

Ch 3 – Onisim Kowal (Paraguay Church)



<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/baptism.jpg> The water baptism picture shows a lady and 4 boys being baptized. I think the lady is related to Victor and Anna Daciuk, and I think it's Anna's mom Mrs. Kot, but I'm not sure. The boys from right (nearest Onisim) to left are: Rev. Ben Shevchenko (Woodburn, Oregon church); Rev. Alex Shevchenko (Russian Gospel Temple, San Francisco), Paul Ilyin, Missions Director ("Every Home for Christ," Russia) (father of Vicky, Natasha, Dave and Laura); and Peter Dumanovsky (of Vernon BC, father of Dave, the current Asst. Pastor of Russian Gospel Temple). On the shore in the middle of the picture is a distinguished man with no tie. That's Alexander Efremovich (AE) Shevchenko, Ben and Alex's dad. AE was the choir conductor in Onisim's church and ran a sewing school as well. AE taught my mom to sew, which became her livelihood in California. Onisim prayed a dedication over my mom as an infant, he baptized her, and he performed her wedding ceremony. My dad greatly respected and admired Onisim and was always happy to have him over for a visit when I was growing up. He used to walk over to our house in Burlingame. Dad always considered Onisim to be one of the best pastors he'd known.

The baptism photo, I would guess, dates to 1948 or 1949, since Rev. Alex Shevchenko is my mom's age, and he looks around 11 or 12 years old. And his older brother Ben is taller in the photo, so I'm guessing he's hit puberty and had a growth spurt. I'm guessing again that this baptism occurred shortly after the Shevchenkos, Ilyins, Shevchuks, Dumanovskys, and others arrived from Shanghai and, subsequently, the Philippines. This group stayed in Paraguay only about 10 years before heading for SF.



<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/baptism2.jpg> The other photo is a crowd of people gathered for a big lunch after a water baptism. The crowd is on my grandfather's farm, across the street from the church and the Kowal farm. Onisim is seated next to my granddad. Their wives are next to their husbands. Grandma is holding my mom as an infant. I believe Eva is holding a baby as well. Since mom was born in 1937, I would date this picture to maybe November 1937 (springtime in South America). The structure in the back is complete and there are no stumps in the foreground. I'd guess it's nearly a year after my grandparents arrived from Ukraine, and just after the Kowal's arrival. Mom told stories of how the church members arrived for church on Sunday morning and parked their wagons and horses at the Woronko farm. My aunts (Catalina, etc.) would have the chore of watering the guest's horses. Likewise, the congregants would use the horse trough to wash the dirt from their feet after walking many kilometers barefoot. Once their feet were clean, they put on their shoes and crossed the road to enter the church.

The Kowal and Woronko homesteads were located at the intersection of 5th and F streets. This is the "farmland" that was given by the Paraguayan government to the 2000 Slavic homesteading families who showed up by the late 1930's. Calle 5 (5th st) runs to the small town of Fram about 2 kilometers south. The church Onisim pastored was next door to him on the north side of F St. They built the church using wood planks sawn from the trees on the homesteads. The Slavic Pentecostal church still meets, and they have a nice stuccoed brick building, freshly painted and maintained in the heart of the small town of Fram.

[Note: photos and descriptions are provided courtesy of Victor Kozaczuk]

<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/paraguay.jpg>

Colonia Fram, Paraguay



<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/paraguay.htm>



Shevchenko, Ilyin and Dumanovskiy families in Paraguay 1957



[Onisim Kowal in Asuncion, Paraguay](https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/OnismAsuncion.jpg)

<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/OnismAsuncion.jpg>

Onisim Kowal in Asuncion, Paraguay - from 1957-1961. Waiting for sponsorship from Alexander Shevchenko to come to United States of America.





