

Joan Alice Jocz

Memoir

This memoir was transcribed from handwritten notes (undated) prepared for a Hebrew Christian Alliance meeting in the 1980s. The Doris mentioned is Doris Nixon, a Hebrew Christian who attended the Nathanael Institute. Pictures are from family archives.

Doris asked me a few weeks ago if I would speak about Jakob's early ministry and I wasn't sure if I could. But it has been good to let my thoughts wander back over some 50 years and I'll try to share some of the happenings with you. So, thank you for asking me, Doris, to do this. And if I speak of his early ministry, I am involved, so I have to speak of myself too.

When I was in my mid-teens I gave my life to the Lord. The Psalmist said: 'Commit your way to the Lord and He will direct your path' and truly this can be the only explanation of the strange twists and turns my life has taken.

One of the questions I'm most often asked is: where and how did you meet (Jakob)? If I could transport you to England, North Finchley in London, I could show you the paving stone on which we stood. It is outside Pitman's Shorthand & Typing School, where I was attending evening classes to improve my typing skills as I had just started to work in the Director's Office at the British Museum. Jakob had come over from the CMJ (Church Mission to Jews) Training School in Warsaw to attend the Keswick Conference and then been invited to the home of my girlfriend to tutor her brother who was studying for the ministry and needed help with Hebrew and Greek. And on that fateful evening my friend, Aileen, brought him to meet me after my class. Our friendship grew and deepened, chiefly through letter

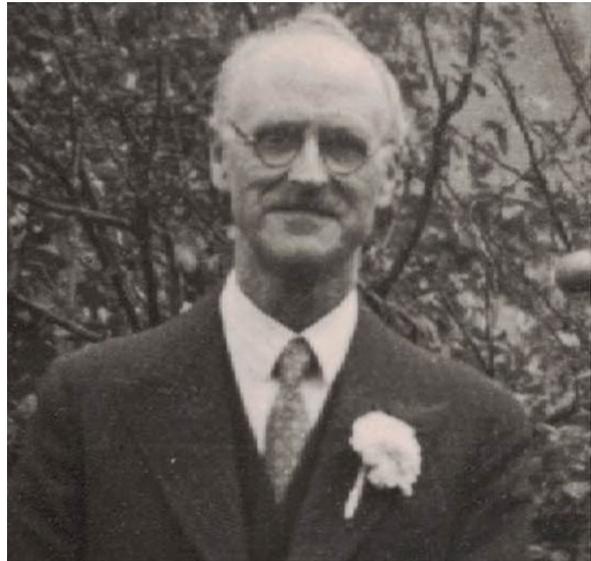


Aileen Bradley

writing, but the following year he spent the summer in England and was made a deacon in the Anglican Church. We spent the holiday with my parents and this gave them the opportunity to get to know their son-in-law to be.



Joan's Mother, Alice



And Father, Edward



St. Barnabas, Woodside Park

1936 was a special year. Jakob was ordained a priest of the Anglican Church for work in Warsaw and a few days later, we were married in my Parish Church. After a short honeymoon and a visit to the CMJ Summer School where we had to endure a lot of kindly teasing as the newly-weds, we packed up and went down to the London Docks to board a Polish cargo boat at Tower Bridge, bound for Gdynia, via the Kiel Canal. That was a dream of a voyage. The crossing was smooth and the trip through Holland fascinating, with the flat land and the windmills with their sails

turning in the breeze. The food was good and too plentiful. The Polish captain thought I should be initiated into the pleasure of drinking vodka. I took one cautious sip and had to wash it down with copious glasses of water, to the amusement of those sitting at the Captain's table. It's like drinking fire, one sip was enough for me! As we came into the Baltic Sea, we were marooned for 2 days by thick fog and it was an eerie experience to be lost in these curtains of mist and hear the plaintive sounds of the foghorns from the boats anchored around us. Later on we learned that this boat was carrying a cargo of gold bullion, so it behoved the Captain to be extra careful.

From Gdynia a train journey of some 3 hours brought us to Warsaw and to Sewerynow No. 3 where the mission house was located. It was a massive building,



Emily Parsons (L) with her Mother, Evelyn at Sewerynow 3

next door to the main post office. On the ground floor the Chapel and various rooms used for meetings, language school, counselling and above the apartment where the Rev. Martin and Emily Parsons lived, and at the top, our apartment, light and spacious, with a balcony looking down to the river. Martin Parsons was the head of the mission and chaplain to the Embassy & the English speaking congregation. Jakob was responsible for the Jewish work which was extensive. Several hundred young people attended English classes and discussion groups or the Bible Studies on Sunday afternoons. Most came to learn English, but there were Jews who were curious about the New Testament and some came and believed. One young man who came to learn English was Rachmiel Friedland and I was one of his teachers. How curiously the paths of people cross! I never

expected to meet him again in Toronto!

