

**FROM BEREZNA AND KRUPA TO BOSTON:  
THE BEGGELMAN AND KARAS FAMILIES  
AND THEIR ROOTS**

**by**

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*To all Beggelman and Karas descendants  
who want to know their roots.*



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No one is really alone; those who live no more echo still  
within our thoughts and words, and what they did is part  
of what we have become.

– “The Blessing of Memory,” Meditations before Kaddish

## **PREFACE**

These pages have been written for those who have come, and will come, after us, our children and grandchildren for whom the distant history of our family roots is little known. Those of us who still recall the stories our parents and grandparents told us about life in the “Old Country,” as they called it, have a duty to record them so that future generations will know who they are, and whence they come.

Our elders, unfortunately, did not talk much about the Old Country. Their memories of it were not always pleasant, and they were happy to leave it behind. Moreover, in those years there was little interest in family history, and genealogy has only recently become a popular pastime. Therefore, what I have done here is to record some of the stories told by my parents and the parents of cousins in our large extended Beggelman/Karas family, and augment it with some recollections of my own and the research I have conducted over the past several years. Any errors are my own, but by and large it is the truth.

The major focus of my research has been on how our ancestors lived in Russia and Poland, supplemented by a brief treatment of the history of those lands in which they lived, as well as stories from their early years in the United States. In this I have been helped by my own experience as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer in Poland (1958-61) and Russia (1967-69), and my knowledge of the Polish and Russian languages, as well as my study of East European history at Columbia University and my readings in the literature of those countries. Hopefully, those who come after me will continue this work by adding chapters on succeeding generations.

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Yale Richmond  
Washington, D.C.  
June, 2012





## 1

### **VOLHYNIA – WHERE IT ALL BEGAN**

The Beggelmans and Karases, from whom I am descended on my mother's side, have their roots in Volhynia, a province of historic Poland. I say "historic Poland" because, while Volhynia is today in Ukraine, in the past at various times it has been a part of Lithuania, Poland, or Russia, and those changes of rulers explain why some in our family never knew whether they should be called Polish Jews or Russian Jews. Behind that confusion lies a lot of history which requires some explanation.

During the years between the two World Wars (1919-1939) most of Volhynia was a part of Poland where it was known as *Wolin* (pronounced as "Vol-in", since the Polish "w," like the German "w," is pronounced as "v"). But for the previous 123 years (1796-1919) it had belonged to Russia where it was known as *Volyn*. Going back further (1386-1795), it was a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. And to go back even further, prior to 1386 Volhynia was under Lithuanian rule.

Lithuania? That small country of less than four million people sandwiched today between Russia, Poland, Belarus, and Latvia? No, not that Lithuania but rather the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a vast medieval state that encompassed today's Lithuania, Belarus, parts of Russia, and most of Ukraine, and extended across a broad plain from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, and from today's Polish border in the west almost to Moscow in the east.

How could Lithuanians conquer and rule such a huge expanse? One explanation is that the land was largely empty, and was peopled for the most part by pastoral nomads who came and went with the seasons, and by isolated farming communities that had no unified state to offer resistance to foreign rule. In addition, the Lithuanians were big and strong, and even today they are among the tallest people in Europe, as evidenced by the many Lithuanians who play in the National Basketball Association. They were also the last pagans in Europe, and the last to be converted to Christianity.

In 1386, however, threatened by the principality of Moscow in the east and German Teutonic Knights in the west, Grand Duke Jagiello of Lithuania converted to Catholicism and married 12-year old Jadwiga, Queen of

Poland. With that marriage, the two countries were joined in a dynastic union that lasted some 400 years.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as it came to be known, was at the time the largest state in Europe, and within its borders later lived more than half of the world's Jews. That tells us how safe and secure Jews were there, protected as they were by the Polish aristocrats who found the services and skills of the Jews useful in managing their property. Perhaps that is why, as an old Polish saying tells us, "Poland was heaven for the aristocrats, paradise for the Jews, and hell for the peasants." And to that historic Poland, some 80 percent of American Jews can trace their roots.

But the Commonwealth, or Poland as it later came to be known, succumbed eventually to internal weakness and predatory neighbors, and at the end of the eighteenth century it was partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and erased from the map of Europe for 123 years. And most of its Jews found themselves living, not in Poland but in Russia, a country that was not hospitable to Jews.

At the end of World War I, however, in an unexpected turn of events, Austria and Germany were defeated, Russia was wracked by revolution, and from the ruins of those three empires there reemerged an independent Polish state which included western Volhynia. Our Beggelman and Karas ancestors, who had lived for many generations in Volhynia, now found themselves citizens of the new Poland. But only twenty years later, when World War II began and Poland was overrun by German armies, it was divided once more, and Volhynia was absorbed by the Soviet Union under the terms of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Today, in yet another change of borders after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Volhynia finds itself in Ukraine, just south of its border with the country of Belarus.

What was life like in Volhynia in the early 1900s when our ancestors left the Old World to seek a better life in the New? Like much of Russia and Eastern Europe, the economy of Volhynia was based on agriculture, with grain the principal product. The bulk of the population were peasants, less than two generations removed from serfdom which ended in Russia in 1861. In contrast to the United States and Canada, farmers and peasants in Eastern Europe lived not on the land they farmed, but in small villages from which, in a vestige of their communal past, they went forth each day to farm land in the surrounding fields.

And how did Jews fare in that society? Historic Poland included people of many religions--Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics (also known as Uniates – in union with Rome), Lutherans, Calvinists, Polish Brethren, Armenian Orthodox, Muslims, and Jews. With such a multiplicity of religions, laws were passed by the Polish parliament in 1573, and endorsed in its constitution of 1791, protecting citizens from persecution and punishment because of differences of faith. This occurred, as Polish historian Adam Zamoyski points out, at a time when people for religious reasons were being executed in England and burned at the stake in Holland.<sup>1</sup>

Refuge was also provided for persons persecuted in other lands. Jews had been living in Poland since the twelfth century when, fleeing persecution and the violence of the Crusades in Western and Central Europe, they were welcomed to the Kingdom of Poland because of their enterprise and business acumen. A charter issued in 1264 promised them complete freedom and opportunities for economic livelihood. The migration continued through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when Jews in Western Europe fled to escape the Black Death (Bubonic Plague), war, and famine, and it increased substantially when Poland expanded eastward and became the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. To help develop their newly acquired and underpopulated lands, Polish kings encouraged Jews to settle there under the protection of Polish lords who were given immense tracts of land in the new territories as rewards for their military service to the Polish crown.

In the fourteenth century, under the enlightened rule of King Casimir the Great, Jews were invited to aid in the development of Poland's eastern territories, newly liberated from Tatar rule. Casimir's liberal policies toward serfs and Jews earned him the title, "King of the Jews and the Serfs." He also had a Jewish concubine, Esther, who bore him two sons on whom he bestowed a coat-of-arms. With protection under the law, more than half of world Jewry found a home in the multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Jews whose family roots are in Russia, Ukraine, or Lithuania should understand that most of the Pale of Settlement, to which Jews were restricted in the Russian Empire, was a part of historic Poland before the partitions. Thus, the roots of most American Jews are in Poland, not Russia.

Despite the loyalty of Poles to their Roman Catholic Church, the Inquisition never reached Poland. In the sixteenth century, writes Zamoyski, the last two Jagiellon kings

...allowed their subjects to do anything they wanted--except butcher each other in the name of religion....They institutionalized a spiritual and intellectual freedom which still lives....It was principally owing to the efforts of the last Jagiellons [a Polish dynasty] that the murderous Reformation and Counter-Reformation never grew into anything more dangerous in Poland than a squabble over seating arrangements at a family wedding.<sup>2</sup>

In 1791, a new constitution, the first written constitution in Europe, guaranteed freedom of religion, gave townspeople the same rights as the *szlachta* (Polish landed nobility), recognized Jews as citizens, and provided protection to peasants. That constitution, however, proved too democratic for Poland's neighbors and led to Poland's final partition a few years later and its disappearance from the map of Europe.

In that Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jews had found a safe haven. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Commonwealth was home to some 750,000 Jews who comprised about half the urban population of the region. Jews lived mostly in small towns, the *shtetlakh*, as they were called in Yiddish, the diminutive form of the German/Yiddish word *Stadt* (city).<sup>3</sup>

Many of the *shtetlakh* were located on the lands of wealthy Polish magnates, as they are known in English, who used the Jews' skills in the management of their extensive land holdings and often retained them as financial advisers. In exchange, the Polish lords and landowners provided protection.

Much of that changed when Poland was partitioned and most of its Jews found themselves living within the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement, the lands that Russia had taken from Poland, and to which it restricted Jews to prevent them from migrating to the heartland of Russia. Even within the Pale, Jews could live only in towns and smaller settlements inhabited mainly by officials, merchants, and craftsmen. Prominent or educated Jews could often avoid those restrictions, in particular by converting to Russian Orthodoxy, but the majority of Jews were tied to the towns where their ancestors had lived for generations.

At the same time, the Russian government intensified its programs of Russification and militant Russian Orthodoxy. To counter the rise of nationalism among the many new ethnic groups of its multinational empire, Russian became the language of instruction in all state schools, and Russian Orthodoxy even more of the state religion it already was. Jews, of course, were bound to suffer, and they did.

In the 1880s and '90s, violent pogroms against Jews, encouraged in some cases by local Russian authorities, broke out in the towns and settlements of southwestern Russia, destroying Jewish property and taking Jewish lives. The pogroms were precipitated by the assassination in 1881 of the liberal Tsar Aleksandr II, liberator of the serfs. In 1887, quotas were established for Jews in institutions of higher education – ten percent for the entire Jewish population of the Pale, five percent in other provinces, and three percent in Moscow and St. Petersburg where the most prestigious universities were located. Areas where Jews were permitted to live became more restricted.

Pobedonostsev, a high Russian church official, once remarked that the Jewish problem in Russia was to be solved by the conversion to Orthodoxy of one-third of Russia's Jews, the emigration of one-third, and the death of the remaining third. How prescient he was!

Jewish concentration in the towns of the Pale continued during the nineteenth century as some of those towns grew into cities which in many cases were more than fifty percent Jewish. By 1900, for example, the city of Minsk was fifty-two percent Jewish, Pinsk seventy-seven percent, Bialystok seventy-eight percent, Slonim seventy-eight percent, and Brody seventy-two percent. As an urban people, Jews played a major role in the economic, cultural, and, in some cases, political life of those cities and towns. By the end of the eighteenth century an estimated seventy percent of world Jewry lived within the Pale.

When asked where they came from, our Beggelman and Karas elders would usually reply "Russia" or "*Volynya guberniya*," as the region was known in tsarist times, *guberniya* being the old Russian term for province. And *gubernator*, of course, is also the word for governor in Latin, as well as Russian and Polish.

Volhynia, as noted above, was in Russia when our ancestors left for the United States at the turn of the century. Its landowners and officials, however, were mostly Poles, and the peasants spoke what was known

popularly as the “local language,” a dialect of Ukrainian, which the Poles call “Ruthenian.”

After Poland was partitioned at the end of the eighteenth century, Jews fared differently in the three divided parts. In the Prussian and Austrian (Galician) lands, life was much better than in the Russian part. Austria and Germany were, for their time, modern European states with rule of law and equal opportunity, which helps to explain the large migration of Jews from Eastern Europe to those states in the decades prior to World War I. Jews there were eventually recognized as full citizens and given equal rights-- 1812 in Prussia, after its defeat by Napoleon, and 1867 in Austria and Hungary, continuing the trend begun in France in 1791.

Russia, by contrast, was a backward state, part European and part Asian, without rule of law, and with severe restrictions against Jews. The Beggelmans and Karases had the misfortune to live in a Russian-ruled province but they also had the foresight and courage to leave when they could, for which we, their descendants, should be eternally grateful.

Like Gaul, Eastern European Jewry was divided into three parts--*Litvaks*, *Russishe*, and *Galitzianers*, who were distinguished from one another by the way they spoke Yiddish. *Litva* is the Russian word for Lithuania, and *Litvaks* come from areas of the Pale of Settlement north of Volhynia and east of Poland which included today’s Lithuania and parts of Belarus and Russia. Those who came from Volhynia and points further south and east were known as *Russishe* (Russian). And those who came from the Austrian part of the former Poland were called *Galitzianers*, from Galicia, the English form of *Halich*, the Western Ukrainian lands that were a part of Austria after the partitions of Poland. Our Beggelmans and Karases were *Russishe*.

## RUSSIAN JEWS

At the turn of the twentieth century Jews in Russia, with few exceptions, could not own or farm land. However, in an agricultural society they were very useful middlemen, as artisans and craftsmen, carters and haulers, innkeepers, dealers in grain, horse and cattle traders, tax collectors, and concessionaires.

As a concessionaire (*arendar* in Russian, and *arendarz* in Polish), a Jew might manage a farm, forest, mill, distillery, tannery, or other property on a landowner's estate, paying the owner an annual fixed fee and retain whatever profit was made. That helps to explain, in part, why the peasants so resented the Jews as middlemen, and why the nobility and gentry protected "their" Jews, giving rise to the expression, "the lord's Jews."

Society was strictly stratified. At the lowest level were the peasants, the vast majority of the population who, in Russia, had been serfs until their emancipation in 1861. But the emancipation, which came in Russia at almost the same time as the end of slavery in the United States, did little initially to change the lives of peasants. Most of the newly freed serfs were unable to purchase or rent land and buy the tools necessary for independent farming. Illiterate and dirt poor, they lived a life barely above the subsistence level.

At the highest levels of society were the aristocrats, landed gentry, and townspeople, in that descending order. Aristocrats, as noted above, had huge grants of land given them by Russian tsars or Polish kings as rewards for military service and loyalty. Some of them lived lives of luxury in palaces whose riches rivaled and often exceeded those of the kings and princes of Western Europe. The more numerous landed gentry, the minor nobility, who numbered some ten percent of the population of medieval Poland, also lived well on their estates, much in the manner of the squires of England and the plantation owners of the ante-bellum American South. Another distinct class were the relatively few townspeople, descendants of foreigners who had settled in Russia, or of freed serfs and others with trades and skills that could be practiced in towns.

In that hierarchical society, Jews were a distinct class, differing in many ways from the people in whose midst they lived. Jews looked and dressed differently, and were considered outsiders although most of them had lived

in those lands for centuries. Among themselves Jews spoke Yiddish, a language derived from old German with admixtures of Hebrew and the languages of the people in whose midst they had lived. Jews were also literate, at least in Hebrew and Yiddish, at a time when most people were illiterate. Moreover, most Jews could converse in other languages as well – Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, or German. They were also accustomed to handling money, could keep accounts, and were descended from people with a love of learning and a long tradition of trading. As noted above, many Jews were skilled artisans and craftsmen who were vital to an agricultural economy – the smiths, millers, haulers, tanners, saddlers, and carpenters. Others were tailors, shoemakers, innkeepers, owners of general stores and taverns, distillers of alcoholic drinks, and traders in all sorts of goods.

The biggest difference, however, was religion. In Eastern Europe, where most of the people were Orthodox (in Russia), Roman Catholic (in Poland), or Greek Catholic (in Western Ukraine), Jews practiced a different religion, observed a different Sabbath and strict dietary laws, and kept to themselves socially. Moreover, many Christians, encouraged by their churches, saw Jews as “Christ killers.”

Few Jews had what we would call today "civil rights." Only in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia, and in the parts of Europe influenced by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic reforms, had Jews achieved emancipation and equal rights under law. By contrast, Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement were second-class citizens, and their only path to full equality was through cultural assimilation, intermarriage, or conversion to Christianity, a path that the vast majority of them resisted. Indeed, when the Jewish *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) made its way from Germany to Eastern Europe, there were fierce debates among Jews between those who were willing to give up some degree of their self-imposed ghetto life in exchange for secular education, equal rights, and full citizenship, and others who wished to preserve at all costs their self-segregated communities.

For those many reasons, Jews lived lives separate from the people whose towns and villages they shared. While Jews traded and did business with Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians, and performed as musicians at their weddings, they did not mix socially with their Christian neighbors. Due to their dietary restrictions, Jews could not dine in gentile homes. Jewish boys went to Jewish schools, and Jewish girls stayed home and learned the household arts. A Jew would never set foot in a church, and a gentile rarely



in a synagogue. Inter-marriage was also rare – although it became more common in the cities – but those Jews who inter-married were ostracized by the Jewish community.

Some Jews leased land from lords who had no desire to manage farms themselves or lacked the skills to do so and were only too pleased to lease it, for an annual fee, to those who had the necessary know-how. Other Jews, such as my father's father, Yoel Volf Cherkes in Bessarabia, were hired as stewards to manage large estates. Still others, as noted above, had leases from local lords to operate taverns and inns, distill and sell alcoholic drinks, harvest forests and operate sawmills, own small shops, and collect taxes from the peasants. And some were money lenders. In this sense, they were indeed the lord's Jews, performing useful tasks for him and protected by him from the exploited peasants. As the classic middle men in a stratified society, the security of Jews was often uncertain and dependent on the goodwill of the local lord or government official.

But despite their enterprise and special status in society, most Jews in Eastern Europe were very poor. To be sure, some of the grain traders and other businessmen did very well, and most Jews had a white tablecloth and silver candlesticks on their Sabbath dinner tables. But the land in Volhynia around Berezna and Dubrovitsa, whence come the Beggelmans and Karases, was not very rich, in contrast to the fertile "black earth" region of Ukraine further south which has been known as the breadbasket of Europe. Life in Berezna and Dubrovitsa was far from prosperous.

