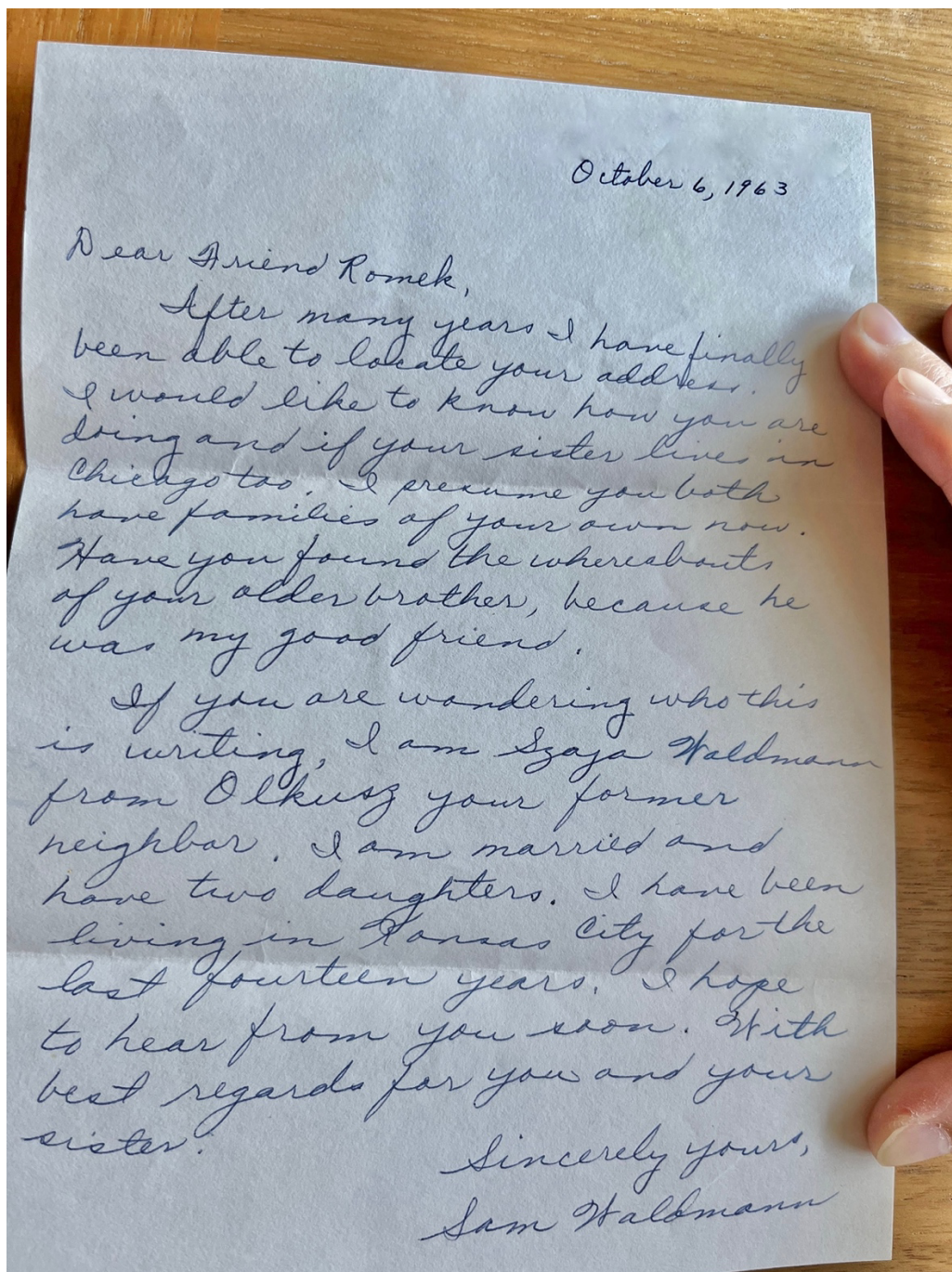


From a correspondence with Elyse Aronson-Tsfati, a granddaughter of Abe Shancer, and a historian Krzysztof Kocjan (with the referenced pictures added to the text by the editor)