We arrived in September and I had great pleasure in exploring the city. One of our favourite walks was along the Vistula to watch the apple barges come down, piled



Barges on the Vistula

high with ripe fruit. Fall soon becomes winter and winter in Warsaw was a totally new experience for a girl used to the damp, foggy weather in London. Heavy snow fell and it was packed down in the streets and the few cars disappeared. Instead, you took a droszka and the driver would spread an old bear rug across your legs – no matter it

was probably full of fleas! – and away we would go with the bells on the horse's harness jingling merrily. My memory is of clean white snow, bright sunshine, vivid blue sky and so cold, little drops of ice formed in one's nose.

At Christmas time, enormous fir trees were put up in the big squares, decorated with coloured lights. Close by would be the watchman, muffled up in many coats and scarves with a blazing fire in a large brazier to keep him from freezing.

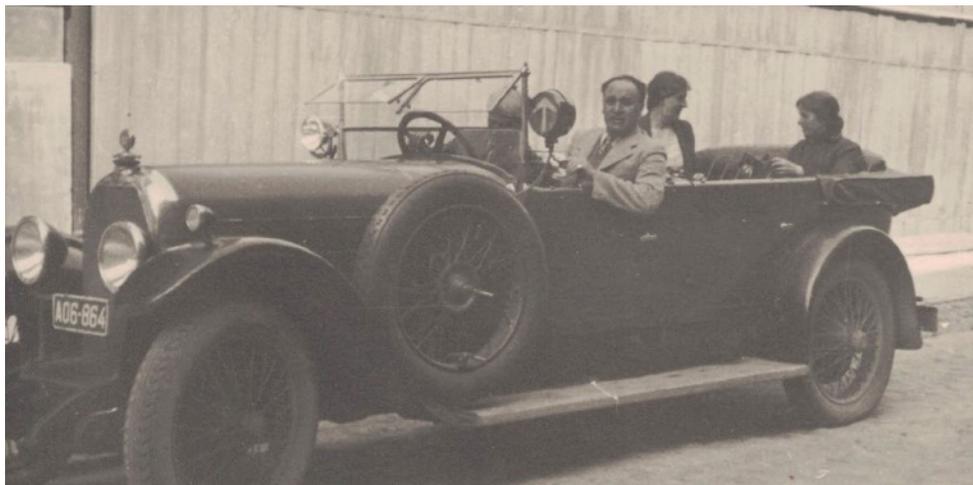
That first Christmas was very memorable. We had parties for the various groups and a good time was had by all. A very special party was for our Hebrew Christian friends. After the meal and the reading of the Christmas story the lights were dimmed and we sang carols in the glow of the candles. Now I cannot hear the carol 'Silent Night, Holy Night', without being transported back to that room and smell afresh the scent of the



Chapel at Sewerynow 3

pine branches. It is a very poignant memory, because of the large group of people present that evening, only 3 or 4 survived the Holocaust.

Summer brought the excitement of the mission journeys. The mission owned a large touring car which was driven by Victor Weisman. Victor was one of the most important men at the mission. There was nothing he could not do and he was greatly loved by us all. Jakob and 3 or 4 of the Hebrew Christians would go and visit some of



Mission Car

the Jewish communities outside Warsaw, often receiving a hostile reception, so we were thankful when they returned safely. They distributed tracts in Yiddish and tried to proclaim the Good News.

Sometimes they were well received, but often they were driven off with curses and stones. So, life in Warsaw was varied and interesting and we thought our life's work would be there.

But we come to the year 1939. At the beginning of that year, Jakob was asked to go to England in March to do some deputation work on behalf of CMJ. We were to return at the end of May. We packed our suitcases and shut up the flat and I did not know I would not see my first home again. It was good to be back in England with my parents and I hadn't been there too long when I knew I was to have a baby. As I wanted my child to have British nationality, I arranged to stay on with my parents and Jakob returned to Warsaw at the end of May. Our plan was for me to go out to join him with our child at the end of the year. Then, unexpectedly, he received a telegram from the head of the CMS in London, asking him to speak at their summer conference

in July, as their main speaker, an Arab, had been taken ill. As I was in London, he was very happy to come, especially as his fare was paid! It was a very hot summer, so he packed just a small case, expecting to be only a week in England, but when he tried to return, the frontiers were closed. All our worldly possessions were in Warsaw and all we had was in 2 suitcases and a hatbox, but we were together and nothing else mattered.

