

## The House at 93, Sokolow Street, Tel-Aviv

*Posted September 15, 2013*

Sokolow Street is a nice street generally. Sokolow Street in Tel-Aviv, in particular, is probably more than just nice. I really know it well. I lived there for many years. I think it is the address I am most attached to. Even my identity card contains this address. Nahum Sokolow was definitely given a good street. More than a hundred house numbers – and that is not a trivial matter, my friends. At the end of it stands a movie theater. Beyond that flows a perennial stream – even in summer.



*93, Sokolow Street, an ordinary colonnade apartment building opposite Amos Street*





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The street was named after Nahum Sokolow in 1936. Prior to that it was named HaTzfira Street, and before that – Pardes Damiani (= Damiani Orchard). Once, where Sokolow Street is, long before the establishment of the State of Israel, there was a citrus orchard here, which subsequently became HaTzfira Street. Nahum Sokolow was the chief editor of the newspaper HaTzfira. In the immediate vicinity, the streets were named after the truthful prophets of the Bible: Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, Obadiah, Haggai, Ezekiel, Micha and even Zechariah. Joshua Ben-Nun is a leadership figure. The members of the Hasmonean family are OK, too. There are some prominent figures of the Zionist movement like Nordau, Ussishkin and even Dizengoff, along with Ibn-Gebirol and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Basel Street, named in connection with Herzl from Switzerland – the one (singer) Margol Zan'ani mentioned at the outset of the social justice protest, is also in the vicinity. There is a Red Magen David (ambulance service) station with ambulances and in the past there was also a fire station with sirens and even a small, roofed market. There was even a factory producing ice blocks for the ice boxes in the years before electrical refrigerators.

I am not aware of any collectible items associated with Sokolow, perhaps a stamp of the Jewish National Fund. Who knows anything associated with Nahum Sokolow? A sugar sachet with Sokolow's picture? A postcard? If you will it – you will find it. Just recently, I saw Danny Shor, who also grew up on Sokolow Street and studied at Municipal High School E and today lives in Rosh HaAyin, carrying a street sign from the past, blue enamel, with the name N. Sokolow in Hebrew and even in English. I do not know why, but I suspect this sign comes from Haifa – but that is OK, too.

The house itself contains an eternal reminder from the time it was built. Halfon Afrigan immortalized himself for eternity in a graffiti caption carved into the cement on the entrance walkway leading into the building, just at the second stairway. The Afrigan family lived at 91, Sokolow Street with three daughters and two sons. Their youngest son, Yossi, was a known instigator of mischief and a childhood friend.

The neighborhood is modern-Zionist with touches of traditional faith. There are many such places all over Israel. Children who grew up in such neighborhoods are presently referred to as "North Side (uptown) Geeks". I also remember many cowboys and Indians in the neighborhood. The youngsters of today, from all over the country, adore the neighborhood and are willing to pay unreasonable amounts just to live there. Astonishingly, it cost us nothing.



*Danny and Michal Shor holding a birthday present from their daughters: an old street sign of Sokolow Street, Tel-Aviv, where I grew up. Amazing! (Photo credit: Karin Shor).*

I do not know why in 1962 my parents decided to move to Sokolow Street from Ramat HaTayassim in Yad-Eliyahu. Apparently, the logical explanation is very simple. The apartment and the building were under construction, and it was the time when the construction process was completed and the apartments were inhabited. I do not remember anything that happened that year, not even the Eichmann trial. The numismatic association that best suits this year is the Israeli documentary film "Tree or Palestine" (= Heads or Tails), produced and directed in 1962 by Nathan Axelrod, Yoel Silberg and Uri Zohar. The name of the film was derived from the phrase used in the flipping of a coin during the period of the British Mandate, the period the film deals with.

In 1962, the year we moved to 93, Sokolow Street, I was four years old and I think I remember us climbing the stairs to the second floor, apartment No.8. I was holding a bottle of Pardes brand orange juice we bought from Lichterman's grocery store on Amos Street, just opposite. I was climbing the stairs when the glass bottle dropped to the floor and shattered. Our mother said "Mazal Tov!" and that was how we inaugurated our ceremonial entrance into our new home at 93, Sokolow Street, Tel-Aviv. We moved from Ramat HaTayassim in Yad-Eliyahu to northern Tel-Aviv.



*1964: celebrating the Bat-Mitzvah of my blond sister Erella at 93, Sokolow Street, Tel-Aviv*



*My sister Devorah with the eldest granddaughter Rinat in our old living room, 1972*

Most importantly, the children should eat well, dress warmly in the winter, study properly and be happy with their life.