<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/Kowal.jpg> Onisim Kowal's family in Paraguay
 Left>Right: Nida, Juan, Evdokia (mother), holding baby Rosie, Olga, Jeannie, Dina, Elsa, Onisim, Natalie, Miguel

REPÚBLICA DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DO BRASIL
 FICHA CONSULAR DE QUALIFICAÇÃO
 MODELO S.C. 108

Esta ficha, expedida em duas vias, será entregue à Polícia Marítima e à Imigração no porto de destino

Nome por extenso **ONISIM KOWAL**

Admitido em território nacional em caráter **Trânsito-U.S.A.**

Nos termos do art. 6^a do Dto. 7967 de 1945. (Resposta ou permissão)

Lugar e data de nascimento **Boratin: 15-fevereiro-1911.**

Nacionalidade **polonesa.** Estado civil **casado.**

Filiação (nome do Pai e da Mãe) **Laurencio Kowal e Gligue-
ria Kowal.** Profissão **agricultor.**

Residência no país de origem **15 e 4^a. Sajonia- Assunção.**

NOME IDADE SEXO

FILHOS MENORES DE 18 ANOS

EM TRÂNSITO
 Permanência por 30 dias no país.
 Não pode exercer qualquer atividade remunerada no país.
 Dec. Lei n° 7967, de 1945

Salvo Conduto: 21, expedido pelas autoridades de Minist. ds Relaç. Exteriores-Paraguai em 4.5.1962.

Passaporte n° 1258, visado sob n° 1258.

ASSINATURA DO PORTADOR
Onisim Kowal

Consulado Geral do Brasil em Assunção, Paraguai
 22 de maio de 1962.

(Rubrica e Assinatura)

NOTA—Esta ficha deve ser apresentada à imigração pela autoridade consular, sendo as duas vias em original.

RECEBIDO no Consulado Geral

<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/onisim-visa.jpg> (transit visa to USA, May 4, 1962)

Trip to Fram, Paraguay – birthplace of Elsa and Jeannie (Kowal sisters), 2015

<https://wigowsky.com/travels/paraguay/fram.htm>



<https://wigowsky.com/travels/paraguay/Fram2.pdf> (Pablo Tsimbalyuk)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIXcN_CqriY

(YouTube video of baptismal site)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja0lbnaJxbo> **Kowal baptism site - the river where Onisim Kowal baptized members of the church**



<https://wigowsky.com/travels/paraguay/Fram3.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WVRzqtUIFI> **Kowal house area and farm in Colonia Fram (outskirts, south of town)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5OWMmHUcGo> (Nick's video – Kowal land)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDZWGIAjTSc> (Nick's video – church site)



Nick and Susie wanted to commemorate the moment with a picture at the church where the Ukrainian tradition was carried on in the same fashion as their grandfather, Onisim Kowal, had started.



Kowal house area and farm in Colonia Fram (outskirts, south of town)



Paul J. Wigowsky
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Nick pretends like he's preaching at the church where his grandfather once was the pastor. There seemed to be some sort of foundation still left at the spot where Nick was standing.
Nick's video: <http://youtu.be/mDZWGIAJTSc>



Kowal house area and farm in Colonia Fram (outskirts, south of town)

From: Victor Kozaczuk

To: Paul J. Wigowsky

Subject: Trip to Paraguay, 2015

Pablo Tsimabaliuk owns the Tsimbaliuk and Woronko farms across the street from the old Koval place. He is my 2nd cousin (or 1st, once removed?). My mother Lidia Kozaczuk was the eldest daughter of Serhiy Woronko, who was Pablo's uncle. Pablo drove me around and explained the history and where former families had lived. The Nowosads and Boyko's are still in the neighborhood. When I was there, there was a small shop in downtown Fram owned by the Daciuk family. The Slavic Pentecostal church is still going, but it's in "downtown" Fram on "church row". There's a Slavic Baptist and a Russian orthodox church nearby. I'm sure that if Koval family members showed up at a Sunday service that they would objects of great curiosity....

Here's some excerpts from the family history I wrote:

Location of church and farms: corner of 5th (now called "Camino de Carmen de Parana a Fram") and F streets. Paraskeva's son Pablo Tsimbaliuk now owns both farms. Across 5th St. on the north corner of the intersection, settled the Koval family. Across both streets, on the west corner of the intersection, the Shust family built their homestead. These families became friends..... The difficulty of living as a pioneer drew the settlers together as a community. They relied on each other for many things: shared virtues and disciplines to live by, aid in crises, advice to make better choices, and friends to celebrate with. . . .