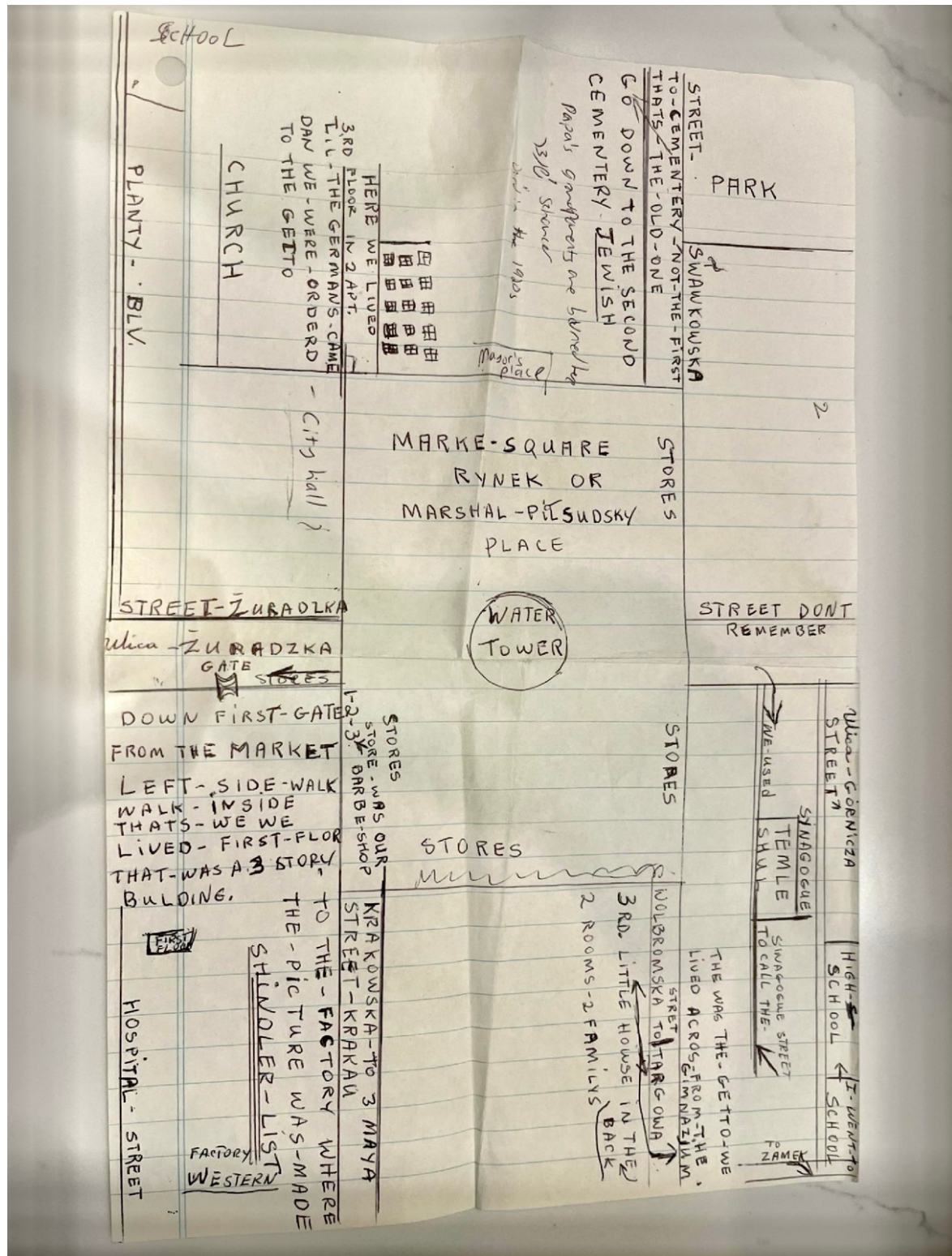
Hello Michal,

I received your email address from Melissa Hunter, who I just became acquainted with after finding a letter that her great-uncle wrote to my grandfather in 1963. Both were from Olkusz and were neighbors. My grandfather, Abe Shancer, lived in the Chicago area until he passed away in December of 2022, at the age of 99. His sister (Sally/Sala) survived the Holocaust as well and also lived in Chicago, although she died many years ago.



(The letter that connected me to Melissa Hunter)

I was able to visit Olkusz in 2001 with my husband. My grandfather drew me a very detailed map of the town (which I still have). It was a perfect map and I was able to see and take pictures of many places from his childhood. I also had the chance to get his birth certificate from the Olkusz city hall.



(The map my grandfather drew of Olkusz in 2001)

Melissa sent me a link to the Olkusz Jews website. I found my grandfather and family listed on pages 11-12 on the following file:

https://olkuscyzdy.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/508_Plac-im.-Marszalka-Pilsudskiego-Rynek.pdf

My grandfather was also known as Roman/Romek while growing up in Olkusz, but once he moved to the States, he went back to Abe and I never knew him as Roman, and neither did my mother. I was wondering if there may be anything in Olkusz that shows his name as Roman or ties it to his name of Abe/Abram. For example, were there school records? He went to an all boys Polish school. His birth certificate shows Abram.