They say that the north is always preferable. The neighborhood is definitely promising. The Yarkon stream and the Peer movie theater are within the range of a 100 meter

dash, without hurdles. Gan HaNevi'im (= Prophets Park) is not even within the range of a 60 meter dash. And the sea? And Gan Ha'Atzma'ut (= Independence Park)? Just a hockey ball throw away? There is also a substantial synagogue at 312, Dizengoff Street.

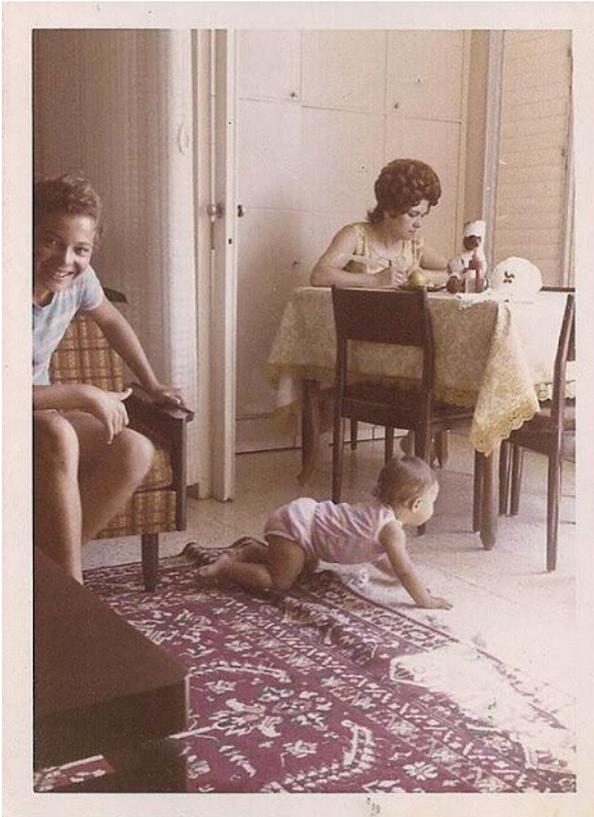
Father and mother and three children: Devorah, Erella and me. A normal Israeli family. Father is a taxi driver and mother is a housewife. Kindergarten on Amos Street with teachers Rachel and Esther. LeDugma Henrietta Szold elementary school, Municipal High School E, military service, university and that's it.

Once there were sands in Tel-Aviv. I do not really remember the real sands, but in the 1960s, along Sokolow Street, there was still a good amount of sand. There was a road and something resembling pavements. I believe there was some limestone and a lot of red earth – or many spots that had not yet been dressed with concrete, as the poet Nathan Alterman once wrote. He lived nearby, at 30, Nordau Boulevard, almost at the corner of Dizengoff Street.

The street itself, in its initial past, was a water drainage ditch, used to drain the low ground to the east of the limestone ridge where, for example, Gan HaNevi'im (= Prophets Park) now stands. The huge, old eucalyptus tree at the house opposite, on Amos Street, always threatened to collapse until they cut it down. On Obadiah Street near Gan HaNevi'im was a charming mulberry tree, very tasty and staining, just opposite the house of the uncles, Sarah and Yitzhak Elron, with (daughters) Nira and Dorit. How could we keep silkworms without mulberry leaves?



*Inaugurating the new telephone line using the white telephone with the cord and dial*



### **Happiness & Dress Warmly in the Winter**

In those places we played all our childhood games: hide-and-seek, catch-me-if-you-can, marbles, five stones, apricot stones, hopscotch, "Dudess" (poor man's baseball) and even a game involving a knife or pocket knife where you cut pieces of turf off the opponent's territory. Those cuts were interesting. We never really intended to dominate or conquer any territory. There were also a few single-story houses in the area, with gardens and such fruit-bearing trees as citrus, loquat, quince and even guava. The tile roofs were somewhat faded. Who thought about investment in real-estate back then? Most importantly, the children should eat well, dress warmly in the winter, study properly and be happy with their life.

Childhood memories, neighborhood stories and young loves merit a separate chapter. Business before pleasure.

### **An Apartment from a Contractor Named Gerber**

The apartment building we moved into was new. Father and mother bought an apartment from a contractor. His name was Mr. Gerber. The contractor Mr. Gerber had a partner who looked very much like him but was less dominant verbally. The price, as I can gather, was fifty thousand Lira (Israeli pounds). I actually remember him with the nice hat in the style of Daphne Leaf and his cordial appearance. I am fairly certain my

parents spoke Yiddish with him. Mr. Gerber was one of those people you could trust at first glance. Some people are like that. We do not always identify them immediately. I believe I possess that skill, but you do not really want to rely on me. From time to time I see such people. In my view, the world does not run out of them. There might have been more of them in the past, but I am not really certain about that. Many people argue that "No one can compare with the founders". Shlomo Ohayon, my elder brother from Netanya, a colleague, always says that.