After the partitions of Poland, the status of the landed gentry, most of them Poles or Polonized Lithuanians, Belarusians, or Ukrainians, declined precipitously as many of them lost their estates, became impoverished, and moved to towns and cities where they became competitors to the Jews in their middle class occupations and professions. Similarly, many peasants after their emancipation began to strike out on their own, which put them in competition with Jews.

As a result, by the mid-nineteenth century society was no longer so stratified, as the impoverished gentry moved down, and the emancipated peasants moved up. Caught in the middle again were the Jews, and the resultant economic and social stresses rekindled the latent anti-Semitism which had long existed in Eastern Europe. The solution, for many Jews, was emigration.

But emigration from the Pale, the regions of tsarist Russia where Jews were required to live, had other reasons as well. The Pale, as noted above, was the vast territory that Russia had acquired in the three partitions of Poland. Prior to the partitions there were few Jews in Russia, but with the annexation of the Polish-Lithuanian territories, Russia acquired large numbers of Jews, and to prevent them from moving eastward into the heartland of Russia, it restricted them to residence in the Pale. Jews could not move east into Russia but they could move west into Germany, Austria, and Western Europe and beyond to America, a path that many of them took.

Emigration also increased after the wave of pogroms, mentioned earlier, at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 which sparked a period of social and political unrest. As the pogroms spread throughout the Pale, many Jews were massacred and life became dangerous, providing yet another impetus to emigration. Particularly shocking was the pogrom in Kishinev (pronounced Kish-in-yov), capital of the Russian province of Bessarabia, on Easter Sunday and Monday, 1903. Rampaging mobs wrecked and looted Jewish shops and homes, assaulted Jewish men, women, and children, and left forty-nine dead, more than 400 injured, and many more homeless. And this occurred in a city that was more than one-third Jewish. (Kishinev today is known as Chisinau and is the capital of the independent country of Moldova.)

Another factor in the rising anti-Semitism was the growth of nationalism. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, movements for independence from Russia, Germany, and Austria rose among the subject peoples of those empires, but especially among Poles and Ukrainians. Jews in those lands usually sided with the ruling power in the belief that “the devil you know is better than the one you do not know.” But because of their failure to support national movements, Jews, more than ever before, were seen as aliens by Poles and Ukrainians.

As a consequence, between 1881 and 1917, some two million Jews left Russia, most of them for the United States, and with good reason. The new tsar, Alexander III, encouraged pogroms and reduced the size of the Pale of Settlement, further limiting the area in which Jews could reside. “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” an anti-Semitic tract that falsely accused Jews of seeking to rule the world, was published in Russian newspapers in 1903, the same year as the bloody pogroms in Kishinev. And in 1911, in a

trial that captured world attention, Mendel Beilis, a Jew, was tried in Kiev on charges of ritually murdering a Christian child. Those events took place some forty years before the Holocaust, but the message was clear – Eastern Europe was no longer the safe place for Jews it had once been – and many left for countries that offered a better future for them and their children.

### 3

#### **BEREZNA AND THE BEGGELMANS**

Our Beggelmans come from Berezna, a small town in *Rovensky Uyezd* (Rovno County) of *Volynya guberniya* (Volyn Province), in tsarist Russian terms. Located on the Slukh River (pronounced with a throaty "kh"), it is thirty-four miles from Rovno, and its coordinates are 51:00 longitude and 26:45 latitude. Today, Berezna is in northern Ukraine, just south of its border with Belarus. It is also 150 miles west of Chernobyl, site of the 1986 nuclear disaster, and it must have been hard hit by the radioactive fallout, the most recent of the many disasters to have befallen that region. Today, Berezna's population is only a few thousand, and there are no Jews there.

Our Karases comes from Krupa (pronounced as kroo-pah), but known today as Krupovye, a village close by the town of Dubrovitsa (Dembrovitz in Yiddish). Krupovye's coordinates are 51:35 degrees North, 26:34 degrees East. Berezna and Dubrovitsa today are connected by a road (via Sarny), as they were when our ancestors lived there.

*Berezne* was the town's name in Yiddish but, like most names in that part of the world, there are several language versions. In Polish, it is known as *Berezna*, and, in Ukrainian, *Berezne*. Historically, as noted above, the shtetl was in Poland until 1793 when Volhynia passed to Russian rule in the Second Partition of Poland, the second stage in the breakup of the Polish state. After the reconstitution of Poland at the end of World War I, Berezna reverted to Poland where it remained until 1939 when it was annexed by the Soviet Union under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The local *purets* (lord) was a Pole named Molinski.<sup>4</sup> According to Bigel, relations between Jews and gentiles were normal, and there were no recorded pogroms or persecutions there in modern times.<sup>5</sup>

We do not know when the first Jews settled in Berezna but in 1648 the entire Jewish population of some fifty families was slaughtered during the Ukrainian War of Liberation when Ukrainians, under the leadership of Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, rose up against their Polish landowners. We do know, however, that Jews were living in Berezna in the eighteenth century but where they came from is not clear. Most likely they came from Poland proper where Jews had lived for centuries, or from western Ukraine which Poland had acquired and where it had encouraged Jews to settle. But in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Poland was in decline after disastrous invasions by Swedes, uprisings by Cossacks, and wars with Prussia. To escape the violence that accompanied those calamities, in which Jews were often innocent victims, many migrated.

Whatever their origins, our Beggelman and Karas ancestors were Ashkenazic Jews, presumably with distant origins in Germany and Western Europe, rather than Sephardic Jews who came from Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean.<sup>6</sup> They were also Israelites, the lowest of the three Hebrew castes – Cohens (priests), Levites, and Israelites – as was my father, Herman (Hymie) Richmond.

The business of Berezna was agriculture, and its Jews were active in the grain trade and small businesses related to agriculture. Jews themselves, however, were rarely farmers since, as noted above, they were not permitted to own land or farm in that part of Russia.

According to the Russian census of 1897, taken a few years before our ancestors emigrated, Berezna in that year had 4,059 inhabitants of whom 2,765 (68 percent) were Jews, and about 1,200 Orthodox Christians.<sup>7</sup> With such a large Jewish community, the town had its own Jewish hospital and old-age home. As of the last census, taken in 1939 when Berezna was part of Poland, its Jewish population was 2,800. Some of our ancestors who were slaughtered in the Holocaust may be buried in a mass grave located on *Pionirskaya ulitsa* (Pioneer Street), on land of the forestry college in *Gidropark* (Hydro Park).

The first Beggelman we know of was my great grandfather Aryeh Leib Beigel, born circa 1851, who had a blacksmith shop in Berezna just off *Koretskaya ulitsa*, (Koretsky Street), one of the main streets of the town. Aryeh Leib was orphaned as a child, and had to learn a craft in order to support himself and a family. He was tall, we are told, and with strong hands, so he chose to be a smith, an occupation in which he earned a reputation as an honest man. Blacksmiths in those days did much more than shoe horses. They were the ironworkers and mechanics who made and repaired metal tools used in agriculture, and many were skilled craftsmen who played an important role in the economy of the towns and surrounding agricultural region.

The family name “Beigel,” as our family was known in the Old Country, also requires some explanation. Although pronounced like the bagel we eat today (which indicates that some of our ancestors may have been bakers),

the name has different spellings due to its various transliterations into English. From the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, it becomes Beigel. From the Polish Latin alphabet, it becomes Bejgel (since the Polish “j” is pronounced like an “i” or “y.”) It is not clear when or why Beigel became Beggelman, but Dr. Bigel, in his book, *Mayn Shtetele Berezne*, refers to Aryeh Leib in some places as Beigel, and in one other place as Beigelman. Jews in Russia took family names only in the early 1800s, which may indicate that only one generation of our ancestors before Aryeh Leib bore the name Beigel. Previously, Jews were known by their patronymics, as most Europeans once were (nobles excepted), i.e. Yitzkhak ben Azar (Isaac, son of Asa). Witness the many Davidsons, Johnsons, Petersons, and other "sons" in our midst today.

In requiring Jews to take family names, the Russian government had two objectives – to facilitate tax collection and ensure conscription for military service. Prior to 1827, Jews were not allowed to serve in the Russian army, but in that year an edict of Tsar Nicholas I established a quota for Jewish young men to be conscripted each year into the army – ten draftees for every 1,000 Jews in the Russian population – and conscription was for twenty-five years, with ten years forgiven for good behavior. It was a long, hard, and brutal tour of duty, and, for Jewish soldiers, there was also great pressure to convert to Christianity. Hazings of new recruits were brutal, and Jews in uniform could not observe their religious practices nor find kosher food. In 1874, the tour of duty was reduced to six years, followed by nine in the reserves, but the brutality continued, and still continues today in the Russian army. It is understandable, therefore, that there were many draft dodgers in Jewish families.

The lack of family names before the 1840s makes it most unlikely that we will ever know who our ancestors were prior to those years. Imagine how many Leib ben Yitzkhaks there must have been in a town of close to 3,000 Jews. Moreover, records were few, and those that did exist may have been destroyed in the Holocaust. However, readers of this book who seek to trace back one or more generations in the Beigel family history should not despair. Records which do exist are being increasingly made available by the Russian and Polish governments, and it is now possible to do genealogical research in Russia, either directly or through people who do it for a price.

The Beigels were prolific, like most Jews in those years, and they multiplied. Jews married at a very young age, usually in their teens shortly

after reaching puberty, making a rapid transition from childhood to adulthood. There were no problems with teenagers in those days because there were no teenagers. Boys became men with their Bar Mitzvahs at thirteen, and you were either a child or an adult, with no intermediate stage. Marriages were arranged by parents, with the help of a *shadkhen* (matchmaker). When the young bride and groom came from different towns, they often saw each other only once before their wedding day.

Factors in the choice of a future son- or daughter-in-law included the wealth of the prospective inlaws and the size of the dowry they were offering, as well as the status and reputation of the family. Finances and marriage were often linked, and marriage between cousins was common. For wealthy parents, a marriage to a cousin would keep the dowry and inheritance within the family. And for poor Jews, marriage between cousins was the only alternative when there was no substantial dowry to be offered.

Health was another factor to be considered in marriage. In an age and place where tuberculosis and other serious illnesses were common, rosy cheeks and plump, round bodies were desirable and considered a sign of health and beauty. I recall my father relating how mothers would place their daughters near a hot stove so the blushing bride would indeed have rosy cheeks when the prospective suitor, accompanied by his parents and matchmaker, called for his introductory visit.

Scholarship in Jewish studies was another asset considered in marriage. Parents of a girl would often seek a young man who was learned in the Talmud, and parents of a boy would give preference to a girl whose father was a learned man.

Married men were exempt from the Russian army draft, which explains why so many Jewish boys were married at seventeen, the draft age. Wealthy Jews could also avoid the draft by paying a bribe, but for poor Jews the only sure exemption was marriage.

Boys and girls accepted the marital choices their parents made for them. In a patriarchal society, the word of the father was not to be questioned. Many such arranged marriages turned out to be good, but some were not. Love, when it came, happened after marriage, not before. Also after marriage came the shearing of the bride's hair. Married women were expected to wear wigs, and only single women showed their hair.

The father was the head of household but the role of the wife should not be underestimated. In many cases, she was the breadwinner, especially when

the husband was a scholar and spent his days at the *shul* debating fine points of the law with other scholars. Women often handled the family finances and, as is common in Russia even today, they were the strength that held a family and community together. Hence the reputation of the strong Jewish mother which endures to this day.

Marriages were expected to produce children, and in the absence of birth control, large families were common, which accounts, in part, for the growth of the Jewish population. But there were other factors which also supported a high population growth. Jews had higher standards of cleanliness which served to protect them from epidemics that ravaged the populace. Jews were required by Jewish law to wash their hands often, and religious rules governed what they could eat. They also had better diets, and better care for those who fell ill. When a spouse died, remarriage often followed soon thereafter.

After the death of Aryeh Leib Beigel's first wife (name not known), he married Rudya (pronounced *Roodya*) Akerman in 1876, and between his two wives fathered sixteen children! The names of only four sons and two daughters, are known to us: Yossef (Joseph), Avrum (Abram), Chaim Boruch (Hyman Boruch), Mikhel (Michael), Perl, and Yokheved, all by his second wife, Rudya Akerman. Their descendants live today in various places in the United States and Israel, so if you meet any Beigels or Beggelmans somewhere, ask about their family origins and first names in their family, and you may discover a distant cousin.

Joseph and Abram Beigel immigrated to the United States at the turn of the century and settled in Boston with their families. Mikhel immigrated to Palestine in 1926, and became active in the Maprai Labor Party. Chaim Boruch, who traded in wood, remained in Berezna and married Ester Miriam, daughter of Yakov Eliezer Gotlieb of Pinsk. One of their sons, Naftali, emigrated to Palestine in 1927 where he changed his family name to Ben-Baruch. Naftali's sister, Rudya, also immigrated to Palestine after marrying a man named Kuperman; they had three boys and one girl. Nasftali's twin died shortly after birth, and a brother, Benzion, drowned as a young boy.

Perl Beigel, born 1895 in Berezna, married (fnu) Waks and perished August 1942 in the Holocaust; she is listed in the Yad Vashem database on



information provided by her sister Yokheved Shtrum, born in Berezna to Leib and Rudya Beigel. Perl had two children, Liuba and Mania, both girls. Their fate is not known. Yokheved, married to (fnu) Shtrum, emigrated to Israel.

Naftali studied medicine, first in Belgium in 1935, and then in Switzerland in 1939 when World War II broke out, and where he had the good fortune to be stranded during the war. Since there were no medical schools in Palestine at the time, he completed his medical studies in Switzerland in 1941, and returned to Palestine in 1945 where he practiced medicine under the new family name, Ben-Baruch (Son of Baruch), and served as chairman of the Committee of Berezna Jews in Israel. My brother Edward and other members of our family met Naftali when he came to Boston for postgraduate medical study in the 1950s.

Naftali Ben-Baruch had four children--Gilad (Gili), Dalia, Ester (Esti), and Yael--who live today in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv, two of them in houses in the same block where their parents once lived and where they grew up.<sup>8</sup> All are professionals, have studied or worked in the United States, have families, and speak English well. My brother Ed and I visited them during our tour of Israel in 1994.

In Israel today there are also descendants of Michael Beigel but we have had no contact with them although I have a note about a Mikhel Beigel living at Antokolski 6, in Tel Aviv. We are also believed to be related to Beigel & Beigel Ltd., a big Israeli manufacturer of high quality pretzels, crackers, and other baked snacks.<sup>9</sup>

Another relative with whom we have lost contact is Lyuba Sapozhnikova, a nurse and former captain in the Soviet Army who immigrated to Israel after World War II, and who visited Boston in 1950.

Joseph Beigel, my grandfather, was married, at the age of seventeen to Chaya Sura (Ida Sarah) Karas of Krupa (Krupovye today), a small village close by Dubrovitsa. Joseph apparently went to live with his bride's family in Krupa, since my mother Rhoda (Rudya) was born there in 1898, as was her brother Philip (Pincus, known as **P**inny) in 1901.

Joseph's brother Abram married Sarah Baseman of Dubrovitsa in 1901 but they went to live in Berezna, probably because Abram was working in his father's smithy shop, whereas Joseph who, as a scholar, had no gainful employment, was sent to live with his bride's family.

## KRUPA AND THE KARAS FAMILY

Krupa (Krupovye in Ukrainian), the Volhynian village whence comes the Karas family, lies in the Goryn (Horyn) River valley, three miles west of the town of Dubrovitsa (written in Polish as Dubrowica, but pronounced in Yiddish as Dembrovitz). Whatever the pronunciation, the town of Dubrovitsa is south of the Pripet Marshes, twenty miles north of Sarny, which is north of the city of Rovno, and 185 miles WNW of Kiev. On maps, Dubrovitsa can be found most easily on the Goryn River (Horyn in Ukrainian) near its confluence with the Slukh River (Slucz, in Polish), about thirty-five miles south of today's Belarus-Ukraine border. Both Dubrovitsa and Berezna may be found on most detailed maps of Ukraine and the western parts of Russia and Belarus.<sup>10</sup> According to the Russian census of 1897, the population of Dubrovitsa in that year was 6,007, of which 2,868 [48%] were Jews.

Volhynia, as noted above, has at times been part of Poland, Russia, or Ukraine, and the land around Dubrovitsa had a mixed ethnicity. According to my mother, there were nearby villages inhabited solely by Ukrainians or Poles. The earliest known Jewish community in Dubrovitsa dates from the sixteenth century.

The first Karas we know of is Yitskhak (Isaac) Karas, born circa 1830 in Krupa. About 1850, Yitskhak married Mindel (family name not known), born circa 1834, who bore five children: Dudyo (born 1853), Yosef (born 1855), Azar (born 1857), Nekhama (born 1864), and Leib (born 1866).<sup>11</sup>

My grandmother, Chaya Sura (Ida Sarah), was the daughter of Azar (Asa) Karas and Sima. Sima (born 1860) was only thirteen and still playing with dolls, we are told, when she married Azar, and that union produced seven children, four of whom came to the United States – Chaya Sura (Ida Sarah), Fagel (Fannie), Myer, and Ysomor. Azar and Sima lived to a ripe old age, and we have a wonderful photograph of Sima to prove it for her.<sup>12</sup> However, they both died in 1942 in Sarny, the nearest large town where Jews, presumably including many Karases, were assembled in a ghetto before being killed by Germans in what they called an *Aktion*, a mass execution.

Fannie married Yitzkhak Eliyahu (Isaac Elia) Karas, her first cousin and a son of Yosef and Tova; Meyer married Sarah, also a first cousin. Marriage

between cousins, as noted above, was common in small Jewish villages where choice and doweries were limited.

