

Zorka Payich Kreco 1894 to 1970



This is Zorka Kreco. She is my great grandmother on my father's side. I've been trying to learn more about her life and so far what I have learned has been very interesting!

In the 1920 US Census she says she is from Serbia. The 1930 US Census reads Yugoslavia and her obituary says Romania. I'm on the search for her Naturalization papers to see if that provides any additional clues.

I have found several different names that Zorka used including, Rose, Rosie, Zorita and Zoreico. I have found the last names of Kreco, Standish, Stamich, Kraico and Gesdimere used in association with her.

Her husband, Mike Kreco, also has an interesting background. In addition to several aliases for him I have found him listed as being from Hungary, Austria and Yugoslavia.

I found several articles from the Cincinnati Enquirer and Cleveland Plain Dealer listing their criminal activities! Everything from alcohol distribution and distilling (during Prohibition), counterfeiting, gambling, assault and more. Great grandfather, Mike, was murdered in Cleveland where he was staying under an alias.

BOOTLEGGER

Of Cincinnati Is Slain.

Mike Starnach Dies In Knife
Duel In Cleveland.

Wounds Partner In Rackets Before
Succumbing—Known In Queen
City As Mike Kreco.

SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE ENQUIRER.

Cleveland, July 1—Mike Starnach, 129 Liberty street, Cincinnati, bootlegger and former convict, was stabbed in a duel to the death here today. Before he died, however, he stabbed his opponent in the abdomen.

The quarrel, police believe, started over a gambling debt. Police tonight are seeking Starnach's assailant, who is said to have been his partner in several rackets.

With the other man Starnach this morning visited the home of Mrs. Helen Klikov, 6401 Utica Avenue, on Cleveland's South Side. Starnach frequently came to Cleveland and Mrs. Klikov saw him during these visits. An argument ensued. Starnach, Mrs. Klikov told police, stabbed his partner in the stomach. Both went into the back yard. Then the two started a duel.

This article is from the Cleveland Plain Dealer 29 JULY 1929

Doctor Treats Assailant.

A few minutes later Starnach staggered into the Klikov home and asked the woman to call police. Then he fell to the floor, stabbed through the heart.

Not long afterward a man who gave his name as George Prelie, 40 years old, 3188 West Seventeenth Street, Cleveland, was treated by a neighborhood doctor for a knife wound in the stomach. According to Cleveland police, Prelie was Starnach's assailant. His wound was not serious and he left after treatment. Police are looking for him.

Starnach's body was taken to the county morgue, where police finger printed and photographed him—an unusual procedure—which gave rise to the belief that Starnach might have been a prominent underworld character. Starnach is said to have been known by several aliases—Mike Kreca, Mike Kreco and Aaron Emord.

Mike Kreco, 45 years old, former Cincinnati man, who was killed yesterday in a brawl at Cleveland, had an extensive police record in Cincinnati, police said. Kreco was arrested some 20 times between 1925 and 1928 on charges of disorderly conduct, possession of liquor, selling of liquor, illegal distilling, violation of traffic ordinances, abuse of his family and, once for taking part in a game of chance.

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Wife In West End.

Kreco was arrested several times by Detectives Elmer Killen, John McGurn, William Wobbe and Detective Sergeant John Cameron. In May, 1925, he was fined \$500 and costs for possessing and selling liquor, and December 16, 1927, he was fined \$500 and costs for possession. He paid a fine of \$250 and costs on a like charge in November of the same year. On October 1, 1928, he was fined \$300 for possession. Soon after that, police said, he left town.

In 1928 he appeared also before the United States Commissioner on a charge of violating the prohibition act by illegal distillation.

Police said his wife, Zoreico Kreco, is the proprietor of a restaurant in the West End, and that she was arrested in March by Detective Millard Schach and Lieutenant Patrick Hayes for possession of liquor. She was fined \$300 on this charge.

WOMAN IS CONVICTED

On Charge Of Serving Intoxicants To Children—Fine Is \$500.

Mrs. Zorika Kreco, 217 West Liberty Street, charged with having served intoxicating drinks to two score of children, ranging in ages from 12 to 17 years, was fined \$500 and costs, on a charge of promoting juvenile delinquency, after a trial before Judge Charles W. Hoffman, in Juvenile Court late yesterday.

