

Zoltan Shtern With His Brothers



This is a picture of me (in the center) and my brothers Vilie Shtern (on the left) and Miki Shtern (on the right) in the home of my brother Vilie. The photo was taken during my visit to the USA in 1992. My parents, my older sister Jolana and my younger siblings Yankel, Herman and Sima perished in Auschwitz in February 1945. I thought that my brothers Vili and Miki also perished. A few years later I got to know that they had survived. They were liberated by the Americans and knowing that Subcarpathia became Soviet they decided to move to the USA. In 1952 the Ukrainian prosecution office got to know that I had brothers in the USA. It was dangerous to have relatives abroad, particularly, if it was a capitalist country, even though we had no contacts. One could be fired or even be subject to more severe punishment. The General Prosecution Office issued the order of my dismissal. This is what was written in my employment record book: 'Fired per order of the general prosecutor of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic'. Even though I was shocked at the loss of my job I was happy to get to know that my brother Vili and Miki were alive. The KGB officers informed me about it. Of course, they spilled no details and I couldn't correspond with them, especially because I was a former convict. I've found my brothers in the USA. They live in Long Island, New York. They were very happy to hear from me. They thought I had perished. I've visited them five times since then. They are married, have children and grandchildren. They are pensioners. My brothers are members of the Jewish community. My older brother Vili is very religious. His older daughter's husband, his son-in-law, is a rabbi. He lives in Israel and lectures at Jerusalem University. Vili's family observes all Jewish traditions; they follow the kashrut, celebrate Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On Sabbath the family goes to the synagogue. My younger brother Miki isn't so deeply religious, but he and his family also go to the synagogue. Recently my older brother had a surgery. I always look forward to my younger brother's calls to tell me about how my older brother feels. He is 89 years old, not young any more. I cannot afford to call them in America: it's too expensive. There are a lot of good things about the USA. I used to think that rich people built their riches on a dishonest basis stealing and lying while millionaires in the USA do a lot of charity and help the poor. However, basically I think that people in America aren't so open and friendly. I

think it's better here. My brothers were telling me to move to the USA, but I never considered this option. I like my work and I like the people here. They treat me with respect. I think I would miss this if I left.