My mother told an amusing story about Fannie Karas who, as a very pretty girl, attracted the attention of the son of the Dubrovitsa *purets* (local lord), presumably a Plater. My mother's grandfather, Azar, had to ask the lord to keep his son away from Fannie. Had he not done so, some of the Karases today might be Polish aristocrats.

Another story is told by Fannie Karas who spent the World War I years in Krupa which was then in Russian territory. When the Germans drove the Russians out of Volhynia, German officers were billeted in Jewish homes. The residents, however, were not evicted, there was no pillaging or rape, and the German officers behaved as gentlemen. The happiest day for the Jews of Krupa, we are told, was when the Germans came; the saddest day was when the Russians retook the village. Twenty-five years later, it was just the opposite.

We also have Karas cousins in Israel. Some are children of Berish and Hyka Karas. Berish was the son of Leib Karas. Yitzkhak and Mindel were also parents of Dudyo who was the grandfather of Azar and Shmuel, our other Israeli cousins, and the great grandfather of Burton Huhem, husband of Jacqueline Huhem. Yitzchak and Mindel's only daughter was Nechama whose children and grandchildren all perished in the Holocaust.

We do not know much about life in Krupa because immigrants seldom talked about how they lived in the Old Country. But I recall my mother telling us that she lived in a small house with a thatched roof and an earthen floor, with no electricity or plumbing, and an outhouse in the back. That was how most people lived in Russia and Eastern Europe at the time, and in many parts of the United States as well, except for the thatched roof.

Krupa, a one-street village of some five hundred people, had eight Jewish houses. Most of the Jews were Karases and related to each other through marriage. However, there must have been a good matchmaker in the region because, as noted above, a Beigel boy from Berezna married a Karas girl from Krupa, and another Beigel boy married a girl from Dubrovitsa although the two towns are forty-five miles apart. The common link appears to be metal working, in both the Karas and Beigel families. And for those who wonder about the meaning of Karas, in Slavic languages it is the word for "carp," the fish. Alternate spellings of Karas, a not uncommon name, are Karass, Karash, and Karasek or Karasik (diminutive forms).

Jews in such villages and towns were shopkeepers, smiths, saddlers, carpenters, and tailors, or worked for the local landowner managing his estate or other property. Some Jews owned taverns and inns, a common Jewish occupation in historic Poland, or distilled and sold vodka and other spirits under license from the local lord. Some were milkmen, as was Tevye of "Fiddler on the Roof" fame, which depicts, not inaccurately, Jewish life in a village in the Pale of Settlement. Others, including some of the Karas women, distilled alcoholic spirits and sold them illegally. We can, therefore, rightly claim to be descended from bootleggers as well as draft dodgers. Other Karases baked bread and brewed beer, and Leo Karas tells us that his grandfather, Yosef Karas, was an experienced smith who made and repaired metal tools. Yosef's son, Elia Karas was also an experienced smith, and his wife Fannie (Fagel) baked and brewed products she sold to other Jews and local peasants. Myer Karas worked on a farm until he became subject to the draft and immigrated to America.

How long the Karases had lived in Krupovye is not known, but we do know something about the history of Jews in nearby Dubrovitsa, on land belonging to a Polish noble family named Plater. Presumably, the Platers also owned Krupa and the land surrounding it. (See letter by Count Plater of Cracow in Appendix A.)

## 5

### DUBROVITSA AND THE PLATERS

The Platers were Polish aristocrats who owned land throughout Volhynia as well as near the cities of Vilna and Cracow; and everywhere on their lands lived Jews. But the Platers are reported to have been particularly fond of the Jews of Dubrovitsa, with whom the family had been associated for some three hundred years.<sup>13</sup>

Dubrovitsa was founded in the twelfth century, and Jews are believed to have lived there since the sixteenth century. A cemetery, established in the seventeenth century, is located at Shevchenko Street 60, now the site of a hospital, and it is likely that many of our ancestors are buried there since there was probably no Jewish cemetery in Krupa. But the Dubrovitsa cemetery was vandalized during World War II, all the headstones have disappeared, and it has not been maintained. In 1939, the Jewish population, according to a Polish census, was 2,536.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, a series of Cossack and peasant rebellions swept through Poland and were ruthlessly suppressed by the Poles. But in 1648, the Ukrainians rose up again under Cossack leader Bogdan Khmelnitsky, in what has come to be known as the Ukrainian War of Liberation. The whole region was beset by violence, entire communities were slaughtered, and the main victims were Poles and Jews.<sup>14</sup>

Dubrovitsa, however, was able to resist the Ukrainian assault because the Jews there joined with Poles, under leadership of the Plater family, in defending a Jesuit monastery at the edge of the town, from which they successfully engaged the Ukrainians and routed them. Again, almost 200 years later, in the Polish uprising of 1830 against the Russian tsar, Jews in Dubrovitsa fought with the Platers against the Russians. When that uprising was put down, the Platers fled to Italy, and after their departure the condition of Jews in the town deteriorated. However, in the Polish uprising of 1863, the Platers declared their loyalty to the tsar and were given back their lands and economic rights. Recalling the assistance given them by Jews in the past, the Plater family took steps to improve the status of the Jews of Dubrovitsa.<sup>15</sup>

## 6

### BEIGEL OR BEGGELMAN?

Beigel became Beggelman after arrival in the United States. Why the name was changed we do not know but perhaps it was because they did not want to be identified with bakery bagels (as Beigel is pronounced). In any event, you may encounter people whose names are spelled Bejgel or Beigel (the "j" and "i" being interchangeable in some Slavic languages).

Many Beggelmans can be found in the United States and Israel although the name, as indicated above, may be spelled differently, as Beggelman, Beigelman, or just plain Beigel, Bejgel, or Begel. Just pick up a local phone book on your next trip out of town. Here are a few Beggelmans I have found from recent readings of the *New York Times*.

Mark D. Beggelman was formerly Chairman and CEO of Office Depot. Mitchell C. Begelman is a prominent astrophysicist in Boulder, Colorado. The late Gladys Largever Begelman wrote a book, *New York on a Thousand Dollars a Day Before Lunch* (Collier, 1981). David Begel was spokesman for New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew. The Bagelman Sisters (Myrna and Claire), later known as the Barry Sisters, were a popular singing duo in New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s when they made several Yiddish- and English-language recordings that are still available today. Igor Beggelman, a Russian emigre, is a prize-winning clarinetist in New York. Henry Baigelman, a Polish Jew from Lodz, survived the concentration camps and formed a jazz band, "The Happy Boys," that toured Displaced Person camps in Europe after World War II; he later immigrated to the United States where he was a success in real estate. And in Israel today, one of our Beigel relatives, as befits his name, is said to be the largest bagel baker in the country.

But the best known of all Beggelmans, although not of the best reputation, was our cousin David Begelman (1921-1994), one of Hollywood's major producers for more than three decades. David, at various times, headed Columbia Pictures, MGM, and United Artists, and produced such successful movies as "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," "Kramer vs. Kramer," and "Poltergeist." While heading Columbia in 1977, David was charged with embezzling company funds. He pleaded "no contest" and was fined \$5,000 but was allowed to keep his post for another year. Subsequently, he became

chairman and chief executive officer of United Artists before resigning under pressure in 1982. David next took over the leadership of MGM before founding his own production company, Gladden Entertainment, which filed for bankruptcy in 1994. Despondent over his financial difficulties, he was found dead in a Hollywood hotel room on August 8, 1995, at the age of seventy-three, with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. David lived in Beverly Hills and was survived by his wife of five years, Annabelle, and an adult daughter, Leslie, from his first marriage. (We have no information on Leslie's whereabouts.) Begelman's indiscretions are documented in a book, *Indecent Exposures*, by David McClintick (Dell, 1982). He was also the subject of an article in *Vanity Fair* (November 1995).

I have not been able to learn how we are related to David Begelman. He may be a son or grandson of a sibling of Joseph and Abram, one of the many siblings whose names we do not know. But David once called on my Aunt Nettie when he was in Boston, and in photos that I have seen of him he looks very much like my uncles Phil and Harry.

## THE BOSTON BEGGELMANS

Abram (Avrum) Beggelman (born circa 1879) came to the United States first, arriving in Boston on the SS *Ultonia* from Liverpool on August 8, 1903, at the age of 24 and with only nine dollars in his pocket. Two years later, his wife Sarah arrived with their son Max. In the ship's manifest, Abram's occupation is listed as "smith."

Next came Joseph Beggelman (born circa 1877), Abram's brother and my grandfather, and he came to the United States twice. The first time, he arrived in Boston alone on July 1, 1905, aboard the SS *Cymric* from Liverpool, to join an uncle, Morris Feingold, residing at 180 Chelsea Street, East Boston.<sup>16</sup> In the ship's manifest, his occupation is listed as "teacher" (presumably a *melamed*). He was twenty-seven and had only one dollar in his pocket. After assessing the situation, a common practice in those years, he returned to Russia, and two years later, in 1907, he came again, this time with his wife Chaya Sura (Ida Sarah), and two young children, my mother Rhoda (Rudya) and her young brother Philip whom we later called Uncle Pinny (a nickname from Pinchas).

When Joseph and his family traveled to America, their itinerary, according to my mother, took them first to Sarny, then to Rovno, and on to Vienna. Since there was no Poland at that time, the border they had to cross was between Russia and Austria-Hungary. Prior to 1919, that border was located to the east of Lvov (Lemberg in German, Lviv in Ukrainian, Lwów in Polish) which separated the Russian province of Volhynia from the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia.

In those years, you paid an agent to get you to America, and he took care of everything, from bribing the Russian guards to get you across the border, to purchasing your rail and steamship tickets. As my mother told the story, they approached the border in the middle of the night and waited until the Russian soldier who had been bribed came on duty and gave the all clear signal. Once in Austria, they traveled to Vienna and from there to a port city (name of city and ship not known), and on to Boston.

Their booking was in steerage class, as most poor immigrants traveled in those years, carrying with them their feather bedding and a supply of good Russian rye bread to sustain them on the long voyage. According to my



mother, they still had some of that bread when they landed in the United States. Immigration records, now being computerized, may soon be able to tell us exactly where and when they landed.

The Beggelman brothers settled with their families in East Boston, close by today's Logan Airport, which in those years had a large community of Jewish immigrants, along with Yankees, Irish, and later Italians, and now Hispanics. Joseph and his growing family lived in a house at 170 Chelsea Street. There was, of course, no airport in those years, and where Logan Airport now stands there was a bay with several small islands where my mother and her friends used to go rowing on Sunday afternoons. One of those islands was Wood Island, and the filled-in land surrounding it is today a park and a stop on the Boston T's Blue Line to Revere.

Joseph and Ida Sarah had ten children, nine of whom survived.<sup>17</sup> Rhoda, the eldest, and Philip, as noted above, were born in Russia. Next, in Boston, came Annie (Hinda), Nettie (Nekhamka), Arthur (Itzky), Harry (Herschl), Rose (Rayzl), Bessie, and Minnie (Mindel) who later changed her name to Wilhelmina (Willie). Ida Sarah, the matriarch of the family, died in 1950, at age seventy-four, in an apartment on 1763 Beacon Street, Brookline, in a beautiful building owned by her daughter Willie and her doctor husband, Samuel "Dutchy" Keiner. It was a far cry from the little thatched-roof house in which she was born in the village of Krupa.

Rhoda married Hymie (Chaim Dovid) Cherkes, later known as Herman D. Richmond, about whom more will be told in the following chapters.

Philip went into the retail shoe business in Boston and later studied law at Northeastern University at night. He soon headed his own business, the Solby Bayes Shoe Company, located for many years on Tremont Street, opposite the Park Street Church, and later, when he expanded and needed more space, in a building he bought on Winter Street, halfway down from Tremont on the north side of the street.

Phil married an English-born Jewish woman, Katy Beck. Hinda worked as a bookkeeper for Karas & Karas Glass Co. until she married Carl Ehmann, a Jewish refugee from Bamberg, Germany, where his father had a grain business specializing in the export of hops. Carl later worked as a salesman for Karas & Karas Glass Co. Nettie, who first worked for Karas & Karas and then for her brother Phil, married Abraham Zides of Roxbury who later worked as a salesman at Solby Bayes. Arthur, who also studied law at Northeastern at night, worked first as a shipping clerk for a paint company

on Boston's Atlantic Avenue, practiced law for a while, and then went into his brother Phil's shoe business. Arthur married Rose Feldman. Harry, who also worked as a shoe salesman for Phil, after a failed marriage to (fnu) Goff, married Louise Hamburger. Rose married Morton Ladge of Chelsea, a wine salesman who later founded Hermetite, an electronics firm, with his brother Morris, an electrical engineer and MIT graduate. Bessie married Michael (Mike) Kurtis (Kertesz, in Hungarian), of Quincy. Mike had played football at Boston University, worked as a physical education teacher after graduation, and then as a salesman for Uncle Phil, and later for Morton Ladge at Hermetite. As you can see, family was important.

Aunt Willie also worked for Phil, selling hosiery and running the cash register until she married Samuel S. "Dutchy" Keiner, a physician from New York City. Willie and Dutchy lived first at 1203 Beacon Street in Brookline where he also had his practice. The building is adjacent to the Hampton Court complex at Beacon and St. Paul Streets. They later bought and lived in the big yellow brick building at 1763 Beacon Street, at the corner of Dean Road in Brookline. Willie used to relate how, from the window of her living room, she would see the young Leonard Bernstein waiting for a streetcar in the morning to take him to Symphony Hall. Dutchy had earlier published a book, *Doctor, Don't Let Me Die* (Boston: The Meador Press, 1947), which supported socialized medicine. After his death (by suicide) in 1954, Willie married Maynard Sockol, a salesman, and moved with him to Florida.

So much for "who married whom." In pages that follow, I will relate some vignettes of these uncles and aunts who were so much a part of my youth.

## THE KARAS CLAN IN BOSTON

After the immigration of Joseph Beggelman and his Karas wife, Ida Sarah, more Karases came from Krupa. Myer Karas arrived in New York on April 12, 1913, and soon thereafter joined his sister Ida Sarah in Boston. As a boy in Krupa, Myer had been sent away to work on a farm and returned home once a week for the Sabbath. In later life, he always had a garden which he tended. When Russian army recruiters came to Krupa looking for him, Myer quickly departed for the United States. In New York, before proceeding to Boston, he looked up his first cousin Sarah who was living with her cousins, the Weinstains (later Winston), in Brooklyn. Myer and Sarah married in 1919 and settled in an apartment in Beachmont, just north of Boston.

Next came Elia Karas (born July or August 1884) who arrived in New York on March 19, 1912, but without his wife Fannie (born 1883), also a first cousin, and their son David (Dave). Their first born, a girl named Mindel, died of smallpox in Russia at age two. Fannie also contracted smallpox at the same time but recovered. Fannie and Dave were prevented by World War I from joining Elia but in 1920 the family was reunited in Boston. Dave was eleven when he arrived, and he had his Bar Mitzvah on August 12, 1923, the day that I was born.

Elia worked at odd jobs initially until Myer got him a job at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy, painting ships during World War I. That job, however, lasted only one day. After spending the morning of his first day painting the hull of a warship from a high staging, Elia was approached by a fellow worker during lunch hour who told him that if he continued to work at such a fast pace there was a good chance that he would fall from the staging. Elia got the message, quit the job after lunch, and took another job stuffing mattresses in a factory, but he never slowed his work ethic.

Ysomor, a brother of Myer, Ida Sarah, and Fannie, remained in Krupa and was unable to join them in the United States when, in 1924, the United States closed its borders to unrestricted immigration. But Ysomor eventually got to Cuba where he lived for many years before immigrating to the United States in the early 1940s with the help of his American siblings. "Somor," as he was known in Boston, worked at Karas and Karas Glass Co. until he had a falling out with Elia, after which he worked at a Stop and Shop warehouse.

He never married and left no descendants. A quiet, taciturn man, he had one distinguishing feature, a large red birthmark which completely covered one of his cheeks. He did, however, manage to get out of Krupa, avoid the Holocaust, and end up with his siblings as a survivor in America. Ysomor died of kidney cancer in 1956 at age fifty-six. He is buried in the Boylston Lodge Cemetery, West Roxbury, along with Myer and Sarah Karas.

Behind the founding of Karas & Karas Glass Co. lies another tale. After World War I, my grandfather, Joseph Beggelman, suggested to Elia and Myer that they could earn money by getting some window glass and going through the streets of East Boston until they saw a broken window, and then knocking on the door of the house and offering to replace the broken pane. A big storm had swept through the area, and there were many broken windows. Accordingly, they hired a horse and wagon, picked up discarded wood framed windows, deglazed the sashes, put the various pieces of glass in a box, tied the boxes to their backs, and proceeded through the streets of East Boston calling out that they had come to repair broken windows.

That very day, Elia got his first lesson in doing business. One of his first customers was a woman who lived on a fourth floor. She called down that she had a broken window, and Elia trudged up the stairs, replaced the glass, and asked 25 cents for the job. The woman calmly remarked that she had told him she needed some glass replaced but had not said she could pay for the work. Elia walked out of her flat rather upset but soon realized that the woman had given him a lesson in finance which would help him through the rest of his business years – the need for an estimate and a firm commitment before the work begins.

From such small beginnings a big business was built, but not without hard work and economies in life style. Elia Karas, for example, used to tell us how he had only one suit during his first years in the United States, and it was reversible. On work days he would wear the suit on one side, and on the Sabbath he would turn it inside out and wear it on the other side.

