



ALLEN NEUROSURGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Arnold G. Salotto, M.D.

Established in the Lehigh Valley since 1955

April 8, 1996

Miriam Weiner, President
Routes to Roots
136 Sandpiper Key
Secaucus, NJ 07094-2210

Dear Miriam,

I had to write to express once more my gratitude for your tremendous work on behalf of my family. When we arranged your trip last summer to our ancestral town of Nova Priluki, Ukraine, we could never have foreseen the results.

Through the sharp eye of Vitaly Chumak, and your perseverance and knowledge of the region and its archives, you found my father's first cousin--the only member of our large family to survive the Nazis. We had no idea she existed!

Your recovery of an old family photograph was wonderful--I will never forget the thrill when I realized the address on the back was my grandfather's, who had left Ukraine in 1913. Your video-taped visit to Nova Priluki and its cemetery, and the interviews with its assistant mayor and citizens were superbly done. Your video-taped interview with our cousin, however, as she recounted the events of the Holocaust, was unbelievable. We felt as though we were sitting with her as she told the story of the extermination of the Jews of Nova Priluki.

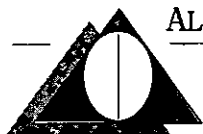
Most incredible of all, we have just spent Pesach with her son, my second cousin, who is a graduate student here in America. He met our family and our parents and it was a grand experience to have him with us.

My father and I are looking forward to our trip to Ukraine in a few weeks with Vitaly. We anticipate our meeting with our cousin and appreciate your thorough preparations.

Please accept again my thanks for the wonderful work you have done, and for your fantastic professionalism and your personal care.

With warmest regards,

Mark C. Lester, M.D.



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November 4, 1996

Ms. Miriam Weiner
Routes to Roots
136 Sandpiper Key
Secaucus, NJ 07094-2210

Dear Miriam:

Six months have rapidly passed since my father and I visited Ukraine and met our cousin. Though I have spoken with you many times about this trip, I have delayed my formal thanks because words are so very difficult.

When you notified me from Ukraine in August 1995 that you had found Elizabeta Linsky Wiener, my father's first cousin, we were incredulous. We believed that all members of my father's family had perished in the Holocaust.

Your return with your videotaped interview and photographs convinced us that this was no dream. You brought with you a photograph of family in Europe which had rested on my grandmother's dresser top thirty years ago. On its back was the address of my grandparents when they had first come to America. You traced our ancestry on my grandmother's side into the late 1700's.

You also learned that Elizabeth's son Boris is currently a student at the University of Texas. We spoke to him from your apartment. We later had him here for several days during Passover and he was present at both our Seders.

None of this, however, approaches our experiences in May 1996. From the moment my father and I met with you and Vitaly Chumak in December 1995, we knew we were in unusual hands. Vitaly's warmth was evident immediately. Your attention to our desires for this trip and your planned itinerary were remarkable. We especially enjoyed your visit with us in Newark just before our flight departure.

Upon our arrival in Kiev, however, we saw the true professionalism of Routes to Roots. We were met by Vitaly, Slava, and Felix Pechursky. Over the next several days in Kiev, we felt we were with old friends. Felix's knowledge of Kiev showed us areas otherwise unknown. Vitaly's thorough groundwork and preparation were evident everywhere. We were able to attend a performance of Handl's Messiah at the Opera House, and the celebration of Jerusalem 3000 Kiev. We attended services at the Brodsky synagogue and at Rabbi Bleich's synagogue.

We had a long meeting with Rabbi Bleich, Chief Rabbi of Ukraine, and toured the synagogue and grounds, as well as the Jewish Schools he supervises in Kiev. Vitaly arranged for us to meet and talk with many Jews and others. He and Felix provided insights into the culture and background of the city and people. Vitaly saw to our every need, to the point of procuring oranges daily for breakfast.

The high point of the trip, of course, was our visit with Elizabeta Linsky Wiener, the daughter of my grandmother's brother. Vitaly arranged for everything, and with Slava became part of our family.

The trip climaxed when Elizabeta rode with us to Nova Priluka, the village of my grandparents, and Elizabeta's birthplace. There, she told us how the family was murdered by the Nazis. We stood in the places where these actions occurred. We stood in the spot where my great grandmother's house had stood, and where my grandmother was born.

Vitaly had arranged a meeting with the mayor and we picknicked with him on a hillside in Nova Priluka. We embraced him and greeted a number of citizens:

A part of our past is now alive and present, thanks to your persistent work and to the skill and professionalism of your associates in Ukraine. Several days of visits with Elizabeta have allowed us to know her and not just to meet her.

I cannot, however, praise your staff enough. Vitaly Chumak is a rare human being. His intelligence, humanity, and sensitivity to Jewish concerns can only be experienced, not described. He arranged meetings for us with government officials of Ukraine and arranged a tour of a government hospital in Vinnitsa. I was able to present a gift of equipment to this hospital.

He took us to Babi Yar, and he and Felix provided a tour there that is beyond what we could expect. We went with him to Zhitomir, Berdichev, and to the tomb of the Baal Shem Tov in Medzibozh. We stood with him in the desolate cemetery of Uman.

Slava's warmth and professionalism were also extraordinary. Though he spoke little English, we communicated well. His personal attention to Elizabeta's comfort during our trip to Nova Priluka was wonderful.

The memories remain vivid. I remember the privilege of leading Shabbat services in Rabbi Bleich's synagogue, which the Nazis had made a horse stable during the war. I remember standing at Babi Yar, and at the killing sites in Nova Priluka and Vinnitsa. I also remember the warmth of the Ukrainian people and the beauty of the country. Most of all, I remember our visits with Elizabeta in her apartment, our meals there, and laughing and sharing stories with her.

Thanks to you and your organization, I feel we have a beginning here, and not closure. My father has spoken directly by phone several times with Elizabeta. I have spoken several times with her son Boris, and hope to arrange another visit here. I envision a possible return to Ukraine.

I cannot convey strongly enough my gratitude and the appreciation of my family. Your personal involvement with all facets of our trip and Vitaly's superb professionalism, skill, and warmth made all the difference. I cannot imagine travelling to Ukraine in any other way.

May you continue to find strength for the wonderful work you do. If it would be helpful, I would be happy to serve as a reference--you have my highest recommendation.

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Best regards, as always. I look forward hopefully to visiting again when Vitaly is in America.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark', written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark C. Lester, M.D.

MCL:cs