I still have his return ticket, some Polish money and the keys to the big gate and the door to our flat.



Return tickets, Keys & Zlotys



I cannot begin to tell you how good people were to us and how our needs were supplied. We stayed with my parents till after our daughter was born and Jakob travelled all over England preaching on behalf of CMJ. We were offered the use of a rectory in North London and a friend sent us a truck load of furniture and necessities to put in it. It wasn't an easy time as the bombing of London began and we were very vulnerable as we were next to a large power station. After some months we were able to rent a small house in Surrey which was a little better, though we were in the path of the doodlebugs and other horrors Hitler sent against London.

Our second and third daughters were born to us there and Jakob became the head of the London Mission and a chief speaker for the Society. He also began to write and study for his doctorate at Edinburgh University. It was at this time we learned that his father, who was also a missionary for the CMJ, and a dear and gentle man, was denounced as a Jew by the doorkeeper (a Pole) at Sewerynow and taken away and shot by the Germans a month before the war ended. His mother survived and we were able to bring her to England in 1947 and then on to Canada. A lady of great courage and humour and many of you remember her.



With the ending of the war, Jakob was asked to be priest-in-charge of St John's Church, Downshire Hill, Hampstead, and we moved to the rectory which was a five-storey terraced house on the edge of Hampstead Heath. The church had been damaged during the war and had no windows, no heat and almost no congregation, but over the years it was restored to its former dignity. A Georgian church, built with high boxed pews and a large gallery. This church became the centre of the CMJ work in London and the congregation increased. Our son was born there.

Much of Jakob's time was devoted to writing and he produced many articles, pamphlets and in all 5 books. He became president of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance and held that office for 6 years. During that time he made many trips abroad on their behalf. The most fateful one was to Chicago in 1954. We travelled to the conference with a group of Hebrew Christians from Europe on the Queen Elizabeth 1 and that was a memorable voyage. It was our first trip to America and the lavishness of life there after the rationing in Britain was incredible, especially when I was served a steak at dinner on which I would have fed all my family! We had a wonderful time, meeting the brethren and getting to know the

Hebrew Christian leaders on this side of the Atlantic. Jakob's brother, Paul and his wife, were there, the Buksbazens, Jakob Peltz, Ed Brotsky and the Kaminsky's. As we had a few days to spare before returning to England, Morris Kaminsky invited us to go with them to Toronto to see the work they were doing at the Nathanael Institute and there we met Audrey Forster and many of you here this evening, and were very impressed with the work being done among the Jewish people. Soon after our return home, Jakob received a letter from Mr Kaminsky inviting him to come to the Nathanael Institute and take over this work from him.



From left: Paul & Elizabeth Yates (Jocz), Joan & Jakob Jocz, Lydia & Victor Buksbazen

And now began a time of heart searching and seeking God's will. Neither of us really wanted to leave England, but doors seemed to be closing there and opening here. I must admit that for 2 years I did my best to ignore that. The children were settled in schools and we were happy in the work there and Jakob greatly loved. But there came a time when we had to say 'Yes' and begin packing up and deciding what to take and what to leave behind. No easy task! We were seen off by a large group of family and friends at the railway station and it was hard to say goodbye. We were on our way to the Liverpool docks to board the Cunard liner, The Ivernia. When we



Ivernia docked at Quebec

opened our cabin door, we found it was filled with flowers sent by our friends at the Church. A lovely thought. It was early October and a time of such gales that the ship could not leave the dock for 3 days. Eventually we reached this side of the Atlantic and the trip down the St. Lawrence to Montreal was a great

pleasure after the rough voyage. We were met at the dockside by a Church Army Captain and I wish I could remember his name. He took us to his home and he and his wife made us so welcome and looked after us, fed us and put us on the train to Toronto. We were kindly welcomed at the Nathanael Institute that night by Audrey Forster and those of you who used to come regularly and then came a long period of settling in and adjusting at for me and the family. Jakob was quickly at home.



Audrey Forster

The rest of the story I think you know. In a short time the Jewish population in that area began to prosper and move north and there was less need for the kind of ministry that the Nathanael Institute offered. At that time, Dr Leslie Hunt asked Jakob if he would consider part-time teaching at Wycliffe College and with the blessing of Bishop Wilkinson he began to do this and soon became a full-time professor of Systematic Theology. This, I feel, was his true vocation. He was able to continue writing and the influence he had on the young men and women training for the ministry was very great. He taught there for 17 years and is remembered with affection by so many.

It was my privilege to be married to him for 47 years and I daily thank God for that.

Joan Alice Jocz



Joan & Jakob at the Toronto Island Ferry 1980