GRANDPARENTS)



**Mikhel Leyb Siegel in Lithuania & his Grave stone also in Lithuania**

Leighton's great grandparents were **Pearl Dorf Siegel** and **Mikhel Leyb Siegel**. Pearl died very young. She was chasing a horse thief out of the barn and the horse kicked her and she died.

Mikhel Leyb had a little shop where he sold groceries, eggs, and produce, some of which he purchased from farmers. Mikhel Leyb was also a peddler, carrying goods on his back and selling them to neighboring villages and in Vilna. He also sold fruit he harvested he grew on a rented orchard. (Jews couldn't own land.) During the summer the children would camp on the land to protect their crop from thieves and vandalism. He was a very religious man and a scholar. A cousin remembered that he told her lovely things, like "Flowers are God's jewels," "Clouds are God's paintings." Because his Father was another Chaim, Mikhel Leyb was known as Mikhel Leyb ben Chaim. "ben", means, "son of". That first Chaim known to us was either a Rabbi or perhaps the son of a Rabbi.

**We often say:**

***"If only Mikhel Leyb could see us now, what would he think?"***

## MILAVITZ BRANCH – more of Leighton's paternal ancestors

- 1) Leighton Siegel b. 1937 m. Dianne Ziskin b. 1941
  - a) Clarence Siegel b. 1911 d. 1978 m Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001  
(LEIGHTON'S PARENTS)
    - i) Fannie Pia Milavitz b. 1876 d. 1966 m. Chaim Siegel b. 1882  
d. 1953 (LEIGHTON'S GRANDPARENTS)
      - (1) Shopse (Sam) Milavitz d. 1920 m Malka (Mary) Weynberg  
d. 1934 (LEIGHTON'S GREAT GRANDPARENTS)
        - (a) Baruch Shoul Milavitz m. Raiza (GREAT GREAT  
GRANDPARENTS)
          - 1. Soloman Smuel Shebsel Karon b. 1808 m. Greta  
Rasa Karon (GREAT GREAT GREAT)
            - a. Sapsel Kaner b. 1785 m. Chasa Malka (GREAT  
GREAT GREAT GREAT)

### **A STORY**

The story is told that Mary was the daughter of a Rabbi and that there had been twelve generations of Rabbis before them. The story continued that Shopse Milavitz was very good looking with reddish yellow hair and a gentle disposition. He hired a horse and buggy to take Mary riding. The couple went over to the Polish part of town and he led her to believe that all of the land was his. She was very impressed and accepted his proposal of marriage. For him, it was a good marriage because he married the daughter of a Rabbi.

Shopse (Sam) was a rag peddler and was in charge of the dump in either Duluth or Superior at the time that he died. Shopse is remembered as a very religious man and a very loving man. Mary is remembered as a tiny lady, believed to be very bright and educated in Europe. She spoke Yiddish, Russian, and Polish. They had five children including Pia (Leighton's grandmother). Note: Families bought and sold last names in order to stay out of the Russian Army (a 25 year stint), so that in this family there are different last names, note: Milavitz, Karon, Kaner, all the same family.



## OSTRIN / STRIMLING BRANCH (Rose's ancestors)

- 1) Leighton Siegel m. Dianne Ziskin
  - a) Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001 m. Clarence Siegel b. 1911 d. 1978  
(LEIGHTON'S PARENTS)
  - i) Ella Strimling Ostrin b. 1887 d. 1960 m. 1906 Clayton Ostrin  
b. 1882 d. 1944 (LEIGHTON'S GRANDPARENTS)

### Leighton's Maternal Grandparents

**Clayton Ostrin** came to the United States in 1905 (historically a time of pogroms in Russia). He came with his friend, Chaim Strimling. The two had been in the Russian Army together and had run away shortly after the beginning of the Russian-Japanese War and came to the United States in 1905.

**Ella Strimling** is remembered as having said that her family had been aware of the Ostrin family in Konotop (in northern Ukraine). During the course of their friendship, Chaim Strimling had shown Clayton Ostrin a picture of his sister Ella and had told him how beautiful she was. Clayton was interested in Ella even before he met her. The story went that he was in love with her picture. Romance flourished and they were eventually married. Clayton always said that he wanted to marry a beautiful woman so that none of his children would suffer. Clayton owned a plant that manufactured commercial dry cleaning and laundry machines. His son Lloyd eventually took over that business and continued to operate it.