## 9

### BEACHMONT

My parents, Hymie and Rhoda Richmond, after their marriage, lived for a short time in East Boston, and then in Orient Heights just north of East Boston. They next moved to Beachmont, a suburb of Revere at a stop on what was then called the Boston-Lynn Narrow Gauge Railway, but today is a station on the Blue Line of the Boston "T," the fourth stop after the airport. Beachmont is where the story of my generation of Richmonds and Karases begins. It was the starting point for us, as children of immigrants, into the great American middle class.

The attractions of Beachmont these days are difficult to discern. Visitors these days will find it rather rundown, and youngsters may ask their elders, "Did you really live here, in this dump?" Yes, we did live there and enjoyed it without knowing that it was a dump. In those years, and well into the 1930s and beyond, Beachmont was a small Jewish community inhabited mostly by working people who needed to rent cheaply, commute to Boston daily, and wanted to live near the ocean and a beautiful public beach.

The commute to Boston was easy, even in those days. It was only a few minutes walk to the Beachmont Station of the Narrow-Gauge Railway, and from there a matter of minutes to the north side of Boston's Inner Harbor, an area of East Boston called Maverick, where passengers transferred to a ferry that crossed the harbor to Rowe's Wharf in downtown Boston. I don't know what the train ticket cost but the price of a one-way passage on the ferry was one cent. That short commute made Beachmont very close to Boston's downtown clothing district, centered around Kneeland Street in those years, where my father worked as a clothing cutter.

There was, of course, a "mont" in Beachmont, a hill overlooking the ocean and the beach, and on that hill gentiles and a few better-off Jewish families owned houses. But it was on the low land at the foot of the hill, close by the ocean, where the poorer Jews lived. I am reminded here that Jews in Europe traditionally lived in the lower and less healthy parts of cities where land was cheaper but susceptible to flooding and disease. Beachmont continued in that tradition, with flooding in the fall and swarms of mosquitoes in the summer. The Jewish section consisted of only a few blocks of nondescript houses, a small brick synagogue, B'nai Israel, which

still stands at the corner of Atlantic and Wave Avenues, a few stores, and for sun-loving Russian Jews, easy access to Revere Beach, only a stone's throw away.

Revere Beach today is a far cry from its heyday before the 1929 stock market crash. In those years, it was a smaller version of New Jersey's Atlantic City. The mile-long, fine, white-sand beach, protected by a breakwater, is still there and well cared for, but gone are the amusements, the rides, the fast food stands, and the hotels and rooming houses on the west side of the Boulevard, as it is still called, the road that stretches along the length of the beach.

The shopping center was on Shirley Avenue, now at the Revere Beach "T" stop, which was full of Jewish shops selling all kinds of food, and teeming with people, similar to what you see in old photos of the Lower East Side in Manhattan. I attended my first movie show there with my mother one afternoon, at age three or four, and I still remember the film, "Beau Geste," about the French Foreign Legion in North Africa. It was a silent film, with subtitles and a pianist playing live music from the pit of the orchestra. And I had my first restaurant dinner, at Singer's, with my family one Sunday afternoon.

Revere in those days was also known as a center of racketeers and gangsters, most of them Italians and Jews. One summer, a Jewish racketeer named Mickey "Mugsy" Cohen was shot and killed as he sat in the living room of his home just a few houses up the street on Beachmont's Endicott Avenue where my family lived that summer. They held a funeral service for him outside the B'nai Israel synagogue but would not let his coffin into the building because he had married an Irish Catholic woman.

At the south end of the beach a long pier extended out into the ocean, and at the end of the pier there was a building that in better times had been a dance hall. A seaplane anchored there would take passengers for a flight of a few minutes over the beach for only two dollars. But few had two dollars to spend on airplane rides in those days.

On the Boulevard, where it begins at the traffic rotary, was the Spanish Gables, a large dance hall built in the Spanish style, where nightly dances were held for a largely gentile clientele. On Saturday nights, my father liked to sit on a bench across from the hall and listen to the music of the dance band. On those summer nights, I often sat with him and got to know all the hit songs of the day as I watched with interest the dressed up groups of

young men and women entering the hall to dance and get acquainted, in preparation for whatever else followed. For a little boy of eight or nine it was an introduction to the mysteries of the adult world. Also on those evenings, we would stop at a bar for a glass of beer, only ten cents in those days. My father would sit at the bar and sip his beer, and I would stand below him with my head well below the top of the bar. Now and then, he would pass the glass down to me for a sip. I was only eight or nine but I liked beer, and have been drinking it ever since.

Next on the Boulevard came a couple of wooden beach hotels, and then a large string of what were called “the amusements”—roller coasters, fun houses, dodgems (bumper cars), merry-go-rounds (carousels), side shows, and various games, all with an admission price of ten cents. Interspersed among the amusements were assorted fast food stands selling hot dogs, hamburgers, Jewish sandwiches, Chinese “chop suey,” taffy apples, and frozen custard, similar to what you would find today in the food courts of suburban shopping malls. Food was cheap in those days -- an ice-cream cone was only a nickel, and a kosher hot dog a dime. Kosher hot dogs were okay for Jewish boys and girls but the other hot dogs, and hamburgers too, were *verboten* because, as my father used to tell me, you never knew what they put in them.

At the mid-point of the beach, at the intersection of Shirley Avenue and the Boulevard, a large stone building housed a movie theater, appropriately named “The Boulevard,” where we kids would go for Saturday matinees when rain washed out our day on the beach. For ten cents we saw two features, a newsreel, a cartoon, a comedy, and a “serial” (an adventure story with installments shown each Saturday). It was an exciting place to go on a Saturday afternoon, accompanied, as Gilbert and Sullivan put it, by “my sister, my cousins, and my aunts.”

Across from the theater on the Boulevard was a bandstand, which still stands, where concerts were held on Sunday afternoons. There, I heard my first live band music, and I recall those concerts vividly. For the largely Jewish audience, the band’s lead trumpeter would often render a popular solo, “Yossel, Yossel” (Joseph, Joseph), which my father very much appreciated. It later became a popular song, “Oh Joseph, Joseph, Won’t You Make Your Mind Up.”

After we moved to Roxbury, “going to the beach” was something we did every July and August, when we were children, to escape the heat and

humidity of the city, and savor the sun and surf. We would rent a small apartment in Beachmont, from which my father would commute daily to his work in Boston. And every day, seven days a week, except for rainy or overcast days, my mother and her three children would go to the beach and bake in the sun from ten in the morning to about four in the afternoon. No one in those days knew about the hazards of skin cancer but we were well aware of the dangers of sunburn. Monitored by our mother, we gradually acclimated ourselves to the sun, starting with a few hours each day and protected by shirts until we were tanned enough to withstand the summer sun and its rays reflected from the water and white sand.

Yet, even with such precautions we often got badly burned, with painful red skin and occasional blisters followed by peeling of the dead skin. What apparently protected us was that the Beggelmans and Karases are all rather dark complected and can tolerate the sun better than fair-skinned people.

Bathing suits in those days were very modest. Boys were allowed to wear only shorts but adults had to keep covered. Even men had to wear bathing suits with tops, and police patrolled the beach to enforce that Victorian standard. But as long as you kept your top and bottom covered there were no limits. My sister Minnie (later Midge) took advantage of that freedom by wearing the first bikini on Revere Beach. It was self-made and showed off her ample top and bottom. But because she feared that it might burst a seam, she just sat on the beach demurely while the boys came from all around to ogle.

Every morning my mother would pack a lunch or, on the way to the beach, we would stop at the local bakery for a loaf of rye bread, and at the butcher shop for some salami and free mustard for sandwiches. And then, off to the beach where we would sit with all the Beggelmans and Karases and soak up the sun and surf. For kids it was a delight. With the sand, we built sand castles and forts which defied, for a while, the incoming tides. We made the forts by scooping up sand in pails for the walls, and then stood inside, piling up more sand as the incoming waves eroded the "levees" we had built. We frolicked in the water, learned to swim at an early age, and floated on the waves with our inflated automobile inner tubes. I learned to swim there at the age of four.

High tides meant big waves for swimming and surfing. No one knew about surfboards in those days but we would swim out into the ocean, stretch out our bodies like a surfboard, and ride in on the waves. Low tides were



also fun. The water receded about 100 yards and we would explore the “flats” for all kinds of sea life--starfish, clams, crabs, and many types of seaweed.

On one of those explorations I saved my brother Ed from drowning. We were wading at low tide when I noticed Ed floundering around trying to keep his head above water. He had stepped into a hole, and I, being a head taller at the time, was able to pull him out.

In the late 1930s, Jewish beachgoers began to abandon Revere for Nantasket, a narrow strip of land south of Quincy that jutted out into the ocean. Nantasket had a marvelous white-sand beach, terrific surf, and plenty of big summer houses that could be rented by the month or season. The Beggelman and Karas families began to go to Nantasket, but when gas rationing was imposed during World War II, the Elia Karas family summered in Winthrop, a small town south of Beachmont with a rocky shoreline and refreshing sea breezes. As you land at Logan Airport from the east, Winthrop is on your right on a low hill just across a narrow stretch of water. For Leo Karas the summer move to Winthrop was fortuitous because it was there that he met Barbara, his future wife. As Leo tells us, they hardly spoke to each other for the first four years, but after he returned from army service in Korea in 1948, they began to see each other more often.

How to explain this Jewish worship of the sun? In later years I learned that it is a Russian tradition brought by our parents from the Old World. Russians, as well as Scandinavians and other North Europeans, are sun worshipers. Plagued by long, cold, and dark winters, Russians relish the few months of sun each summer, and head for the local rivers or beaches of the Baltic and Black Seas. The same “urge to the south” showed itself in later years when Jews thronged to Miami and other beaches of South Florida. No one knew then about the benefits of Vitamin D which helps calcium absorption but North Europeans all knew that exposure to the sun was good for your health.

Back to Beachmont where the newlyweds, Hymie and Rhoda Richmond, and Myer and Sarah Karas, took apartments in a three-decker frame house at 6 State Road, a short street running from the traffic rotary at the south end of the Boulevard to the center of Beachmont and today’s T station. The building, which still stands, is the first house south of the traffic rotary. In that building, on the second floor, my sister Midge and I, as well as our cousin Ann Karas (later Castleman), spent our early years.

With growing families, the small apartments soon became rather crowded, and the Richmond and Karas families moved around the corner to Wave Avenue where Myer and Elia Karas had bought frame duplex three-deckers at 15 and 19 Wave Avenue, each with six apartments. The Elia Karas family lived on the second floor of number 19, and the Myer Karas family on the second floor of number 15. The Richmonds rented the third floor of number 19 where they lived when my brother Ed was born in 1926. For Ed's birth, my father's sister, our Aunt Polly (Polina, in Russian), came from New York to take care of Midge and me when my mother went to the hospital to give birth. My earliest recollection from childhood is leaning out over the porch of our apartment, held by Aunt Polly, to wave goodbye to my mother as she walked down Wave Avenue, all alone, to take the train to the Strong Hospital in East Boston, a small private "lying-in clinic" run by a Dr. Strong, where Midge, Ed, and I were born.

The Elia Karas family, while still living in East Boston, would spend the summers in Beachmont where, on August 15, 1928, Leo Karas was born in the White Elephant house on Jones Road, corner of Atlantic Avenue, a big, white brick house that still stands. Prior to the summer of 1929, Leo's family moved to 19 Wave Avenue.

Leo's mother, Fanny, loved the ocean and made sure that her family spent summers near water. But Elia rarely went to the beach, and when he did, he was always protected by an umbrella. Leo's first memory of swimming in the ocean was when he was three or four, and his mother was bouncing him on her knees in the chilly waters of Revere Beach.

That cold water had a lasting effect on Leo. For many years he was a member of the "L" Street Brownies and dunked himself in the 28 to 39 degree winter waters of Boston Harbor. In the summer, he swam in the more comfortable 55-60 degree waters of the Atlantic Ocean at Ogunquit Beach, Maine.

## ROXBURY AND MATTAPAN

We left Beachmont in 1927 when my sister Midge was seven, I four, and Ed one, for our move to Roxbury. The move was made for several reasons. In Beachmont, we lived one short block from the ocean, and winters there were cold and damp. I recall sitting before the kitchen stove in the mornings, wrapped in a blanket to keep warm. Second, we kids were constantly coming down with colds and upper respiratory infections which were attributed to the damp weather. Third, Beachmont was rather run down.

Roxbury, by contrast, was a very nice Jewish neighborhood in those days, close by Franklin Park, and the move from Beachmont was a step up for us. Also a step up for the Karases was their move to Mattapan a few years later – Myer’s family in 1934, and Elia’s in 1935 -- when they bought newly built brick houses at the top of Tennis Road off Blue Hill Avenue.

At about the same time, my grandmother’s family also made the move from East Boston to Roxbury, and lived for a while on the first floor of a big frame house at 227 Harold Street where we Richmonds lived on the third floor. The building has since burned down but it was one house down from the corner of Harold and Homestead Streets, and directly across from the old Williams School where Ed and I attended grades one and two. Thus, the Beggelmans and Karases moved from one part of Greater Boston to another but they still remained within visiting distance. And they did visit!

On Sundays, it was not unusual for “family” to visit without an invitation or even advance notice, especially since we all did not have telephones in those years. Families also helped each other in times of need and provided employment in an age when nepotism was not a bad word. Parents had difficulty "letting go" of their children, and children, even after they married, did not stray far from the home hearth. It was unheard of for anyone to leave the Boston area, military service excepted, and I was the first one in the family to do so when, in 1947, I left for Germany and a job with U.S. Military Government which led to a 30-year career in the Foreign Service.

My grandmother Ida Sarah, accustomed to cooking and baking for her big brood, continued to do so after many of her children had married and left home. One of my duties as a boy in Roxbury was to walk, with my sister Midge and brother Ed, to grandmother's apartment every Friday afternoon

and pick up a challah, a babka cake, some strudel, and other goodies she had baked. Among our favorites were the *hamantashen*, the three-cornered poppyseed or prune pastries; *mohnelach*, poppy seeds boiled in honey and allowed to harden; and *korzhiky*, very hard poppyseed cookies. It was always a treat because everything she baked was better than what you could buy in a bakery. Ed and I particularly liked the sugar-coated top of the *babka* cake, and the yellow raisins inside. We would burrow out the raisins with our fingers, and the cake looked like Swiss cheese in the morning. Ed once ate the entire sugar and cinnamon coated top of a cake at one sitting while our mother was not looking.

Here I am reminded of a story about my grandmother's cookies that illustrates the Russian origins of our family. When I was posted to Poland (1958-1961), I searched for three years in vain for the goodies I recalled from grandmother's kitchen. But when I later served in Moscow, I found the same babka cake and korzhiky cookies that she used to bake.

Family members also helped each other when they needed work. My Uncle Phil, at various times, employed in his shoe business his wife Katy and siblings Arthur, Harry, Nettie, Rose, Bessie, and Willie, as well as his brothers-in-law Mike Kurtis and Abe Zides. My mother also worked there in the late 1940s after her divorce, when Phil, to help financially, gave her part-time work addressing cards and envelopes for his mail-order business. I had my first full-time job at Solby Bayes in 1939, the summer after I graduated from high school, and I also worked there on Saturdays during my first two years of college. My brother Ed worked there full-time in the mid-1940s before going to Washington, D.C. to work for the government.

Karas & Karas Glass Co. also gave work to family members, employing at various times my aunts Hinda and Nettie; Ann, Ruth, and Lilli Karas; Ysomor Karas; the three sons of Elia Karas--David, Arthur, and Leo; as well as Carl Ehmann, husband of Hinda. That too was traditional in East European cultures, and in Jewish families in particular, and is still true in traditional cultures around the world.

Looking back at the Beggelmans and Karases I knew as a child in the 1920s and '30s, what strikes me most was how close knit that extended family was. It consisted of four nuclear families--the two Beggelmans and the two Karases--who lived close by each other and socialized mainly with each other. There was a strong sense of community, and people helped each other and provided employment when needed. During the Depression, for

example, when unemployment was very high nationwide, everyone in that large extended family had a job.

**MORE BEGGMANS**

Abram (Avrum) Beggelman, Joseph's brother, headed the other branch of the Beggelman family. Trained, like his father, as a metal worker and smith, Abram, after his arrival in Boston, worked for a local iron works in East Boston called American Architectural. Next, he worked in a rag shop, and then opened his own rag business in which his children all worked. (Collecting rags for reprocessing was a common occupation for immigrants in those years.) Still later, Abram opened a second-hand furniture store, also with his children and wife Sarah (whom we called Surka) who was the saleslady. Their daughter Eva related how they would buy second-hand bed springs which the children would repair at home and the father would tighten up in the evening.

The family eventually bought a house in East Boston at 153 Paris Street, corner of Porter Street, which still stands. As you exit the Sumner Tunnel in East Boston and turn right to Logan Airport, the house is immediately to your right, the one with the green roof and multi-colored asphalt siding. Their daughter Eva lived there until she entered a nursing home in 1994. After her death in 1999, the house was sold.

Abram and Sarah Beggelman had nine children -- two daughters and seven sons. Their first child, Max, drowned at age twenty-one while swimming at Sluice Pond near Lynn; another son, Joseph, died at age twenty-three of kidney disease; and a daughter (name not known) died young.

William Beggelman, an electrician who worked for General Electric in Lynn, married Esther Seigel. They had two children, Leonard and Norma. William died at age seventy-nine and was survived by his daughter Norma. Leonard died of liver disease at age seven and was buried alongside his father in Pride of Lynn Cemetery, in Lynn. Norma married Edward Spector, and they lived in Pennsylvania with their two children, Amy and Jennifer.