### **"With the Neighbors you must be Tsootsinyoo-Mootsinyoo"**

Our building is very typical of the apartment buildings of that era. Three floors on colonnades. The general color shade is bottle-olive green. Our apartment is on the second floor, front side. 38 stairs. A two and a half room apartment, namely – a living room, a children's bedroom (the half room) and the master bedroom. Total area – 54 square meters, as recorded in the registrar's office. My mother used to say "Quadrat-meter" – definitely reasonable and convenient. A good spot in the middle. The neighbors are nice and fairly similar. Good neighbors are very important. Can you choose good neighbors?

My mother used to add that with the neighbors, you must be "Tsootsinyoo-Mootsinyoo", or in plain language – do not quarrel (the equivalent of "walking on eggshells"). "The most important thing is to keep the atmosphere positive". Some people insist that it should be pronounced "Pootsinyoo-Tsootsinyoo", but both are legitimate, in my opinion.

### **Are the Neighbors to your Liking?**

Indeed, the neighbors were very nice, sympathetic and courteous. On the ground floor, in a two-room apartment, lived Mrs. Doris who worked as housekeeper for one of the Meyer brothers, of the family that owned the Shalom tower and department store. Above her – the Rubinfeld family with their daughter Leah-Liora, the owners of a pastry shop. We lived above the Rubenfelds and above us, on the top floor, lived Shuki and Evette Aharon, who subsequently became the parents of little Roy. That concludes the front on one side only, as there is also another side.

There were also the half-floor apartments at the back, which deserve an honorable mention. Mrs. Margaret Deutsch of Austria, who was no longer young and subsequently became very old and never spoke Hebrew. The Feldmans – a childless couple. Mr. Schwarz, who lived half a floor above us and was handsome, tall and always sharply dressed. He always smelled great and the stairwell benefited from his

selection of perfumes. He had a Vespa scooter with a sidecar. Finally, right under the roof of the building lived Tova and Yehezkel Eini, who were practically one half floor above Shuki and Evette.

Back to the front: on the other, adjacent side, lived families just like us. On the ground floor – the Bloomenfelds. He was a doctor of some kind – but not an MD. Above them – the Knoll family from South Africa, with their two daughters – Gila-Joyce and Miriam. Above them, the Peer family – on the same floor as us. Etta and David and the children Molly, Ofer and Rinat. Above them – the Meitlis family, with their children David and beautiful Atara.

We had in our building quite a selection of occupations. Mr. Denis Knoll was a pharmacist. David Peer, the athletic trooper, was a member of the Dan cooperative (a bus driver). Mr. Binyamin Meitlis and his wife Helena had a cookie and biscuit factory, Prima. Shuki Aharon was a career military man and subsequently a businessman involved in numerous fields, who was even a friend of Alfred Akirov's in connection with the business of Alaska Fashion. Mr. Yitzhak Schwarz worked as the beverages manager of a leading function hall. Our father had a career change and opened the coin shop at 18A, Ben-Yehuda Street.

I do not remember any dogs in the building, but David Meitlis mentioned the dog they had. My parents used to feed cats and the cats would run toward them whenever they went down, and rubbed against their legs. My parents were not the only Holocaust survivors in the building.



*Driver: S. Liderman, Tel-Aviv, 93, Sokolow Street, License 57622*

**Mr. Schwarz, When will you Get Married?**

Neighbors sometimes meet and exchange words on the stairs. I remember my mother asking Mr. Schwarz once when we would dance at his wedding. It was probably something along the lines of "Mr. Schwarz, when will you get married?"

My mother's intentions were good. She probably wanted to match him with someone along the way. Matchmaking is a problematic occupation. My mother's attempts at matchmaking as a Mitzvah – a good deed – became famous in our area. To the best of my knowledge, despite her Herculean efforts, not a single new household was established in Israel because of her attempts.

I follow in her footsteps and have had the same success in this field of activity. Many people grin quietly at my somewhat suicidal attempts. I am confident that there are those who pity my pathetic perseverance. I promised myself I would never try again, but it still happens sometimes and I do not really have any control over it.

I also remember now that in the backyard was a small room with a window and even a toilet. A kind of basement or storage shed, if you will, where a couple of very nice Poles worked and possibly also lived. Their names were Adam and Bianca and they specialized in the manufacture of wooden dolls with added hair and leather elements. They produced fairly special products that could have been catalogued today. This room was adjacent to the dustbins and we even used it during the famous radiator period in our family. All in all, we had 13 housing units in one apartment building. 13 is a good number for Jews.



*Graffiti in cement by Halfon Afrigan on the walkway at 93, Sokolow Street*

## **Common Property**

The roof of the building is a part of the common property, as is the bit of garden at the front and the air-raid shelter where we spent some time during the Six-Day War. A roof is a nice thing, as you can use it to sunbathe and build a Sukkah and even to install TV antennae and solar heating boilers later on, or even watch the IAF fly-past on Independence Day. There are no private parking spots as back in the day, there was a lot of empty road but very few cars. Parking space and a roof are very important. They are also highly valuable, and in a little while you will understand the reason why we have gathered here.

