



**The Buchinsky Story**

## **The Buchinsky Story** (as told by Harry Buchinsky)

### A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BUCHINSKY FAMILY OF MAITLAND

Our father, Louis (Lazar), was born in 1900 in the village of Raguva in the Panevezys district of Lithuania. There were frequent border wars between Lithuania and Poland, and for that reason some people born in Vilna would be Polish, while others would be Lithuanian. It all depended on who occupied the area at that particular time.

During one of those border wars, our father was conscripted into the Lithuanian army. He was unfortunate to be captured by the Poles and was imprisoned by them as a POW. They were taken out daily to work in the forests. We don't know the nature of the work, but more than likely it was not light work, for our father saw prisoners dropping dead as a result of very little and sometimes no food or water.

After some weeks, or maybe months, he realized that if he did not break out he would soon just be another dead body, and so one day when they were out in the forest, on the spur of the moment he made a mad dash away from the work site. But to where? It made no difference. Either the guards didn't see him, or they were just too lazy to chase after him.



*Ca. early 1920s*

After walking for hours in what he thought was the direction of Lithuania, he came across a Shul. It was already dark, and they had a coal fire burning in the yard to warm the Shul. He decided to settle for the night. The next morning when people came to daven Shacharit, they found him there. He said, "Ich bin a Yid," and he explained his situation, and that he was trying to get back to Lithuania. They brought him some warm food, a change of clothing and some liquids, and they directed him to the next shtetl and to where the Shul was located. This went on from one shtetl, or more correctly Shul, to the next. We don't know if it was weeks or months, but eventually he found his way back to his home in Raguva.

He was promoted to Corporal (or the equivalent), and he became a prison guard and remained in Lithuania until the end of the war. After demobilization he left for South Africa. His two brothers and his sister had meanwhile entered the USA under the USA immigration laws at the time, but during the time that our father was a prisoner of the Poles, the immigration laws were severely tightened, and he did not qualify for entry to the USA.

Like most Jews, he emigrated to escape the pogroms (killings) against the Jews. And why? Just for practicing their faith!



Our father arrived in Cape Town probably around 1925 and was employed by National Meat Suppliers at the abattoirs at approximately 10 shillings per week (or possibly per month). After saving sufficiently, he sent for his “girlfriend”, Cille (Sheilah), and they were married by Rev Kassel in the Woodstock Shul on 25 September 1927.



They soon started their family, and it grew rapidly - Masha, Julius, Harry, Ralph and Leah.

As a married man with a growing family, he could not survive on 10 shillings salary, so he bought an old wheelbarrow and some second-hand goods, socks, shirts, underpants, vests, and he became a “travelling salesman”, or a smous, in Afrikaans.

Our father was a good talker and he sold very well, and he soon rented a shop, near where the Odes family lived next to the Police Station, and from there he started selling his goods.

He was later able to have a shop built on Main Road (later Voortrekker Road) opposite the Welcome Hotel and Adams Fruit Market. L Buchinsky Mens and Ladies Clothing, L Buchinsky Mens and Ladies Shoes, would occupy those premises at 117 Voortrekker Road until the company ceased trading in the early 1980s. We were regarded as the Stuttafords of Maitland! Other adjacent shops were B. Barron Chemist, Margolis Fish and Chips, Broadway Bakery and Tea Café. This was the CBD area, downtown Maitland.



*Louis and Cille with their three older children, Masha, Julius and Harry (ca. 1937/1938).*



*Our shop on Voortrekker Road.*

*From left to right:*

*Possibly Mrs Grace (an assistant), Cille, Julius, Uncle Barney, ?, Louis, possibly Martin Aploon (February 1949).*

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Masha (Marcia) deceased. She matriculated at Maitland High School, then did a shorthand/typing course. She was employed as a secretary in a large legal firm in Cape Town, later moved to Johannesburg, and she eventually became the secretary to the first Computer Science professor at Wits University, an entirely new development at that time.

Julius deceased. He married Alma Jowell. He became one of Cape Town's leading auctioneers, noted for his novelty advertising. He appeared in all his adverts wearing thick black glasses, and this became his branding.

Harry married Shushana (Shooshy) Marks. He graduated as a medical doctor at UCT. After working at King Edward and Addington Hospitals in Durban, he set up private practice in Milnerton, where he remained until he retired. Harry was also vice chairman (he later became chairman) of the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation in 1994, where he, together with other officials of the Shul, had the honor of welcoming President Nelson Mandela into the Shul for a special service, prior to his official installation as president of South Africa. President Mandela was the country's first Black head of state and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election.



Ralph attended UCT at Rhodes University, where his studies were unfortunately interrupted due to ill health. He died at a relatively young age, due to complications of an ulcer.


Leah (Lee) married Aubrey Sack. She attended Good Hope Seminary, and later qualified at Groote Schuur Hospital as a Sister RN, and then went to the "Vic" in Johannesburg, qualifying in Maternity. She later went still further and attained her Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing. Leah now lives in Toronto, Canada.

**2 PUBLIC AUCTIONS  
ON MONDAY JUNE 6  
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**PROPERTY 2: THIS DELIGHTFUL FAMILY HOME  
(S.T.C.)**




**13 CAMDEN ROAD, MAITLAND  
MONDAY JUNE 6 — 12 NOON**

**COMPRISES:** 3 bedrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen,  
pantry and bathroom.

**VIEWING:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays  
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CAPE TIMES 21/5/88

*This house at 13 Camden Road was one of the numerous properties that Julius was instructed to sell over the course of his illustrious career.*

*This particular house was occupied by the Kramer family from 1934 until 1970.*



*BACK: Barney (an uncle), Masha, Julius, Harry (an uncle), Cille, Leah  
FRONT: Ralph, Louis, Betty (an aunt), Harry  
(1949)*

*This family photo was taken outside our house at 122 Coronation Road.  
Our father's younger brother (Harry) and his wife were visiting.  
It was the first time the brothers had seen each other since Uncle Harry  
emigrated more than 30 years before that.*



*February 1949*



*Source: Google Maps, 2024*