Rubin (Ruby), Beggelman, formerly in the construction business, married Frances Abber, and they had three daughters. Karen, born in 1947, died of Tay-Sachs disease at age four. Marlene Beggelman, a retired physician, lives in Cambridge, MA, and Elaine Beggelman, a musician, lives in Santa

Cruz, CA. Ruby died in Palm Coast, FL, on July 10, 2003 at age eighty-seven.

Sam Beggelman founded Merrimac Glass Company in Chelsea. He married Rose Cheskelovitz in 1939, and they had two daughters, Sandra and Joan. Sandra married Charles Goldish, and lived in Swampscott. They had a son Mark married to Rowanna, and another son, Andrew. Joan married Robert Steiner, and they had two children, Susan and Julie, and also lived in Swampscott.

Rose divorced Sam in 1976, after thirty-seven years of marriage, when she learned that he had been living with another woman, Estelle, whom he later married after he and Rose had divorced. Sam had maintained two households. From his second household, he had two children, a girl who was not well, and a boy, Charles, who was institutionalized in Bridgewater State Hospital and died in 2001. Sam died in 1999 at age eighty-six, on the same day as his sister Eva who was 89. Rose, at this writing, is in her 80s, in good health, and still works as a bookkeeper.

Israel ("Fat" or Izzy) Beggelman flew in the Air Corps during World War II as a gunner on B-24 bombers, and took part in the big raid over the oil fields at Ploesti, Romania. After the war, Izzy went into the glass business. He lived in a retirement community in Canton, MA until his death in 2003. Izzy's daughter, Donna Trushin, had three daughters, Suzanne, Jennifer, and Stacey, and lived in Stoughton. Suzanne died at age sixteen, and Stacey died at twentyfive of burns suffered in a tragic accident in 1998 in Baltimore where she was a first year student at Johns Hopkins Medical School. Izzy also had a son, Gary, who changed his family name to Berger.

Louis (Louie) Beggelman, who died at age sixty-two, was in the roofing business. He married Charlotte Feinstein and is survived by sons Alan and Jay. Jay married Mary Beth Darling of Belmont, and they had a son Max and a daughter Naomi, who all live in Palm Coast, FL. Alan married Diane Thomas, and they had a son Matthew. After Alan and Diane divorced, Alan married Carol Nille. Alan lived in Arlington, and worked as a firefighter in Cambridge, with the rank of lieutenant, until he retired in 2008.

All the children of Joseph and Abram Beggelman had jobs during the depression years when work was very hard to find. They did not earn much but they lived with their parents, pooled their resources, and there was always plenty of food on the table and in the icebox (later called the "fridge"), at a time when many Americans were jobless and going hungry.

Moreover, they felt free to bring friends home to dinner on Friday night, a tradition in Jewish families.

My grandfather Joseph, for example, we were told, would often bring home to dinner complete strangers, befriended at his synagogue but with no place to go for the traditional Sabbath dinner. I recall being at my grandmother's on such Friday nights when friends and sometimes strangers were welcomed to a table laden with plenty of good food. One of my Uncle Arthur's friends at those Friday night dinners was Joseph Ford, a fellow law student at Northeastern University who later became a federal judge in Boston. Joe Ford was the first gentile I ever dined with, and I recall how surprised I was to see him sitting at my grandmother's table.



### THREE UNCLES

My mother's three brothers—Philip (Pinchas), Arthur (Itzig), and Harry (Hersch) -- were important figures to my brother Ed and me in our childhood and adolescence. They helped us mature and gave us something our father seldom did – attention and interest. Our father would take Ed or me on evening walks in Franklin Park after work and regale us with stories about his youth in Russia. He would also take us into Boston, on occasion, to see an American Legion or Veterans Day parade. And the whole family (Midge excepted) would go on our customary Sunday afternoon drive in my father's 1932 Chevy, usually to Lake Sharon or Houghton's Pond in the Blue Hills. But our father never showed much interest in what we were doing, whether it was schoolwork, hobbies, employment, or our ambitions and dreams. For that we had to depend on our mother and her three brothers.

“Uncle Pinny,” as we called Phil when we were young, was the eldest son in the Beggelman family, and in the East European tradition and absence of a father, he was the family senior. He made the big decisions, and the rest of the family went along. Phil, for example, prevented his sister Nettie from marrying a very eligible suitor, “Chicky” Midman – an artist, a very handsome man, and a nice guy – whom he did not approve of because Pinny thought that the Midman family was not good enough for the Beggelmans. Chicky later worked as an art teacher in the Boston public schools.

Phil married Katy Beck, a woman with whom he had been having an affair, even after she went to the Massachusetts Bar Association and told them that he had “done her wrong.” That resulted in his being denied the admission to the Bar that he had so coveted. However, his failure to “pass” the Bar probably persuaded him to remain in the shoe business where he eventually became a multimillionaire.

Phil got into the shoe business by chance. He came to the United States in 1907 at age six, and although a very bright boy, he had to leave school early to help support the family. In the search for his first job, Phil went to downtown Boston and walked along Washington Street, the main shopping thoroughfare in those days, inquiring in every ~~story~~ store whether they needed a boy for odd jobs. In a shoe store owned by a Mr. and Mrs.

Andrews, he found his first job and future career. The childless Andrews took an interest in Phil and taught him the shoe business.

Phil's real interest, however, was the law, and in the evenings he attended Northeastern University Law School, graduating in 1929. But that was the year of the Wall Street crash, and prospects for lawyers were not good. Moreover, as noted above, Phil was not admitted to the Bar. So, in 1934, at the height of the Depression, Phil joined up with Dr. (fnu) Solby, an orthopedic surgeon, to found the Solby Bayes Shoe Company.

The business began with a small shop on West Street in downtown Boston which specialized in orthopedic shoes. It was at that point that Philip Beggelman became Philip Bayes, the name taken from a young Hollywood starlet named Nora Bayes. Another explanation, however, is that Bayes is simply an anglicization of the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "beyz."

When Dr. Solby unexpectedly died, Phil found himself the sole owner of the business. Retaining the name Solby Bayes, he moved to a bigger and better location on Tremont Street at the foot of Park Street, just behind the subway entrance. The store's specialty was hard-to-fit feet, and it stocked sizes 1 to 12, AAAAA to EEEEE. The trade was retail – walk-ins – but Phil also built up a large mail-order business which Aunt Nettie ran, selling shoes to repeat customers all over the United States and abroad. When the mail-order business expanded in the 1940s, Phil moved to a larger location at 41 Winter Street, in an eight-story building he had purchased. That building, in 2007, had condos starting at \$719,000.

My first recollection of Phil was his gift to me of a book, the first I ever owned. I was about nine or ten at the time and a very curious boy, always asking him questions about everything. So, one day Phil brought me a book titled *The Want to Know Book*, which provided answers to the many questions little boys were likely to ask. I treasured it for many years.

Phil also gave me my first full-time job, as noted earlier, as stock boy at Solby Bayes the summer after I graduated from high school in 1939. During my first two years of college I also worked at Solby Bayes on Saturdays, earning \$2.00 a day as a stock boy and salesman. In my junior year I left to work at Filene's Little Shoe Shop, on the corner of Washington and Franklin where I eventually worked up to the grand sum of \$5.00 a Saturday, which was good pay in those days.

Phil took an interest in Ed and me. In 1943, when I went into the army, the day after graduating from Boston College, he came to North Station with my mother to see me off to Fort Devens.

Phil traveled a lot, but without his wife, and always alone. In 1963, on a European tour, he stopped in Vienna and took my then wife Pamela and me to the most expensive restaurant he could find, and after dinner to the Vienna State Opera. Tickets to the Opera were very difficult to obtain on short notice – then and now – and Phil must have paid a small fortune to get them. Unfortunately, he fell asleep during the performance. On another occasion, when I returned home from Poland with my family on home leave, Phil met us at Logan Airport with a bag of candy for my daughter Hania, and drove us into Boston in his big Cadillac. Hania thanked him by eating the candy and puking on the front seat of the car.

Not having children of his own, Phil wanted me, and later Ed, to come into his shoe business. When I would return to Boston on home leave from my Foreign Service assignments, he would take me to lunch, always at an expensive restaurant – Boston’s Locke-Ober or the Parker House – where he had charge accounts, and try to persuade me to come home and “settle down.”

Phil was equally solicitous of my brother Ed whom he also wanted to take into his business. But Ed also turned him down and went instead to Washington to take a job with the federal government, and eventually go to law school and embark on a legal career. Ed had worked full-time at Solby Bayes for more than a year after graduating from college, and when he announced that he would be leaving the shoe store, Phil asked him why. Ed gave a reply that must have deeply disappointed Phil, explaining that he didn’t want to spend the rest of his life waiting for the front door of the store to open and bring in another customer.

Despite his rebuff of Phil’s proposal, when Ed returned to Boston he was often invited to Phil’s apartment for Sunday dinner or to dine with Phil at the Parker House. In later years, Phil would visit Ed’s home on Sundays and play with his children. And when Ed went into politics in Newton and became a city alderman, Phil would contribute to his election campaigns and show interest in his political and legal careers, often discussing strategy on cases Ed was working on.

Phil really cared about us – or so we thought – and it was a big surprise and disappointment when he died a multimillionaire and remembered, in his

will, all his siblings and all their children, including my sister Midge and her three children, but not my brother, me, and our children. Ed and I have discussed this many times, and the only reason we can fathom – looking at it charitably – is that Phil thought that Ed and I did not need his help. Ed was a lawyer by then, and I had made a career in the Foreign Service. But, like Orson Wells in the conclusion of the film “Citizen Kane,” grieving on his deathbed over “Rosebud,” the lost sled of his childhood, perhaps Phil was deeply offended forever by our not accepting his invitation to join him in the shoe business.

Aunt Willie, Phil’s youngest sister, on learning that Ed, I, and our children had not been mentioned in Phil’s will, declared “A great injustice has been done,” and made provisions for us in her will, the proceeds to be disbursed upon the death of her husband Maynard Sockol, currently living in Boca Raton, FL.

Uncle Arthur, or “Itzky,” (from Yitzhak, or Isaac), as we all called him, was also a surrogate father for Ed and me. One particular recollection I have is how Arthur, one Friday evening, dropped by our apartment while I was struggling with a school assignment – to write my first “paper.” Arthur, who was studying law at the time, sat down with me at the kitchen table and spent an hour or so showing me how to write a paper. On other occasions he would take me to high school football games, and on Sunday mornings to Franklin Park where he would play second base in sandlot baseball. Short, stocky, and with a powerful build, Arthur was very athletic and also played a good game of tennis. At Revere Beach, he would go for a swim in the evening after work, not just a short dip in the water to cool off, but a mile-long swim up the beach and back with a slow and steady overhand stroke.

Arthur also started me on stamp collecting. While attending law school at night he worked as a shipping clerk at a paint company that had customers all over the world. Arthur would save for me the stamps from incoming correspondence, and I soon had a good international collection and knew the names of almost all the countries of the world.

When I was sixteen or seventeen and working with Arthur at Solby Bayes, he and I would often go to lunch together at a small eatery on School Street where we would sit at the bar and eat knockwurst with kraut or baked beans. And on Saturday evenings, after the store had closed, we would have dinner together at Dini’s, a block away on Tremont Street, where I would order the broiled mackerel special three-course dinner – only \$1.95 in those

days – after which we would take in a movie. Arthur also introduced me to Scotch whiskey which he would order before dinner, usually Johnny Walker Black Label. As he used to tell me, "If you are going to drink, you might as well drink the best."

Arthur lived modestly and did not overindulge, but as a young man he had rheumatic fever, and it must have damaged his heart and left him with a case of angina. At age fifty-nine, he died suddenly of a heart attack. His premature passing was a shock to all who knew and admired him. Arthur's death was also a major factor in the decision of his son Joe to study medicine.

Uncle Arthur was also important to Ed in his youth. Ed worked part-time with Arthur in "Arthur's Bootery," an offshoot of Solby Bayes located above Uncle Phil's store on Tremont Street. When business was slow, Arthur and Ed would have long discussions about such weighty subjects as life, careers, women, and dating. Arthur enjoyed long philosophical discussions on literature and politics, and in such debates he often summarized, in a very cogent manner, what his opponent was trying to say. He would have made a very good lawyer. Very fair and unbiased, he opposed racism long before human rights became popular among liberals.

Arthur also enjoyed humor and always seemed to have a smile on his face, a rarity among the Beggelmans. He was the only employee at Solby Bayes who could get Phil's wife Katy to smile, and he would tease her every morning until she broke into a smile. He had a hearty belly laugh, and his favorite comedian was Jackie Gleason. An affectionate and caring father and husband, Arthur wrote love poems to his wife Rose, née Feldman.

Arthur was also instrumental in Ed's purchase of his first home, at 44 Morton Street in Newton. Arthur lived around the corner at 29 Vineyard Road, where his son Joe and his family now live, and when the elderly clergyman who lived in the Morton Street house died, Arthur telephoned Ed who was on vacation with his family in Gloucester. Ed drove down to Newton and purchased the house the next day after a 30-minute cursory inspection. During those years, Arthur, his wife Rose, and their two children, Frances and Joe were especially close to Ed and his children.

Uncle Harry would also take me to dinner when I worked at Solby Bayes and, in later years, when I came home on weekends from the army. Memorable was one Saturday evening after work when he took me to his health spa, the Sidney Hill Club, which was then on Washington Street near

Boylston, and treated me to my first “*shvitzbad*” (sauna) and massage. It was my first “Turkish bath” and it made me feel like a grownup. But my most memorable day with Harry was when he took me, as a little boy, to a Red Sox Sunday doubleheader at Fenway Park. I was too young to appreciate the game, and I sat there baking in the centerfield bleachers for two long games that I did not understand. From that distance I could hardly see the infield, and that’s when I first began to realize that I was nearsighted and needed glasses. Ed also attended baseball games with Harry at Fenway Park and Braves Field (now BU Field). Ed enjoyed the games, but his eyesight was always better than mine.

Uncle Harry was afflicted with a hip joint ailment that plagued him all his adult life. In his youth, he was horsing around with some friends at Nantasket Beach one summer when his hip was injured. It was not treated correctly and the joint deteriorated, resulting in a serious limp which required him to use a cane for the rest of his life. Despite that handicap and his many long hospital stays for unsuccessful surgery, Harry remained cheerful and optimistic. It was as a salesman at Solby Bayes that he coined the phrase, “Limp in, leap out,” to describe the many customers who came for orthopedic shoes.

On summer Friday evenings in Roxbury, Arthur or Harry would often come to our apartment on Harold Street, sit on the porch chatting with my father, and eventually ask for a loan of five dollars for a date the next evening. Five dollars went a long way in those years.

Mort Ladge, Aunt Rose’s husband, also figured in our youth. Although not a blood uncle, Mort was very much a part of the extended Beggelman family. When I was in college, he used to hand down to me his old suits after he had outgrown or tired of them. Mort was a very good dresser, and his clothes were always top quality, which made me one of the best dressed men on the Boston College campus. And at the end of World War II, when Ed was discharged from the Navy, Mort and Rose provided space in their apartment on Elgin Street in Newton Center for Ed and my father and mother while they looked for a larger apartment.

Mort was a self-made man. I don’t know whether he ever finished high school but during the Depression he washed bottles for a wine company where he eventually became top salesman. During the war, he worked at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy, and after the war, as noted above, he started an electronics business, Hermetite, with his brother Morris, an MIT

graduate. Mort gave Ed one of his first jobs, selling the popcorn machines his brother had designed and was manufacturing. After selling the machines, Ed would supply the corn for popping.

Our favorite aunt was Nettie, one of my mother's younger sisters. With no children of her own, she came visiting often, and always with a box of candy. We loved the candy but, in an age before flossing, our teeth suffered.

Aunt Annie (Hinda) was also very close to my mother and particularly helpful after mother's divorce. Annie's husband Carl, like all Germans, was an inveterate traveler, and the Ehmann family would take my mother with them on weekend trips with their daughter Sherry (Sharon).

**THE ZAYDE WE NEVER KNEW**

My *zayde* (grandfather) Joseph (1876-1934) was, in Yiddish terms, a *gelehrnter* (a learned man, or scholar), a man learned in Hebrew and religious studies but without a trade or profession to support his family. In the "Old Country," as Russia was commonly called, such men were highly respected and were sought as husbands for unmarried daughters. That appears to have been the case with my grandfather Joseph who in later years held forth as a *melamed* (teacher) at a synagogue on Chelsea Street in East Boston where he officiated at services, gave Hebrew lessons, and prepared boys for their Bar Mitzvah. (Girls did not have Bat Mitzvah in those days.) Such scholars were honored men in Russia and had high social standing among Jews. In the United States, however, many of them, like Joseph, had difficulty adjusting to life in the New World, earning a living, and supporting their families.

From today's perspective, it would appear that Joseph did indeed have difficulty making the adjustment to America. Whereas his brother Abram and his in-laws, Elia and Myer Karas, went into business, Joseph was never able to provide for his wife and nine children, a situation that must have depressed him and affected his marriage which, we surmise, was not a happy one, and led to domestic discord.

In the 1920s, Joseph was committed by his wife and son Philip to the Boston State Hospital in Mattapan, a mental institution on Morton Street near Blue Hill Avenue, but for reasons the family never disclosed. His confinement occurred shortly before our family moved from Beachmont to Roxbury, in part, it now appears, to be near Mattapan where Joseph's children could visit him regularly.