Grandpa Clayton & Leighton  
Clayton Ostrin & Leighton



Ella Ostrin (Strimling)  
with her concertina



Ella Strimling

## **STRIMLING BRANCH – Leighton’s maternal branch**

- 1) Leighton Siegel b. 1937 m. Dianne Ziskin b. 1941
  - a) Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001 m. Clarence Siegel b. 1911 d. 1978  
(LEIGHTON’S PARENTS)
    - i) Ella Strimling b. 1887 d. 1960 m. Clayton Ostrin b. 1882 d. 1944 (LEIGHTON’S GRANDPARENTS)
      - (1) Labe Levitas Strimling b. 1842 m. Ada Sher b. 1843 d. 1914  
(LEIGHTON’S GREAT GRANDPARENTS)
        - (a) Nossan m. first wife (LEIGHTON’S GREAT GREAT GRANDPARENTS)

### **A STORY**

There are not very many of us who had ancestors so thoughtful and concerned about family that they themselves wrote the family history down. The Strimling family is one of the exceptions. In 1903, Labe Levitas Strimling wrote on the flyleaf of the Book of Job: "I have written this down in the Book so people can refer to it.

"The concession (selling water to villagers) was good for twenty years, nothing special, nothing to brag about. So I left it out of the beginning of my writing. I took the trouble to inscribe this so it should be a remembrance for all the children about the years, how old they are, and for me personally; it is necessary to know sometimes. It will undoubtedly come in handy when they will sometimes take the Book in their hands and they will read this. They will surely be pleased." Labe Levitas (written in Yiddish 20 February 1903, 10th of Adar) A last line is illegible; perhaps "This is a remembrance from Father."

The Strimling family name in the Ukraine was Levitas. The name was changed in order to keep the sons out of the Russian Army. The family took Strimling as its official name and never went back to the original Levitas. The word Strimling means fisherman of the sea and it is the name of a favorite fish in Lithuania.

It seems that Labe and Ada lived in Shavol, Lithuania until 1874 when they moved to Konotop, Ukraine. Later in 1883, they moved to Brod, Russia. The move to Russia from Lithuania was very difficult and was accomplished in a covered wagon according to the stories that have been told.

Eventually, only Ada Strimling and her youngest daughter, Ella, remained in Russia. Ella had a fiancé in Russia who was not interested in emigrating. She considered staying in Russia and marrying her sweetheart, but her mother really wanted to see the other children again. There was some question about whether her mother could get a visa because of her age or health. So, a decision was made. If Ada could get a visa, mother and daughter would immigrate to the United States. If Ada could not get a visa, they would stay in Russia and Ella would marry her sweetheart. Ada received the visa and they went to America.

Nossan, Leighton’s great great grandfather, was a senior bureaucrat in the Tzar of Russia's government. As a result, the Strimling family was privileged and could travel freely, and the children could attend choice schools. After Nossan died, the Tzar cancelled all of the family privileges.

## **OSTRIN BRANCH –Leighton’s maternal branch**

- 1) Leighton Siegel b. 1937 m. Dianne Ziskin b. 1941
  - a) Rose Ostrin b. 1914 d. 2001 m. Clarence Siegel b. 1911 d. 1978  
(LEIGHTON’S PARENTS)
    - i) Ella Strimling Ostrin b. 1887 d. 1960 m. 1906 Clayton Ostrin  
b. 1882 d. 1944 (LEIGHTON’S GRANDPARENTS)
      - (1)Yahuda Labe d. 1921 in Russia m. Tsviah Malinsanky  
(Malis) (LEIGHTON’S GREAT GRANDPARENTS)



**Yahuda Labe Ostrin**



**Tsviah Malisansky Ostrin**

Yahuda was a misgeah, supervising the slaughtering of beef, according to the laws of kashrut. Tsviah is remembered as a kind person, who took in and fed orphans, for example. She was a caring and devoted mother. In order that her children would not go to bed hungry, she would bring them bread and milk at bedtime. They never left Russia.

# Family Trees