Life went on normally. The little ones grew up. The fledglings sprouted wings, became independent and even left the nest and flew away. Some have even left Tel-Aviv. My sisters moved to Hadera and I moved to Rosh Ha'Ayin. The grown-ups, namely the elderly, remained in the area that became the Old North of Tel-Aviv. It is always good to visit father and mother and it was fun for the grandchildren, too. Sometimes we would go boating on the Yarkon stream with Haimiko and Moshiko of Thessaloniki or just walk along the water. Grandmother and grandfather are the best in the world. It was the same with the other families.

The building on Sokolow Street was always properly maintained. There is a devoted committee that sees to it that any damage is repaired immediately. Shuki Aharon is the committee. Mr. Knoll used to help with the collection. No one wanted to replace a winning team. Everyone preferred that Shuki would keep his appointment forever. Roy, the son, helps out. That was the best arrangement for all of us – as proven by the fact that no one has ever volunteered for the job.

Time has not stopped even for a minute. It has marked all of us. Even the building has aged a little. It underwent a renovation project or two, but nothing fundamental. The tenants have really advanced. Some of them have even moved to other places. The Meitlis family moved out a long time ago, and the Aharon family, namely – Shuki, Evette and Roy, the adjacent neighbors, bought them out and now have a double, spacious apartment. That is how you become real-estate sharks without teeth.

Almost all of the original tenants have moved to another, permanent residence where you do not pay a monthly fee to the tenants' committee. My parents moved to an assisted living complex and subsequently to the place of eternal rest in Kiryat-Shaul, while still retaining the address of 93, Sokolow Street, Tel-Aviv, code 62284, as in the identity card.

There is never a dull moment at 93, Sokolow Street. One generation is gone and a new one is born. There are grandchildren and even a great grandchild who happily associate themselves to this place. Yair ("Yairchick") Yarom, the son of Tal and Yael Shachnai-Yarom, and the great-grandson of my parents, was born there and would always be able to claim that he is originally from 93, Sokolow Street. The bedroom at that apartment still exists. The house on Sokolow Street is dynamic and productive. Today, my son Nir lives there and promises to follow the rules of 93, Sokolow Street. Nir Yosef Liderman explains that it is a cool place.

Of the original team, the younger ones remain, as well as the heirs. Everyone is a potential heir – some more, some less. The best way is to be a sole heir. In case of debts – several heirs are better. How do you divide a two and a half room apartment among three heirs? You add half a room!



*In the living room of Genya and Shmuel, with uncle Robin and aunt Hayale and the children and grandsons and armchairs and chandeliers*





**Must have a renovation or a National Outline Plan 38 project! Or: How do you divide a two and a half room apartment among three heirs? You add half a room!**

One day we were notified that the committee convenes the tenants for a very important meeting! National Outline Plan 38 is at the gate and the building needs a thorough makeover. The sewage system is in critical condition. Please bring your check books with you! The meeting is held, as usual, at Shuki's apartment. A double, spacious and air-conditioned apartment and there is even an external elevator serving the apartment. Everyone is in attendance. The meeting is important. Some tenants sent their children, who would eventually become their heirs. Some of those children are fifty plus or more.

I came to the meeting and met the present neighbors as well as those of the past. The hosts served mineral water, dried fruit and biscuits. There were some proposals. They merit a separate post, which will never be written. There was some shouting, even loud shouting. Our mother, the late Genya, did not hear so well but she did not attend that meeting. I never believed there could be shouting at 93, Sokolow Street in the Old North of Tel-Aviv. That's what you get when you start talking about money. The decision was not to decide for the time being. We will have another meeting before or after the holidays, so that everyone has a chance to consolidate their positions and make up their minds. I am not too sure about that. I believe there would be shouting at the next meeting, too, but shouting is better than fist fighting.

I also met a new neighbor who moved to 93, Sokolow Street, into the apartment of the late Mr. Schwarz. No, she never met him. She bought the apartment from his heirs. Not only children inherit. Members of the extended family can inherit, too. That was exactly what she had been searching for a long time. A one and a half room apartment

at a good location. I did not ask her for additional details and even restrained myself, with difficulty, regarding her marital status. I believe I could guess what it was. I have more than a hunch that you, too, know that Mr. Schwarz never married.

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***The House at 93, Sokolow Street or "Mr. Schwarz, When will you Get Married?" was published initially in Kobi Liderman's magazine on the MySay website***



*Four gentlemen crossing the road at the corner of Sokolow Street and Amos Street. Processed by Eliezer Morav*