What was my grandfather like? We simply do not know because all of those who knew him are now gone. Ruby Beggelman, however, told me once that Joseph was a pleasant man, small in stature and similar, in many ways, to his own father, Abram. Ruby also recalled that Joseph would occasionally slip out of the Mattapan hospital and make his way to his brother's house in East Boston where they would feed him and escort him back to Mattapan on the streetcar. My father, before his death, told me that there was nothing wrong with Joseph, and that he had been institutionalized



because once, angered by his wife, he had assaulted her. Joseph died at the Mattapan hospital in 1934, at age fifty-eight. According to his death certificate, the cause of death was tuberculosis.

We grandchildren were never told of Joseph's existence although we lived only a short streetcar ride away in Roxbury when he was in Mattapan, nor were we ever shown photos of him. For us, he simply did not exist, which I today find inexcusable. But mental illness, if in fact that's what it was, was considered shameful in those days, as it still is in Russia today. It was something that families sought to conceal, although it is likely that Joseph's illness today would be diagnosed as a form of depression and treated with medication. In any event, there have been no cases of mental illness in the Beggelman extended family.

Joseph was a very observant Orthodox Jew. My grandmother Ida Sarah kept a strictly kosher kitchen, observed the Jewish traditions and holidays, and lit candles every Friday evening. Their children, however, once they left home, broke with tradition. That was due, in part, to their desire, as with many immigrant families, to assimilate and be seen as Americans. But there was another reason, as my mother once explained to me. In her father's home, she said, religious observance and adherence to tradition was so strict that she rebelled when she married and left home, and no longer wanted to observe all the traditions of her parents.

My mother lit candles on Friday evening, kept a kosher kitchen, and we celebrated the Jewish holidays after a fashion, but as in many second-generation immigrant families, much of the ritual was gone. On the Jewish High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we children would get dressed up in our best clothes and were expected to go to the Crawford Street synagogue in Roxbury. There, however, after making the obligatory visit to my grandmother, seated in the segregated women's balcony, we would stand outside the synagogue and converse with our friends.

Ed and I also had the Bar Mitzvah expected by our father, although they were merely pro forma. But afterwards, he never cared about whether or not we were observant Jews. I regret that very much because he was very learned in Jewish studies and could have taught us a lot.

## BURIAL PLOTS

Joseph and Ida Sarah Beggelman, with three of their children -- Rhoda, Arthur, and Nettie – are buried in the Beggelman family plot in Chevra Mishnias Cemetery in Woburn, MA. To get there by car from Boston, take I-93 North, exit in Woburn at Montvale Avenue, turn left a couple of blocks on Washington Street, right on Ran Drive, and the cemetery entrance is the first gate on the right. The Beggelman plot is in the northeast corner of the cemetery. Buried there are Ida Sarah Beggelman, died December 16, 1950, age seventy-four; her husband Joseph Beggelman, died January 22, 1934, age fifty-eight; their daughters Rhoda Richmond, died December 6, 1961, age sixty-three, and Nettie Zides, born December 19, 1908, died June 19, 1984, age seventy-five, and their son, Arthur B. Bayes, born June 10, 1910, died February 1, 1970, age fifty-nine. Buried in the Baker Street cemetery in West Roxbury are Philip and Katy Bayes, and Carl and Annie Ehmann. Michael and Bessie Kurtis are buried in a Quincy cemetery, also on Baker Street. Joseph and Midge Nathanson are buried in the Boylston Lodge Cemetery in West Roxbury.

The Abram Beggelman family plot, a few steps away from the Chevra Mishnias cemetery in Woburn, is in the former Beth David Cemetery, now under the Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts. Continue to the end of Ran Drive, turn left, and the entrance gate to Beth David is on your right. Buried there, a few steps down the path from the gate on the right, are Abram, died December 14, 1955, age seventy-six; Sarah, died April 27, 1960, age seventy-six; and their sons Max, died July 27, 1924, age twenty-one, and Joseph, died March 19, 1935, age twenty-three. Their daughter Eva is buried in the last row of the cemetery.

Elia and Fanny Karas are buried in Congregation Mishkan Tefila Cemetery on Centre Street, West Roxbury, as are their children Minnie, David (Dave), and Arthur. Their daughter Min's husband, Dr. Jules Harran, was cremated in Florida by his second wife. Dave's wife, Adele, died in 2008 at the age of ninety-four. Arthur's widow, Gloria, in her eighties, as of this writing, resides in Newton. Leo and his wife Barbara reside in an apartment overlooking Boston Harbor.

Looking back at this large and extended family, I am struck by how vital, prolific, and long-living they were. Except for the few who died young from accidents or major illnesses that were not treatable at the time, most of them lived to a ripe old age, and in relatively good health.

One disease, however, that does run in the Karas family is Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, which is not as bad as it may sound. A chronic inflammation of the thyroid, it is thought to be caused by autoimmune factors. Eight times more prevalent in women than in men, it is most frequent between the ages of thirty and fifty, and a family history of the disease is common, especially among women. Patients complain of a painless enlargement of the thyroid or fullness in the throat. On examination there is a non-tender goiter, smooth or nodular, firm, and more rubbery in consistency than the normal thyroid. There is also frequent coexistence with other endocrine disorders, including Addison's disease (adrenal insufficiency), hypoparathyroidism, and diabetes mellitus, all of which may be autoimmune in nature. Hashimoto's disease is treatable with a synthetic thyroid hormone taken daily.

Members of the Karas family who have had Hashimoto's disease include my grandmother Ida Sarah. My mother Rhoda must also have had it because she was diagnosed with a "goiter" in her early thirties, although it was not then known as Hashimoto's, and she was not treated for it. In later years she also had a mild case of diabetes mellitus. Others in the family who have had the disease include my sister Midge and her daughter Susan. My brother Ed and I have not had it. Female descendants of the Karases should check their thyroids periodically and report the family history of the disease to their physicians but not worry because it is treatable, and you can live with it to a ripe old age.

Dave Karas's sons, Norman and Barry, suffer from ataxia which affects communication between the brain and legs, arms, and speech. Norman has been in a wheel chair for the past several years and requires constant attention from his wife, Amy, and care givers from the state. Amy and their three children treat Norman with dignity and love. Barry, who has been using a walker and wheel chair for the past ten years, lives alone but with increasing difficulty is able to fend for himself with some assistance from the State of Florida and Jewish Family Services. Norman and Barry's mother, Adele, as well as their uncle, Leo, have been tested for the disease, and both tests were negative.

## THE HOLOCAUST

Like most Jews of Eastern Europe, the Jews of Berezna and Krupovye (Krupa) were victims of the Holocaust, including almost all of the Beggelmans and Karases who did not emigrate. Of the seventy-two Karas relatives of my generation that we know of, thirty-six died in the Holocaust.

In the fall of 1942, many of Berezna's Jews were sent to a Nazi extermination camp at Belzec in Poland. The remaining Jews were shot in Berezna by the Germans on April 12, 1943. Those Karases remaining in Krupa are believed to have suffered a similar fate. But did any of the Beigels and Karases escape the Holocaust? We know of a few, and their stories are worth retelling.

Shmuel (Samuel) Karas, a son of Nechama Karas and a grandson of Yitzkhak and Mindel Karas, is one survivor we know of. Shmuel was a schoolboy in Dubrovitsa in April, 1942, when the Germans approached from the west. His teacher, recognizing the danger, advised his students to flee with him to the east, to the Soviet Union. But Shmuel, wanting to protect his younger brother Azar, ran home to Krupa and begged his mother to let him take his brother with him. In a fateful decision, the mother refused, saying that the Germans would make things difficult for a while but would then go away. So Shmuel said farewell to his mother and brother, ran back to Dubrovitsa, caught up with his class and teacher, and kept running into the Soviet Union until he reached Uzbekistan where he found refuge during the war.

After the war, Shmuel returned to Krupa in search of his family and learned that they had all been killed by the Germans a few months after he had left. The men were killed first, then the women were marched out of town and forced into a large pit where they too were shot.

Recognizing that there was no future for him in the Soviet Union, of which Krupa was then a part, Shmuel found his way to Italy where he worked with a Zionist organization, helping Jewish refugees emigrate to Palestine. One day in Italy, he saw the name "Karas & Karas" imprinted on the lower corner of a store-front window. Surprised to see his family name, he asked the shop owner where he had bought the glass and was told it came from Boston. The shop owner heard Shmuel's story, took pity on him, and

allowed Shmuel to call long-distance to Karas & Karas in Boston where Elia Karas took the call.

Hearing Shmuel's story and realizing that they were related, Elia asked the store owner to give Shmuel \$100 which his firm would make up in due course. Shmuel used the \$100, a large sum in those days, to arrange passage on a ship smuggling Jewish refugees into Palestine. But in the early postwar years it was not easy for Jews to get to Palestine which was still a British protectorate, and the British were limiting immigration. Shmuel's ship was seized by a British patrol boat and diverted to Cyprus where he spent the next two years in a prison camp.

In that camp, however, a small miracle occurred when Shmuel recognized his long-lost brother Azar among the other interned prisoners. Azar had survived the war by serving in the Soviet army, and had also been trying to get to Palestine. When the state of Israel was created, the two brothers immigrated there where they served in the military, married, had children, and made new lives for themselves.<sup>18</sup> (This story makes you wonder why some people survive and others do not.)

Menachem Karas, another survivor, immigrated to Palestine in the mid-1920s. Menachem's mother, as she lay dying in Israel in 1984, asked for a pencil and paper, and wrote in Hebrew the genealogy of the Karas family as she had known it when she left Krupa for Palestine in 1926. It is due to her effort that Jacqueline Huhem, of San Diego, California, was able to reconstruct the genealogy that we now have on a diskette. Menachem married Hana Lazarus, originally from Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1950, and they had a son Rafi and a daughter Michal. Rafi married Irit, and they had a son, Assaf, and two daughters, Liron and Adi. Michal married Udi, and they have a boy named Chen. Menachem also had a brother Ze'ev whose wife is Jaffa. They all live in Tel Aviv.

Did others survive the Holocaust? Possibly. Some may have fled east before the German advance and sought refuge in the Soviet Union. Others may have joined the partisans or the Soviet army and fought through the war. One Karas family member, Lyuba Sapozhnikova, as noted above, was a nurse who rose to captain in the Soviet army and emigrated to Israel after the war. Many Jews, however, not knowing about the Holocaust and trusting the Germans as civilized people, remained where they were, preferring to take their chances with the Germans rather than the Russians. That, of course, was a tragic mistake, since almost all of those who remained perished. The

casualty rate for the others--refugees, partisans, and soldiers--was also very high and it is doubtful that more than a handful survived the war. Where they might be today is anyone's guess, although those who may have immigrated to Israel could be expected to have established contact with the *Landsmannschaften* and relatives from their home town in the old country.<sup>19</sup>

I have, for example, a copy of a Yizkor book on the Jews of Berezna, published in Israel in Yiddish by the Berezna Landsmannschaft, which has references to the Beigel family and photos of several of them. I also have papers from our Karas relatives, probably from Menachem Karas's mother (received from Leo Karas), in Hebrew with English translation, that has handwritten charts of who married and begot whom.

## THE NEXT GENERATION

Let's turn now to the next generation of Beggelmans and Karases.

Arthur and Rose Bayes had two children – Joseph and Frances Ina. Joe, a medical doctor and anesthesiologist, lives in Newton, MA. Joe had a son, Benjamin, from his first marriage to Helen Poulin, and another son, Jeremy, from his second marriage to Lynda Goldberg, an artist. Frances married Robert Zazzara of Vienna, Austria. They have two children, Viktoria and Olivia, and live in Vienna where Frances teaches piano at the *Hochschule fuer Musik*, and her husband is an executive with Continental Tire Co.

Carl and Annie Ehmann had a daughter, Sharon (Sherry) who married Paul Scherer, a physicist/engineer, and they have three children, Jonathan, Ethan, and Susannah, and lived in Bryn Mawr, PA. Jonathan, a chemist with an MBA, lives in Cambridge, MA and is married to Kwin. Ethan, who is studying for a PhD in Public Policy, married Jill Manning, and they live in Brookline with their newborn son. Susannah received her Psychology BS from West Chester University (Summa Cum Laude) 3 years ago and her goals are still divided between following a career in helping special needs children (a job she just started) and a small business career which will better protect her from the extended lay off which she experienced during the recession of 2008.

Mort and Rose Ladge had three children, Jerrold, John, and Jane. Jerrold, who died young, had married Rene Carol Brandler, and they had a daughter, Rhonda (Bunny) Ellen, who lives in Boston. John married Marilyn Newman, and they had two children, James Ira and Meredith Sue. Jane married Alan Gottfried, and they had a son Ari.

Michael and Bessie Kurtis, who lived in Quincy, had two children, Susan and Gerald. Susan married Malcolm Trachtenburg, and they had two children, Jon and Loren, and live in Norton. Loren married Dom Vecchiarelli, had two children, Amanda and Justin, and they live in North Attleboro. Jon is single and lives in Boston. Gerald married Patti Young, and they live in Needham.

Myer and Sarah Karas, as noted above, had three children, Ann, Ruth, and Lillian. Ann married Bernard (Beryl) Castleman of Quincy, and they had two children, Jane and James. Jane married Steven Hochman, and they live in White Plains, NY with their daughter, Sara, who graduated from medical school in 2003. Ruth married Gerald Goldberg, and they had a son, Steven, an electrical engineer, who lives in Newton with his wife Carol and their two children, Michelle and Evan. Lillian married Harold Palefsky of Lowell, and they had two children, John and Sandra. John married Barbara Miller, and they live in Courtland Manor, NY with their three children, Harrison, Susan, and Michael. Sandra married Mitchell Marder, and they live in Bethesda, MD with their son Hunter and daughter Zoe. Myer Karas, after the death of his wife Sarah, married Mary Libman (née Harmon), and they had a daughter Irene (now Irene Barr) who lives in West Hyannisport with her husband and two children, Scott and Lori, from a previous marriage to Martin Marcus.

Elia and Fanny Karas had four children, David, Minnie, Arthur, and Leo. Dave married Adele Olodovsky, and they had two children, Barry and Norman. (David died young, at age fifty-five.) Barry married Linda Clevens in 1968, and they adopted a child, David Andrew, in 1973. Barry and Linda divorced in 1985, and he lives in Manalapan, FL. Their son, David Andrew, fathered a child, Donovan, with Christine Berry in 1997. Donovan lives with his mother in Marlborough, MA, where David also lives separately and runs a repair business. Norman married Amy Levine, and they had three children, Hilary, Deena, and Joshua Elie. Hilary had two boys, Alex and Ryan Bortnick, from a first marriage, and was later married to Richard Scott Levin and lives with him in Billerica. Deena Holly Karas Rogers was separated from her husband. Joshua Elie Karas married but is now divorced. Minnie married Jules Harran, a physician from New York, and they had two children, Wendy and Frederick. (Minnie died at age sixty-four.)

Arthur married Gloria Rachlin, and they had three children, Terry, Gail, and Steven. Terry married David Levin, and they live in Framingham and had three boys; Jeremy who is engaged to Keith Boyz, Andy who is engaged to Stacy Johnson, and Jason. Gail married Terry McNair; they live in Framingham and had two boys, Sean and Adam. Steven married Lynne Satlof (now Lynne Satlof-Karas); they live in Newton and had three boys, Joel, Jacob, and Aaron. Steven is Regional Sales Coordinator for AFLAC



and Lynne is Director of Corporate Services for Parents-In-A-Pinch. Arthur Karas died in 1990 at age sixty-four.

Leo married Barbara Eidelman, and they had four children, Susan, Linda, Joseph (Joe), and Matthew (Matty). Susan, a psychotherapist, lives in Northampton, MA with her partner, Claudia Beldengreen, and they had two sons, Ethan Hunter Beldengreen-Karas and Brandon Isaac Beldengreen-Karas. Joe, who became President of Karas & Karas Glass Co., Inc., married Judith Feingold, and they had two children, Allix Michelle and Benjamin Elijah. Linda is a producer with CBS Evening News who, after eight years with CBS News in London, currently works out of Manhattan. Also in Manhattan, her brother Matty Karas is director of programming for MTVn's new digital music service, "URGE." MTVn is the parent company of MTV, VH1, and other subsidiaries. Matty is also the founder of a rock band, "The Trouble Dolls," for which he is the lead male singer, guitarist, and composer.

## MY MOTHER RHODA

My mother, Rhoda (Roodya, in Yiddish), was born on January 17, 1898 in the village of Krupovye (Krupa to Jews), near the town of Dubrovitsa (Dembrovitz in Yiddish), in what was then the Russian *guberniya* (province) of Volhynia, but historically a part of Poland. Krupovye and Dubrovitsa are today in Ukraine, just south of the Belarusan border.

A very beautiful young woman, Rhoda was the eldest of the nine surviving children of Joseph Beggelman and Chaya Sura (Ida Sarah) née Karas. As with many immigrant families, Rhoda had to leave school in Boston at age twelve to work in a sweatshop and help support her family. She later worked in Filene's department store, wrapping gift packages, until her marriage to Hymie who, she soon learned, was no gift.

Throughout her marriage Rhoda was a housewife except when she clerked in the grocery store in Brighton that Hymie owned for one year in 1937-38. And after her divorce, as noted above, she worked part-time in her brother Phil's shoe business where she addressed promotional material and catalogues in her beautiful handwriting. Also, after her divorce, she spent her summers with her daughter Midge and her husband Joe Nathanson at their Camp Matoaka, Maine (for girls), and on weekends she often traveled around New England with Carl and Annie Ehmann and their daughter Sherry. In her final years, she lived with Midge and Joe in their home in Newton.