I would be very happy to provide additional information on my grandfather and his story. It was only him and his sister who survived the war. My grandmother was born in the US, and she met my grandfather in Chicago after he immigrated.

My grandfather has 2 ½ hours of video in the Shoah foundation, which he recorded in 1996.

Attached are two pictures that are shown at the end of the Shoah foundation video of my grandfather from Olkusz. Both are from 1939, one before the war, and one after it had started. My grandfather's family owned a barber shop and he was an apprentice barber prior to the war. The pictures came from someone named Frank who moved to Montreal after the war. He was a photographer and had many pictures in an attic in Olkusz that were still there after the war.





I am also attaching the map my grandfather drew of Olkusz in 2001 in preparation for my trip. In addition, I am attaching the letter that connected me to Melissa Hunter ([both see above](#)).

I am happy to share more and talk further, and certainly would love any help/advice for when we come to Olkusz.

Hi Krzysztof,

Michal Ostrowski gave me your email address, and he may have already reached out to you on my behalf. I just recently became aware of Michal's website on Olkusz's Jews, and I was very excited to see all the information including your very impressive and detailed book. Since Michal likely already reached out, I won't repeat what I already sent to him, but you can see the correspondence below as well as the attachments I sent to him.

I am trying to see if there is anything that might explain my grandfather being known as Roman growing up in Olkusz, even though his name was Abram. Someone told us that it could have been because his stepfather was also named Abram, so the family called him

Roman to differentiate. I see how Abram/Abrom can turn into Rom/Roman, but it is just a guess. I wonder if there is anything that might show his name as Roman somewhere in Olkusz. Please let me know if you have any ideas.

I will be coming to Olkusz the week of September 22, and look forward to seeing the town again and bringing my mother with me this time.

Thank you for your time and for the distinguished research you have done on Olkusz's Jews.

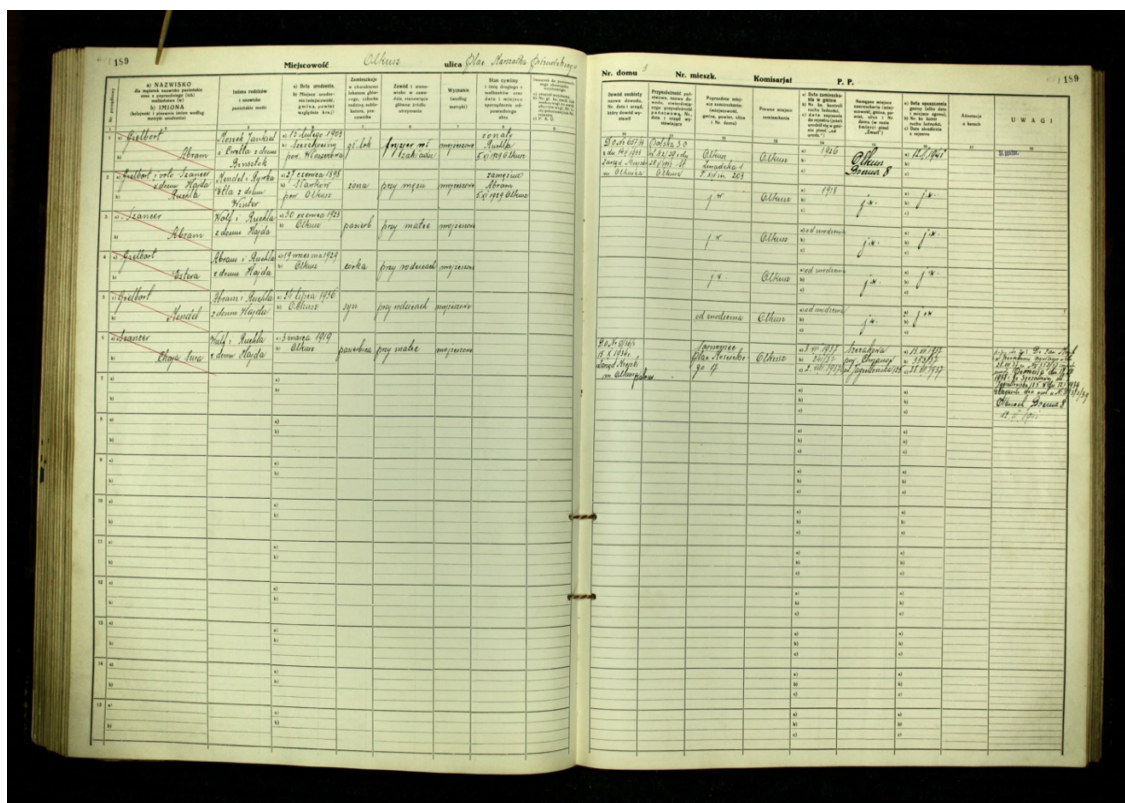
-Elyse Aronson-Tsfati

Dear Elyse,

I'm very happy to hear from you as few years ago, working on my "Jewish Olkusz", I tried to reach your family, but with no success.

