



Bronia Bronkesh Z"L

Bronia Cimmerman Bronkesh has lived in Scottsdale since 1991. She was born in her grandparents' home in Sarny, Poland in 1921. Bronia first attended private Hebrew schools and then Polish public schools. Following graduation in 1938, she left for Warsaw to continue her education. While home for summer vacation in 1939, Germany invaded Poland and within the week the Nazis bombed Sarny. Two days later the Russian army came to Sarny and over night the town became part of the Soviet Union. Bronia repeated two years of high school in Russian in order to be eligible for Russian college. Life was good for a short while.

In June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union and the Nazi army marched toward Sarny. Bronia encourage her family to run deeper into the Soviet Union. Bronia, her mother and sister left, sometimes walking for miles or riding trains while being bombed while her father and other relatives stayed to wait it out. As soon as they managed to get to Kiev they had to leave because the Nazis were quickly advancing. After three days dodging bombs on the Dniepr River, they made it to Dnepropetrovsk where boxcars waited to transport refugees into Asia. While riding the train for days in awful conditions, they were glad to escape the Nazis. At a train stop they miraculously found an aunt who was able to get their destination changed landing them in Kirovakan, high in the Caucasian Mountains. Life was quiet far from the front. Bronia continued her education and was accepted to medical school and she left her family to attend school in the Armenian capital or Erevan.

In October 1942 the papers reported atrocities inflicted on the Jews in the conquered territories. Sarny was prominently featured. Its Jewish ghetto had been liquidated and its residents taken to the woods, forced to dig trenches and shot into those ditches. Among the thousands killed were Bronia's father and grandparents. In 1944 when Kiev was liberated, they returned and Bronia resumed her medical studies there and on weekends cleared rubble in the destroyed city. When Sarny was liberated, they returned but no Jews were left alive and so Bronia with her mother and sister left the Soviet Union in hopes of making it to the USA where they had relatives. Their first stop was Lublin, Poland. There she met Sane Bronkesh whom she married on October 14, 1945 and a week later they left on a journey that took nearly two years. They were smuggled by the Hagana through Czechoslovakia and Austria eventually landing in an American DP camp outside of Munich. An American Jewish officer wrote to his mother asking her to place a newspaper ad that helped connect them with their relatives in the USA who secured visas for these Holocaust survivors who arrived in NY in June 1947 including Bronia.