In 1951, Rhoda, at my invitation, came to visit me in Germany. She had just been divorced and needed a change of scenery, and I thought that a year in Europe would do her some good. She came over on a U.S. Army transport that docked at Bremerhaven where I met her with my car, and we drove through Germany to Nuremberg where I was then stationed. We lived in a nice, little house, requisitioned by the U.S. Army at the edge of the city. But it was a rather lonely existence for her since she did not drive a car, and her only diversions during the week were having coffee with an American woman who lived across the street, and making shopping trips to the Post Exchange and Commissary on an Army bus which made daily rounds of

American homes. On weekends, we made excursions by car through Bavaria and Austria.

After a few months in Nuremberg, I was transferred to Stuttgart, a much larger city where there was much more for her to do. In Stuttgart, we lived in a very nice two-bedroom apartment on a hill overlooking the city, with a walkway across the street from our house that enabled her to walk down directly to the city center. In Stuttgart there was also an Army bus that took her to the Commissary for shopping. There were also many activities that she could attend at the American Consulate General where I worked – parties, dances, and dinners. Stuttgart also had an opera, ballet, and symphony, whose performances we attended. We made trips into the nearby Black Forest, to Switzerland, and to ski resorts where I did the skiing and she, with great trepidation, rode the cable cars. We had home delivery of the *Paris International Herald Tribune* and the *Stars and Stripes*, the Army daily newspaper, so she could keep up with the news. And there was the Armed Forces (Radio) Network she could listen to.

However, after a year she had enough of Europe, and I drove her to Le Havre, France, where she boarded a Dutch ship for passage to New York. On the way to Le Havre we spent a weekend in Paris where we did what tourists usually do. We dined at a Jewish restaurant in the Marais, the old Jewish district, and saw a show at the Folies Bergere. When women there came on stage almost completely naked, mother was at first shocked, but toward the end of the show she said to me, “You know, after a while you get used to their being naked.” But she was really shocked when a completely naked woman in a gilded cage was lowered from the ceiling of the theater and, hanging in mid-air directly in front of us seated in the balcony, sang “I’m Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage.”

A beautiful but quiet woman, Rhoda kept her troubles to herself. In the early 1930s, however, she began to suffer headaches and, on the misguided advice of a physician, she cut her long brown tresses that reached down to her hips. In those years she also had a skin ailment that was diagnosed as “hives.” In retrospect, it appears that the headaches and skin problem were brought on by the realization that she had married the wrong man.

Her only pleasures in life came from her siblings and her three children for whom she sought a life better than her own. To them she imparted her ambitions, high moral standards, love of literature and music, and her unfailing belief that honesty and virtue will triumph.

She died of lymphoma in Boston, at age sixty-three, after a long and painful illness.

## 18

### **BESSARABIA**

Bessarabia, where my father, Chaim Dovid Cherkes (later Herman D. Richmond), was born on January 15, 1893, was a "land of milk and honey," as he and others have described it. The misfortune of that small but rich agricultural land, the size of Belgium, was its strategic location in a far corner of Europe where great empires and strong states – Russia, Ottoman Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Poland – had warred over the centuries. With those wars Bessarabia's borders shifted as its farms and fortunes moved from one to another of its powerful neighbors. And for most of its modern history, Bessarabia was home to many Jews, due in part to its location in the hinterland of the port city of Odessa on the Black Sea.

Bounded by three rivers – the Prut on the west, the Dniestr on the north and east, and the Danube on the south just before it flows into the Black Sea, Bessarabia had been part of the Ottoman Turkish Empire from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. But in 1893, when my father was born there, it was in the Russian Empire. Ethnically, however, it was Romanian, the language spoken by most of its peasants.<sup>20</sup> Although my father considered himself to be a Russian Jew, when asked what his nationality was, he would usually reply "Bessarabian," although at times he would claim to be a Romanian in order to distance himself from Soviet communism.

The name Bessarabia has nothing to do with Arabia but derives from an old Romanian family, Basarab, whose feudal domain the territory once was. And it was known as Bessarabia until 1940 when, during World War II, it was annexed by the Soviet Union and renamed Moldova.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova became an independent country, the Republic of Moldova. As Moldova, it is often confused with Moldavia (the Latin form of the same name), a Romanian province on the West bank of the Prut River. Rivers, however, make poor boundaries because people on both sides of a river usually speak the same language and have familial ties. Together, Moldova and Moldavia constitute

most of historic Moldavia (or Moldova, as you prefer). If you are still with me, the confusion over their names parallels the confusion over their histories.

In its early history Bessarabia was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the vast medieval state that extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, although much of it was empty and peopled largely by nomadic tribes. In 1569, when Lithuania and Poland were joined in a union later known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that state was the largest in Europe, encompassing most of today's Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, the western Ukraine, and Bessarabia.

When, in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turks began their advance into Europe, they drove back the Poles in a series of bloody battles, and Bessarabia and Moldavia became vassal states of the Ottoman Empire, as the Turkish empire was then called. They remained in that status for some three hundred years, and Turkish rule left a lasting imprint on the land and its people.

The Muslim Turks were hospitable to Jews and others who were prepared to pay taxes and not challenge their rule, and due to that tolerance, Jewish communities flourished and prospered throughout the Ottoman Empire. Spanish Jews found refuge in the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain in 1492, and until the modern era, the world's three largest Jewish communities were in the Ottoman cities of Alexandria, Egypt; Constantinople (today's Istanbul), Turkey; and Salonika (today's Thessaloniki), Greece.

In the modern era, however, the Ottoman Empire decayed and declined. It lost Bessarabia to Russia in 1812 after defeat in a six-year war, the first of Bessarabia's many transfers between Turkey, Russia, and Romania which became fully independent only in 1878.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bessarabia went back and forth between Russia and Romania. After Russia's defeat in the Crimean War in 1856, the southern part of Bessarabia was returned to Romania; and in 1878, after Turkey's defeat by Russia in another war, the entire territory was annexed again by Russia. In 1918, following World War I and revolution in Russia, Bessarabia once more reverted to Romania where it remained until 1940 when the Soviet Union regained it under the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, only to lose it to Romania again in 1941 when Germany, Romania's ally in World War II, invaded the Soviet Union. In

1944, a victorious Soviet Union once more reclaimed the territory but, with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova became independent for the first time in its history.

If all this has confused you, just remember that Bessarabia, or a large part of it, is today called Moldova, and its people have lived under many flags.

The social structure of Bessarabia in 1893 was typical of Eastern Europe at the time. At the top was a small class of land-owning aristocrats and landed gentry (the lower nobility), who were mostly ethnic Russians or Poles. At the bottom were the peasants, the vast majority of the population, who were serfs until their emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century, although even after liberation most peasants were still landless, illiterate, and little more than farm hands. And in the middle were the Jews, who came to Bessarabia in the fifteenth century from Poland and Germany. Some scholars, however, believe that Bessarabian Jews are a mixture of Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Turkic Jews, the latter descended from the Jews of the Turkic state of Khazaria. But whoever they are, Bessarabians love their *bryndza* (sheep's-milk cheese, cured in brine) and *mamaliga*, the national dish of the peasants, which is similar to Italian *polenta* and other foods based on corn meal.

Jews thrived in Bessarabia as the essential middlemen in a rich agricultural economy based largely on the production of grain, fruit, and wine. In 1897, they numbered eleven percent of the population. However, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, they were mostly an urban people, living in cities and small towns, the *shtetls* in which they often numbered more than fifty percent of the population. By 1848, for example, the population of the city of Iasi (Jassy, pronounced *yash*) in Romanian Moldavia, was at least half Jewish. Beltz (Balti, in Romanian), subject of the popular Yiddish folk song, *Beltz, Mayn Shtetele Beltz*, is located in the heart of old Bessarabia. Kishinev (pronounced *Kish-in-yov*), the capital of Moldavia, also had a very high percentage of Jews at the turn of the century, and in the Soviet period as well. In 1903, however, Kishinev was the scene of a bloody pogrom in which forty-nine Jews were killed, hundreds wounded, and thousands left homeless. Despite international condemnation, another pogrom followed there in 1905, in which another nineteen Jews were killed. Those pogroms precipitated the immigration of many Bessarabian Jews to America.

In the cities and towns of Bessarabia, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Jews traditionally were artisans and craftsmen, carters and haulers,

shopkeepers, tradesmen, and innkeepers. Later, when higher education was opened to them, they became prominent in the professions – journalism, law, medicine, and finance – far out of proportion to their numbers in the population.

In the countryside, however, where my father was born and raised, Jews were managers and lessees of farms, owners of inns and taverns, petty traders, grain merchants, money-lenders, shop-keepers, and proprietors of what we used to call general stores. And, as in many parts of old Russia and Poland, Jews in the countryside often had a monopoly on the production and sale of alcoholic drinks, a monopoly granted them by the Russian government for a price.<sup>21</sup> The monopoly on alcohol was one of the sources of anti-Semitism among the peasants who were the principal consumers of the vodka and fruit brandies that the Jews produced and sold in their taverns and inns.<sup>22</sup>

Why were Jews so essential in that part of the world? The answer is simply that the aristocrats and gentry, as in other feudal and semi-feudal states, had been awarded large land grants as rewards for military service to their royal rulers, and especially in territories recently won from the Turks. The aristocrats and gentry, however, were traditionally raisers of regiments and commanders of troops, as they were all over Europe. They had neither the interest nor the experience to manage large land holdings and were only too pleased to lease them to people with knowhow, such as Jews and Germans, who could read and write, spoke several languages, and knew how to trade in grain, manage money, conduct business, keep accounts, and show a profit.

The peasants in Bessarabia, as noted above, were mostly ethnic Romanians but after 1812, when Russia acquired Bessarabia from the Turks, it encouraged the immigration of Russians and Ukrainians in an attempt to Russify the territory. As a consequence, Moldova was then – and still is today – inhabited by people of varying ethnicity and language – Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz (a Christian Turkic people), Bulgarians, Jews, and Gypsies. Ethnic Romanians, however, have always been, and still are, the majority.

World War II and the German conquest of Eastern Europe ended all that. The once vibrant Jewish community in Bessarabia was annihilated in the Holocaust, and most of the few survivors immigrated to Israel and other countries.<sup>23</sup>

## OUR CHERKES ANCESTORS

In that ethnically and linguistically diverse Bessarabia my father, Chaim (which means *life*) Dovid Cherkes, a son of Yoel Volf Cherkes and Sura (Sarah) Kaufman, was born in the village of Boben, a mile or so from Kelmentsy (Kelmenitz in Yiddish), on January 15, 1893 (February 19, Hebrew calendar), in *Khotinsky uyezd* (Chotin District, in English, but pronounced with a throaty “kh”).

Yoel Volf (Joel Wolf in English) was a steward (estate manager) and land surveyor who worked in Kelmentsy for a Jew named Israel Burshteyn (Burstein) [or Brunshteyn?]. Yoel Volf had been previously married, and from his first marriage to (fnu) Freifeld, he had five children – Leib (Leo), Lina (Lena), Polina (Polly), Ruby, and another son (name not known) who drowned as a young man in the Dniestr River. Chaim Dovid, the sole child of Yoel Volf's second marriage, grew up in a household with five siblings and was the youngest in the family.

Chaim Dovid's mother, Sura (Sarah), was a daughter of Aba and Miriam Kaufman, and granddaughter of Hersh Kaufman. The Kaufman family, also known as B'nai Hershkes (Sons of Hersh) before Jews took family names, were prosperous grain traders, general store owners, and lessees of farmland. Most of the Jews in Kelmentsy were Cherkeses, Hershkes, or Kaufmans.

Kelmentsy, the town nearest to Chaim Dovid's birthplace, is on the Dniestr River due east of Khotyn (Chocim in Polish, and Khotin in Ukrainian).<sup>24</sup> Kelmentsy's geographic coordinates are 48:29 North, 26:50 East, and it can be found on most detailed maps of the region. Khotin, well-known in history, was originally a Polish fortress town and the site of big battles in 1621 and 1673 when the Poles halted the Turkish advance into Europe. Khotin and Kelmentsy, to the north and east respectively of the Dniestr River, are now in Ukraine but were under Russian rule when Chaim Dovid lived there.

Chaim Dovid, a handsome and lively boy, was the apple of his mother's eye and very spoiled. In later life he insisted on having his own way, was difficult to get along with, and had a reputation for getting into arguments and being handy with his fists. The ladies, however, loved him. Our cousin,



Eva Beggelman, once told me that, as a young man, he was "devilishly handsome."

When Chaim Dovid was four the family moved to Belkovitz, a village of some 300 families of which about twelve were Jewish. Belkovitz is near the town of Brichany (Brichan, as my father called it, but Briceni today in Romanian or Moldovan).<sup>25</sup> Brichany is about five miles south of today's Moldavia-Ukraine border, and fifty miles due east of Chernovtsy (Chernowitz), an old garrison town of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the Russian census of 1817 Brichany had only 137 Jewish families in 1817 but by the 1897 census the number of Jews had risen to 7,184, or 96.5 percent of the town's population. A Jewish state school was opened there in 1847, and a hospital in 1887. In 1930, the city had 5,354 Jews, still 95.2 percent of the population. Today, with a population of some 80,000, it is the fifth largest city in Moldova, but with very few Jews.

In Brichany, as it was then called, Chaim Dovid's father worked as an *upravlayushchi* (steward) on the estate of a Jew named Yankel Nafturle who had leased it from a local *purets* (squire) whose name by chance was also Cherkes, although he was not a Jew.

The following account of Brichany is from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*:

On the eve of World War II, the Jewish population was near 10,000. In June, 1940, when the city was annexed to the Soviet Union, Jewish property and the communal buildings were confiscated and only the synagogue was saved because it was used as a granary. Some 80 Jews were exiled to Siberia. On July 8, 1941, Romanian and German troops seized Brichany on their eastern offensive and murdered many Jews. Jews from the neighboring towns of Lipkany and Sekiryany were brought to Brichany, and on July 28, all Jews were dispatched across the Dniestr and several were shot en route. When they arrived in Mogilev, the Germans forced the younger Jews to dig graves for the older ones who were shot and buried there. From Mogilev, the rest were turned back to Ataki in Bessarabia, and then on to Sekiryany, with hundreds dying en route. For a month they stayed in the ghetto there, only to be deported again to Transnistria [the east bank of the Dniestr River] where they were murdered in a forest near Soroca. At the end of World War II, only 1,000 Jews returned to Brichany.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever relatives we may have had in Brichany were most likely murdered in these "actions," as they were called by the Germans.

The origins of Cherkes (Cerkez in modern Romanian), the family name, are a mystery but there are several possible explanations, all of them

plausible. To begin, the Cherkessy (in the plural) are a Sunni Muslim Turkic tribe that dates back to the thirteenth century. Here is how one scholar describes their origins:

The term "Cherkess" itself is confusing because, like "Tatar," it has been used with different meanings in different periods. The Cherkess belong to the Adygei group...and their name appears to be derived from Kerkety, one of the Adygei tribal names. The whole group are referred to in the early Russian chronicles as Kasogi/Kasagi; at about the same period (c. tenth century, AD) they were known to the Arabs, Persians and Georgians as Kushak. From the thirteenth century the name Cherkas began to be used (though not specifically for the Adygei, rather more for the people of the southern Ukraine). This term, in the form Cherkess, came to be accepted as the general designation of all the north Caucasian peoples (e.g. Abkazians, Abazins, Ossetians, etc.) and is still often used in this sense in Turkish and western European sources.<sup>27</sup>

The term Cherkessy, however, is also used for a Sunni Muslim people who inhabited the North Caucasus mountains between the Kuban River and Black Sea coast. Russian vassals since 1557, the Cherkessy, nevertheless, in the nineteenth century successfully resisted Russian military expansion for fifty years until they were overwhelmed by superior forces, much as the Chechens also were, then and in our time as well. After their defeat by the Russians, many of the Cherkessy fled to various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Another group of the Cherkessy around 1600, of somewhat privileged descent, settled in the Principality of Moldova and eventually became one of its 72 boyar (higher nobility) families. In time they were assimilated into the general population.

In English, the Cherkessy are called Circassians, a name well known in the West, and especially to the British. In the early nineteenth century, the British cultivated people who might help them stop Russia's advance to the Middle East and India. Many books about the Circassians written by British travelers and scholars can be found today in major research libraries. Those books stress the beauty of the Cherkessy women – Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible married one – and the ferocity of their warriors.

Most of Eastern Europe's Jews originally lived in historic Poland, in the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a multi-ethnic state with people of many religions. But very few Jews at that time lived in Orthodox Russia where Jews were not allowed to settle. In the early eighteenth century, however, when Russia began to acquire Polish lands in Ukraine, it

also acquired a few Jews. Those Jews were initially tolerated by Russian rulers but were expelled from Russia in 1727 by order of Empress Catherine I, an expulsion that was confirmed in 1744 by her successor, Empress Elizabeth.

But when Russia, under Catherine the Great (who ruled 1762-1796), absorbed Eastern Poland, Central Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, the greatly enlarged Russian Empire acquired hundreds of thousands of Jews and had to come to terms with its new subjects. One result was the imposition of the so-called Pale of Settlement which initially restricted Jewish residency to the western and southern lands of the Russian Empire, including the Caucasus where the Cherkessy lived.<sup>28</sup>

In 1825, however, at the start of the reactionary reign of Tsar Nicholas I and his suppressive policies against Jews, permission was withdrawn for Jews to live in the Astrakhan and Caucasus provinces where Jews had lived in small communities since the first millenium after arriving from Persia. It is quite possible, therefore, that one of Chaim Dovid's ancestors was forced to leave the Caucasus at that time and migrate to Bessarabia which was within the Pale of Settlement. Jews in those years commonly took family names from their places of origin, and because he came from the land of the Cherkessy, he may have been called Cherkes. Similarly, some Jews are named Astrakhan, which may indicate origin in that province.