According to the charge, Mrs. Kreco, wife of Mike Kreco, bootlegger, who was shot at Cleveland, Ohio, some months ago, had been arrested several times for selling liquor, and Saturday night, November 15, a crowd of young folks were in her restaurant having a birthday party, it was declared, but drinks were served and several of those in the party became ill and had to be taken to the hospital.

Alcoholic liquor in the form of egg-nog was found, it was charged, and in addition to the liquor charge, Mrs. Kreco was haled before the Juvenile Court on the promoting charge. She was defended by Attorney Julius Samuels, while Assistant County Prosecutor Raymond Huwe appeared for the state. Mrs. Kreco gave notice that she will appeal from the conviction.

Police under Lieutenant Kleemeier raided a house at 541 West Sixth street and seized 150 bottles of alleged home-brew beer. They arrested the occupant, Miss Ethel Owens, 26 years old, on a charge of having possessed liquor.

Mrs. May Lewis, 24 years old, negress, 624 Carlisle avenue, was arrested on a charge of having possessed liquor by Lieutenant Easton and Patrolmen Flaughner and Reichman.

Others arrested on liquor charges were: Samuel Rappaport, 38 years old, Liberty and Race streets; Mrs. Zorka Kreco, 28 years old, 213 West

LIQUOR CACHE IN DOOR

**Gets Liberty Street Man in Jam
With Police—Fined \$500.**

Michael Kreco, 217 West Liberty street, convicted on a charge of having possessed liquor, was fined \$500 and costs by Judge William A. Alexander yesterday. Detectives under Lieutenant Rudolph Wehking testified Kreco had a unique cache constructed in the door jamb at his home. They said the liquor from a tank buried in the floor was drawn through a screw hole in a door hinge.

Liza Williams, negress, 415 John street, charged with having possessed liquor, was fined \$250 and costs.

Others fined on liquor charges were: Tiny Mathews, negress, 1251 Richmond street, \$150 and costs; Monroe Figg, Webb alley and Cutter street, \$150 and costs, and Frederick Adkinson, 1510 Race street, \$150 and costs.

Heavy Fine For Violator — Michael Kreco, restaurant proprietor, 217 West Liberty Street, was fined \$300 and costs by Municipal Court Judge A. L. Luebbers yesterday on a charge of having possessed moonshine liquor. Kreco admitted having been arrested several times on liquor charges. Once, he said, he served a sentence in the Leavenworth Prison for counterfeiting. He was granted a 10-day stay of execution in order to appeal.

Zorka and Mike Kreco's son, Michael. This story is just too funny not to share.

Married On His Night Out; Pleads For Divorce

Michael Kreco, 30 years old, taxicab driver, 101 Findlay Street, a former soldier, sought escape in Domestic Relations Court yesterday from a marriage which he said took place on a large night out 10 months ago in Mississippi.

Kreco said that his Sergeant at Camp Shelby, Miss., reminded him of his marriage of the night before when he awoke in camp the morning of April 21, 1941. He said he and the Sergeant had been drinking the night of April 20 and that he had "passed out." Investigating next morning, he learned that he was the husband of Edna Kreco, 44, Laurel, Miss., who operated a cafe and tourist camps at Laurel.

Discharged from the army shortly after the marriage, Kreco decided to return to Cincinnati. His bride declined to accompany him, so he came to Cincinnati alone in June, he told Judge Charles W. Hoffman. He informed the Judge that Mrs. Kreco had been married and divorced three times and that she was the mother of five children. Her first husband was Snowie Knight, her third Ernest Bishop, but he did not know the name of his wife's second husband, he declared.

Judge Hoffman, holding the case open, instructed Kreco to obtain proof of his wife's former divorces.

PVT. MICHAEL S. KRECO, 31, son of Mrs. Zorka Kreco, of 2254 Vine street, has been missing in action in France since June 6, according to a telegram received Tuesday by his mother. Pvt. Kreco has been in the paratroops since March, 1942.

Freed

PVT. MICHAEL S. KRECO, paratrooper, son of Mrs. Zorka Kreco, of 101 Findlay street, recently was freed from a German prison camp, the War Department announced Wednesday. He was captured in France June 6, 1944.