I knew that your grandfather survived but had no info on the rest of his family's fate. Only in September 2022, when my book was already published, I had a chance to watch your grandfather videotestimony and realized that his stepsister Estera survived too. I saw the photos shown by your grandfather by Frank/Froim Besser from Montreal – do you have a contact with his family?

The prewar register of Olkusz residents shows your grandfather first name always in the form of "Abram" (enclosed). However, in DP camp your grandfather used the form "Roman" (enclosed). I saw already once that an Abram was called "Roman" – maybe it was considered to be its Polish equivalent?



Hi Krzysztof,

It is great to hear from you. I am not aware of those email addresses, so I am glad that you finally have a contact with my family. My brother's half-sister Estera did not survive. It was his older sister - Chaya Sura/Sala/Sally who survived. Sally married another Holocaust survivor from Warsaw, named Max Gerstman/Gersztman. He and Sally had their first son Ben in a DP camp before immigrating to Chicago in 1949.

My grandfather also had an older brother who does not appear in the image that you attached. I have his name listed three different ways - Selig/Israel/Nachum and he was born on May 10, 1921 in Olkusz and supposedly died in 1941 in Russia.

I have quite a lot of information from the war and after for my grandfather but not as much from his time in Olkusz, except for what was in his Shoah video and what he told us. Below is his obituary.

<https://www.goldmanfuneralgroup.com/memorials/abe-shancer/5093115/>

I am not in contact with Frank Besser's family in Montreal but if you know that is the correct spelling of his last name, I can do some research and see what I can find.

My grandfather was in touch with at least one person from Olkusz who moved to Israel, but that was many years ago.

Wishing you all the best,

Elyse

Krzysztof,

My mom and I are not familiar with the person named Rywka Szancer. It's possible she was related to my grandfather's father - Zev Wolf Szancer? I believe Wolf's parents (my grandfather's grandparents) died in Olkusz in the 1920s and were buried in an Olkusz cemetery. Wolf also died in Olkusz in 1924.

Best Regards,
Elyse

Extracts and pictures from other Elyse letters:

My mother found two more photos that may be of interest to you. They are from after the war in the DP camp. One is of my grandfather and his sister Sala and the other is for my grandfather's football team wearing their uniforms.





An excerpt with corrections by hand of the Abe Shancer testimony after the war (provided by Elyse Aronson-Tsfati, [a full version is attached as a separate document](#)):

Roman Abe Shancer
(previously Roman Szancer)

-1-

On September 6, 1939 I was a resident Olkusch, Poland. I lived at Pilsudski Place 14. It was on the above date that the German Army occupied our town. With me at the above address were my parents, two sisters, and two brothers. One sister is yet alive. My occupation was that of a barber.

With the occupation came a scarcity of food which required our waiting in long lines for food which we had no assurances of obtaining. It was necessary for us to get into line at three a.m. when the stores actually opened at eight a.m. After a couple of weeks we were issued food cards which allotted us very meager portions to live on, but we managed.

Once while walking with two friends a German policeman by name of Offerman stopped us and beat us because we were not supposed to go in groups. As a result I was hospitalized for a period of three weeks.

In the earlier part of 1940 all of the Jews were required, by order of the German mayor of the city, to move into the ghetto. It was extremely difficult to secure an apartment and no family could get more than a single room. While in the ghetto I worked in a barber shop and once while shaving a customer a German policeman named Scholz accosted us and beat us so long he actually broke his rifle.

We had a Jewish president in the ghetto whose name was Sobel. His secretary's name was Czernecki. The head of the Jewish police was Gleitman.

~~On March 18, 1940~~ March, 1940 the Jewish Committee had orders from the German government to deliver 300 young Jewish males from the ghetto. I turned out to be one of them. Although there was an order from the committee for me to come in and register I could not be located immediately. When I could not be found my mother and sister were arrested and held until I would show up. If I failed they would be sent away. With my arrival my mother and sister were released.

The next day found us shipped out to Sosnowiec in the durchgangslager where we were held for four days. We were then shipped out in groups and I was sent to RAB lager, Sakrau by Gogolin in lower Silesia, Germany. We arrived on the 18th of March, 1940. On the next day we were placed at work on the RAB.

RAB. REICHS-AUTO-BAHN.