Off the farm, the Woronko's life centered on their church community. At first Serhiy had built a very small cabin to live in. But as time passed he added on to his home to enlarge it. To his larger home he invited his Pentecostal neighbors to gather for prayer meetings. Once Serhiy had built a barn, their Pentecostal neighbors (Koval, Shust, Makitrinsky, Boyko, Tsimbalyuk, Novosad, Petliura, Tsverkaliuk, Krasnopolski, etc.) began to meet in it for church services. In a couple of years, the neighbors erected a church building across the street on the corner of Panas Shust's farm.

Their neighbor Onisim Koval was chosen to pastor and served there for over two decades until 1958. In Ukraine, Onisim had been an altar boy in the Orthodox church before he became a Pentecostal in 1925 at the age of 14. Once he'd grown he became a traveling evangelist in Ukraine. He and his wife Eva Kotsuba married in 1935 and arrived in Fram in 1937 or 1938. They raised a large family on their homestead. Often they held full-immersion water baptisms in the pond on Tsimbalyuk's farm. The baptized dressed in white clothes. The girls put on scarves for the first time. Pastor Koval officiated at many weddings and funerals over the years. He baptized several of the Voronko children and officiated at Lidia Woronko's marriage to Andrei Kozaczuk. Church meals (baptism potlucks, etc.) were held across the street from the church on the Voronko farm.

The church members parked their horses, wagons or bicycles on the Woronko farm because the church across the street had no parking area. Catalina Woronko de Prokopczuk remembers her chore of bringing water for all the visiting horses to drink as they waited for service to end. Everyone wore their best clothes to service, and those who had shoes wore them then. But since shoes were expensive, tedious to clean and uncomfortable, most people who walked to services came barefoot carrying their shoes. They washed their feet at the Voronko farm, put on their shoes there and entered the church building with clean feet and shoes.

By 1941 the large number of Pentecostals in Colonia Fram had split up and built churches on 5th, 6th and 7th streets. Each church in Fram belonged to an organization. Ivan ZubZolotorow was superintendent of the Union ("Soyuz") of the Assemblies of God in Argentina. He'd been a military officer in Poland and had completed Biblical studies. Ivan Vinichik, who had been secretary of Schmidt's "East European Mission" in Poland was now the superintendent of the South American Pentecostal churches affiliated with Schmidt's organization. Both Zub-Zolotorow and Vinichik pastored churches in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The third type of churches were the "Free" Pentecostal churches who were not members of the other two organizations. Pastor Koval's church on 5th Street was a Free church. Mr. Labotski pastored the first Assembly of God (a Pentecostal denomination from the USA and affiliated with Zub-Zolotorow) church in Paraguay on 6th St, down the road from Pastor Koval's church. Alexei Botsun pastored the 7th Street European Mission church (affiliated with Vinichik). Onisim Koval moved to Asuncion and lived there from 1958 until 1962 when he emigrated to San Francisco, California.

In 1949 new Slavic immigrants arrived to Colonia Fram. Part of their story is described in Peter Iliyn's book, Out of the Far Corners. Families named Shevchenko, Dumanovsky, Ilyin, Iliyn, Shevchuk, Velichko, Brachunoff and many others had been migrating through China since the late 1920's. Most of the new families in Fram from China had become Pentecostals during the Ukrainian revival of the 1920's under Ivan Voronaev. They had fled Stalin's persecution by escaping first to Kazakhstan and then into China. Mao began the Chinese Communist revolution in the late 40's. After their many years in far western China, these families were then evacuated from China to the Philippines by the new United Nations. From the Philippines these families chose to immigrate to Paraguay. Most of these families joined Pastor Koval's church and began actively participating. A choir was formed and directed by Alexander E. Shevchenko. Lidia and her future husband Andrei sang in that choir. Vera Iliyn and Alexander E Shevchenko took over teaching the Sunday school from Serhiy Voronko and Mr. Novosad. Taught by Ivan Voronaev 20 years earlier, the more recent immigrants practiced foot washing before each communion service. Mr. Shevchenko opened a tailoring school and taught young Lidia Woronko how to sew. Pastor Koval baptized their young people including young Alexander Shevchenko Jr., Paul Iliyn and Peter Dumanovsky. Some of their young people married children of the

earlier immigrants. Eventually, Mr. Shevchenko Sr. began co-pastoring the church with Onisim Koval. Other families like the Produns and the Daciuks also attended the church during this time. In the late 1950's most of the families from China left Fram, and many of them immigrated to San Francisco, California where they started a large Russian Pentecostal church. This church began a short-wave radio broadcast to preach the gospel into the atheistic Soviet Union. They produced albums of Christian choir music that they sent into Ukraine, where some were confiscated by the Soviet government and displayed in a Museum of Atheism in Rovno, Ukraine (which Victor Kozaczuk visited in 1986.) Pastor Koval left his farm in Fram in 1958. By then most of the "Chinese" Pentecostal families had also left. Many young people had been leaving the homesteads and moving to Buenos Aires, Argentina. These big changes (including the loss of pastor's Koval and Shevchenko) caused by this wave of emigration likely influenced Serhiy and Eufimia Voronko feelings about continuing in Paraguay.

<https://wigowsky.com/travels/paraguay/Fram3.pdf>

ONISIM KOVAL
1911-1997

Onisim Koval was born February 15, 1911, in Poland. He grew up in a Russian Orthodox family, and in his youth he served beside a priest. One day he entered a church of the Pentecostal faith. At the time he was only 14 years old, and he became a Believer; he believed that God had called him to the Pentecostal faith. This happened in the Ukraine, and he immediately started preaching about God. Within a few years he started traveling from church to church preaching God's Word.

He was married at the age of 24 to Evdokeya Kotsuba. This happened in March 3, 1935. Less than three years later, he boarded a cargo ship with his wife and first child and sailed to South America. There he settled in Paraguay in the village of Colonia Fran, where fellow-Believers built a church and where Onisim Koval became their Pastor. He served almost 25 years as a pastor, and he performed water baptism for many souls. His entire life was a service to God and a sermon about God. He did not desire any glory for himself on earth; he only desired to receive Glory in Heaven.

Onisim and his wife Eva lived a long and fruitful life in Paraguay from January 15, 1937 to June 1, 1962. After 25 years in Paraguay, the family increased to 9 children. Two other children died after birth. They also lived four years in the capital city of Asuncion. When the large family arrived by plane in America in 1962, they came right away to San Francisco, where they became members of the Russian Full Gospel Church. In 1982 Onisim and Eva moved to the suburb of San Mateo, where their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren frequently came to visit them. Onisim left behind 8 children, 21 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. He loved all his children and instructed them to serve God.

After Onisim's wife Eva passed away in 1993, Onisim had a hard time living alone. Last year in September he suffered a stroke that left him mostly blind and hard of hearing; he spent his final days in the Junipero Serra Convalescent Home in Millbrae. 3 years, 2 months, and 10 days after his wife passed away, Onisim was at last reunited in heaven with her. He finally gave his Spirit back to God at 6:20 in the morning on Wednesday, January 8, 1997. He was 85 years old when he went into Eternity.



Onisim Kowal, Feb. 15, 1911 – Jan. 8, 1997

Scripture: "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (Rev. 22:21)

Concluding remarks (on a sad note):

After I married Onisim Kowal's daughter Elsa in 1972, Onisim became my father-in-law, and I witnessed a feud between him and his former co-pastor from Paraguay, Alexander E. Shevchenko. It occurred at the 17th Street Church, which was our nickname for the Russian Gospel Temple (Храм Благой Вести). Alexander E. Shevchenko was the pastor, and Kiril Ilyin (Alexander's sister Vera's husband) got into an argument about something (most likely a family matter), which escalated into the church one Sunday. Onisim stood up in church to defend his dear friend from Paraguay, Kiril, and Alexander over-reacted in anger and excommunicated Onisim. I don't know if they ever reconciled, but I think there were harsh feelings about that incident for many years. Something similar had happened to my father, Ivan Wigowsky, years before that, but that is another story and will be told in chapter 6.

DEDICATED TO ONISIM AND EVA KOWAL (and Family)

<https://wigowsky.com/parents/kowal/kowal.html>