With Russia's acquisition of the Caucasus region it was faced with long-lasting insurgency and guerrilla warfare by the Muslim peoples of the region – Chechens, Ingush, Cherkessy, and others --who did not want to live under Russian and Christian rule.

In 1864, when Russia had finally completed its conquest of the Caucasus after a fifty-year struggle, some 600,000 Circassians left their homeland at the urging of the Turks who considered themselves responsible for their fellow Muslims. In their migration, some Circassians wended their way westward along the northern coast of the Black Sea and then south through Romania and Bulgaria on their way to refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Some settled in Syria, Lebanon, and what are now Jordan and Israel – then also a part of the Ottoman Empire – where they were enlisted by the Turks in the defense of Palestine. In World War I, descendants of those Circassians fought on the side of the Turks and, after the war, during the British Mandate of Palestine, served in the British army. In 1947, as professional soldiers, the Circassians fought alongside the Jewish Haganah to defeat the

Arabs in the Galilee, and they have fought for Israel in every war since it gained independence. In our time, Circassians have also served in the Israeli forces that maintain security in the occupied West Bank. Although they are Muslim and speak their own language, in addition to Hebrew and English, the Israeli Circassians, who now number some 3,000, are highly regarded and trusted members of the Israeli Defense Force.<sup>29</sup>

So, does that make the Cherkes family Circassians? Not necessarily, although that possibility cannot be eliminated. Some Circassians did indeed pass through Romania at about the time that Jews in Bessarabia were taking family names. Chaim Dovid's black wavy hair, blue eyes, dark complexion, short stocky build (5 ft., 5 in.), broad facial features, and high cheek bones indicate that he may indeed have been descended from a Circassian warrior who dallied in Bessarabia. Neither Chaim Dovid nor his siblings – Polly, Lena, and Ruby, all three from their father's first marriage – could be said, from the photos we have of them, to have typically Jewish features. Young Chaim Dovid and his brother Ruby, in their early photos, indeed look more like sons of the Caucasus than sons of Israel. And because Jews practiced matrilineal descent--anyone whose mother was Jewish was recognized as a Jew--there may indeed be a Circassian in our family tree.

To be more speculative, one might also consider the Khazars, the Tatar rulers of the North Caucasus region who converted to Judaism in the eighth century and maintained their independent empire for more than two centuries before being conquered by Svyatoslav, Duke of Kiev. The peoples of Khazaria, as the Khazar land was called, after being overrun by Ghengis Kahn's Mongols in the twelfth century, fled west to Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Romania (which included Bessarabia at the time). One theory has it that some East European Jews are descended, not from Asheknazi Jews of Western Europe, but rather from those who fled westward from Khazaria.<sup>30</sup>

Another possible explanation for the Cherkes name is that one of Chaim Dovid's ancestors may have come from Cherkessk (an adjectival form of Cherkess), the North Caucasus city in the center of the region where the Cherkessy lived. When Russian Jews, in the nineteenth century, were required to take family names in order to facilitate collection of taxes and conscription lists for the military, they had to choose family names. Until that time most Jews were known by their patronymics, e.g. Chaim Dovid ben (son of) Yoel Volf.

Jews often took family names that indicated their city or place of origin – Minsky, Krakower, Berliner, Rovner, Filene, Rohatyn, Wiener, and Prager. A Cherkes, therefore, might indicate someone whose ancestors had come from Cherkessk, or perhaps Cherkassy, a city on the Dnieper River in Ukraine about 120 miles southeast of Kiev. Witness all the Jews named Cherkassky – the masculine adjectival form – the best known of whom was the great romantic pianist Shura Cherkassky, who was born in Odessa in 1911, and died in London in 1995.

Another explanation, offered recently by a Russian scholar in St. Petersburg, is that the Russian word "Cherkes or Cherkas" is also an old synonym for the word *kazak*, and among common Jewish family names are Kazak, Kazakov, Kazakevich. Kazak was also a common Jewish nickname which meant "strong, brave man."

To add another question, the name "Wolf" is not Jewish or Russian. So, how did my father's father get the name Yoel Volf? Whatever the possible explanations, at the present time we can only speculate and may never know, with certainty, the origin of the Cherkes family name. Some hope, however, may come with the new development of DNA genealogy which may be able to tell us if we are indeed descended from a Cherkes warrior who dallied in Bessarabia.

What *is* certain, however, is that my father was a Bessarabian Jew, a people known as shrewd traders, crafty businessmen, and no strangers to underhanded practices, traits that aptly describe my father. That well-earned Bessarabian reputation, however, has a basis in history.

When Romania – of which Bessarabia was then a part – came under the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century, it was ruled by Phanariot Greeks serving as agents of the Turkish Sultan. The Phanariots, named after the district of Constantinople where they originated, filled many of the Romanian princely positions which they purchased at a price for periods of one or two years. During their short tenure in office, the Phanariots sought to maximize the return on their investment through corrupt practices which included excessive taxation, smuggling, the sale of offices, speculation in foreign currency, and otherwise robbing Romania of its riches. The entire Romanian nation suffered, and the legacy of the Phanariots lingered on long after they had departed. They left behind in Romania and Bessarabia a tradition of opportunism and shady dealings which long outlasted their tenure.

The first Cherkes family member we know of was my great grandfather, Yoel Volf Cherkes. As told by my father, Yoel Volf was a strong and healthy man, and during one of the frequent cholera epidemics in Bessarabia he volunteered to massage people who came down with the illness. Massage, at the time, was believed to be a cure for cholera, but with Yoel Volf's contact with infected people, he himself contracted the disease and succumbed to it.<sup>31</sup>

Yoel Volf's son, also named Yoel Volf Cherkes, and the grandfather for whom I am named, was born in Sokyryany (Sokoran), just west of Kelmentsy on the Dniestr River. This raises a question since Jews, by tradition, are not named after living people. It is quite likely, therefore, that my great grandfather died before his son was born, and the son was named after his deceased father. This seems plausible, since in 1872 there was a major cholera epidemic in Russia.

Chaim Dovid lived with his parents on farms near Brichany where his father was the steward of an estate owned, as noted above, by a Russian squire also named Cherkes. The many Cherkes names in that part of Bessarabia indicate that some Circassians, as well as Jews from Circassia, may indeed have settled there after their exodus from the Caucasus.

My grandfather Yoel Volf, died in Belkovitz in 1900, at age fifty-five, when Chaim Dovid was only seven, from injuries suffered four years earlier when he was thrown from a horse and dragged some distance with his foot caught in a stirrup. Yoel Volf is buried in Brichany in the Jewish cemetery "on the hill across the bridge," as my father described it to me.<sup>32</sup>

After Yoel Volf's death, Chaim Dovid and his mother Sura moved to Brichany where they lived for a year with Sura's sister, Chana (Eva) Roshashonsky. They next moved to Kelmentsy, Sura's birthplace, where they remained for three years and where Sura married Leib Bravman, a grain merchant, who raised Chaim Dovid. It was Sura's third marriage, her first being to (fnu) Reines of Novoselets. It was quite common in those days for Jews to remarry shortly after a spouse had died, and marriage brokers were always ready, willing, and able, for the right price, to find a suitable match.

Sura and Leib Bravman lived in Kelmentsy for three years and then moved to Nahoring (Nagoryan in Russian, Nahorian in Ukrainian) on the Dniestr River, where Bravman had brothers. The squire in Nahoring, according to my father, was a Polish medical doctor named Volsky (Wolski, in Polish). Volsky had a younger brother, Isu (phonetic), who, according to

my father, was killed by peasants in his brother's manor house in one of the revolts of the Russian Revolution.

Chaim Dovid attended *kheder* (hebrew school) in Kelmentsy until the age of sixteen, and for a short time in Kamianets-Podilsky (Kamenets-Podolskiy in Russian). He was proficient in his Torah and Talmud studies, and years later, although neither a believer nor a synagogue goer, he would often recite from memory lines learned from his boyhood studies. After finishing kheder, Chaim Dovid became a grain trader, a common Jewish occupation in Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup>

Like most Jews of Eastern Europe, Chaim Dovid could speak, or at least understand, several languages. Among themselves Jews spoke Yiddish, but Chaim Dovid also knew Hebrew, was conversant in Russian and Romanian, and could understand Ukrainian, Polish, and German as well. English, however, he spoke with a heavy accent and never fully mastered.

Chaim Dovid had four siblings--Leib (Leo), Lena, Polina (Polly), and Ruby. Leib Cherkes, the eldest, came to New York in 1908, two years after his father's death and two years before Chaim Dovid.<sup>34</sup>

Leib made the long trip from Russia to New York twice, which was not unusual in those days. Many men came to look things over, and then went back and returned with their wives and children. Leib arrived in New York on June 27, 1908, age twenty-six, on the SS Campania from Liverpool, which must have been the first trip. We do not know the date of his second arrival but at that time he must have come with his wife Shaya. Leib and his wife returned to Russia in 1910 and he died there in Lipkany, Bessarabia, on the Prut River, in 1917 or 1918, at age thirty-five or thirty-six, rather young, but those were years of war, revolution, and much violence. Leib's son Gerald Cherkes arrived in New York around 1917, at age seventeen, presumably to avoid the Russian draft, went to high school in New York City, and became an upholsterer. Leib also had several other children who remained in Lipkany, and their fate is not known. They were either killed by the Germans or Romanians, fled east with the Soviet Army and perhaps survived World War II, or immigrated to Israel.

Gerald Cherkes married Betty Winer on April 3, 1937 in New York City, and they had a daughter, Rhoda, later known as Ronnie. Ronnie married Harold Tartar on June 15, 1958 and they had three children, Lori, Caryn, and Glenn. Caryn married Howard Glasser, and they had children named Sierra

and Austin. Lori married Howard Oberstein, and they had Jesse and Evan. Glenn was single. Ronnie and Harold Tartar live in Brooklyn, NY.

Lena Cherkes married (fnu) Feinstein and moved with him to California. Their son, George, who studied at the University of California in Berkeley, died while a student there. The Feinsteins had another son, Walter, who worked in advertising in New York City, and a daughter, Julia, who lived in California. Julia came to visit us one summer at Revere Beach, and we have photos of that visit. Of Julia and Walter, there is no trace, but Ronnie Tartar recalls visiting Julia in California in 1958. Julia was married then and had a son who was a teenager in 1958. The name of Julia's husband and son are not known. Lena died in Alameda, CA, in 1954.

Aunt Polly (Chaya Perel was her Jewish name), married Philip (Pincus) Seplow (originally Cęplowitz) on March 13, 1905 in New York City. Uncle Philip, as we called him, worked in the clothing industry in New York. When I was about three, he made for me a navy blue sailor suit, very popular with little boys at the time, and we have a photo of that too. Uncle Philip is recalled as a very kind, friendly, easygoing man, always smiling, and fond of telling jokes, some of which I still remember to this day. Cęplowitz (pronounced Tsemp-loh-vitz in Polish) is a name of Polish-Lithuanian origin which was shortened to Seplow in the United States. The origins of the Cęplowitz family are in the town of Daniłowicz in Poland. Philip and Polly's only child, George Warren Seplow, was graduated from New York University and earned a dental degree at Tufts in Boston. His Jewish name, like mine, was Yoel Volf, after our grandfather.

Polly and Hymie (as Chaim Dovid was called in America) were close in their younger years, and in the 1920s and '30s the Seplovs would often come to visit us in Boston. We children looked forward to their visits which were big events for us since they always brought gifts – clothing and chocolates or candy. (I recall the boxes from Schrafft's). Polly had a full head of grey hair (as did her brother Ruby), and I was told that she had turned grey at the age of sixteen, apparently the result of a genetic trait.

Polly was as Americanized as her brother Hymie was not, and she was always up to date on what was American and "correct." She also watched what she ate, and never traveled without her mineral water (Saratoga and Poland Spring preferred) and her mission figs. With her, I ate my first mission fig and it was the best thing I had tasted to that time. I have eaten them regularly ever since and become a regular guy. Whenever I see a bottle



of Poland Spring water in my local supermarket, I am always reminded of my Aunt Polly.

In later years, there was an estrangement between Polly and Ruby on the one hand, and Hymie on the other, after the three of them went to Florida together one winter in the mid-1930s. My father went to recover from the "grippe," and Polly and Ruby to chase the winter sun, but they drove back to New York together in my father's Chevy, and I believe they had a falling out during the long ride home. In any event, there were no more visits to us in Boston. That was regrettable because the Cherkes family was so small, and we children used to look forward to their visits.

When George Seplow was studying dentistry at Tufts his mother moved to Boston, and he lived with her, first at 227 Harold Street in Roxbury, in the same house and on the same floor as we did. After a year or so, they moved to Seaver Street, on the second floor of a very nice apartment building on the corner of Maple Street across from Franklin Park, and one block west of Blue Hill Avenue.

My memories of George are based on the impressions he made on me as a young boy of ten to twelve years. I recall him as someone to admire and look up to. He was tall (to me at least), dark, and handsome, had a well trimmed mustache, dressed conservatively but elegantly, wore suspenders, and read *The New Yorker* magazine. I recall how he would race down stairs faster than I had ever seen anyone do. While at dental school, George worked part-time as a counterman at the Waldorf Cafeteria chain in Boston.

One of my brother Ed's favorite stories about cousin George concerns the treatment he received from George at the Tufts Dental Clinic when George was a dental student. Angered by the pain, Ed, in a reference to George's mustache, shouted at him, "You have dirt under your nose!"

After completing dental school, George and his mother returned to New York City where George set up a dental practice and married Daisy Pearl Derfner. They lived in the Bronx where George practiced dentistry and later managed his father-in-law's real estate holdings. Shortly after their marriage at New York's Hotel Edison, which my father, mother, and Aunt Nettie attended, George and Daisy came to visit us in Boston. I recall that he drove the biggest car (his father-in-law's) I had ever seen.

Many years later, in 1947, I visited George and Daisy when I was passing through New York on my way to Germany. I also saw them in 1956 when I was a graduate student at Columbia University studying Polish history in

preparation for an assignment in Warsaw. Daisy's parents were Polish Jews, and I recall her telling me how she had visited her relatives in a small shtetl near Warsaw after graduating from Barnard College. The trip was a graduation gift from her father, a house painter who had the good sense to put his savings into real estate which he accumulated over the years. Ed also saw them in New York in 1949 when he returned from visiting me in Germany.

George and Daisy had two children, Kenneth and Ellen. Kenneth Seplow studied law, went into financial management, and lives in Manhattan. He had two sons, Michael and Andrew. Ellen, a lawyer, lives in Manhattan with her second husband, Morris Zedeck, a toxicologist. Ellen's first marriage to (fnu) Lieberman ended in divorce. From her first marriage Ellen has two daughters, Lisa and Andrea Lieberman.

Polly and Philip Seplow moved from New York City to New Jersey where they owned and operated a small chicken farm in Freewood Acres, south of Freehold. Polly died on September 22, 1964, at about age seventy-seven. After her death, Philip moved to the Bronx and died on July 20, 1973 in New Rochelle. He was buried at the Beth David Cemetery in Elmont, Long Island, in a group plot owned by the Wolkozisker Burial Society. (Wolk is Russian-Yiddish for "wolf," and Wolkozisker may be the name of a Landsmannschaft to which he belonged, and may also indicate that he came from a place named Wolkozisk in Poland or Lithuania.)

George Seplow died in Palm Beach, Florida, on December 6, 1989 at age eighty-three, proving again that the Cherkeses are long-living. Surviving him were his children Kenneth Seplow and Ellen Lieberman Zedeck, and the four grandchildren named above. George and Daisy had been married fifty-five years when she died in 1987.

Uncle Ruby Cherkes also became a chicken farmer, in Freehold, New Jersey. A taciturn and reclusive man, Ruby came to see me in 1943 when I was down with the "flu" at the army hospital in Fort Monmouth, NJ. My mother, recalling the great flu epidemic of 1919 which killed thousands of Americans, was concerned, and she called Ruby and asked him to check my health status. Ruby was married once but there were no children and nothing is known of his former wife. Not much more is known about him but everyone in the Richmond and Beggelman families used to say that I was "just like Ruby," in character as well as physical appearance. I never knew whether they meant it as a compliment or not.

Ruby died in Alameda, CA, in 1969, so it appears that he went there after his sister Polly died in 1964.

## **HYMIE'S AMERICA**

### **The Early Years (1910-1911)**

My father was a draft dodger! In 1910, at age seventeen, and to avoid the Russian army draft, Chaim Dovid immigrated to the United States to join his siblings in New York City. In those years, young men were drafted into the Russian army for six years, followed by nine in the reserves, and it was a difficult and brutal tour of duty, especially for Jews. Hazing was common, as were beatings by noncoms and officers. Service was often in isolated places, far from home, and for observant Jews – and most Jews were observant in those days – there was no access to kosher food or religious services.

Dodging the draft, however, probably saved my father's life since he might have become one of the many Russian casualties in World War I. And aside from the draft, the future for Jews in Bessarabia was not promising in those years, and many Jews, as a result of the Kishinev pogroms, left for America.

The emigration was clandestine, made by bribing Russian border guards. For my father, the entire trip, from Nahoryan to the Dutch port city of Rotterdam, and from there by ocean liner to New York, was arranged by an agent, for a price. He arrived in New York on August 10, 1911 on the SS Uranium and was met by a friend of his siblings who treated him to his first American hot dog. On the Uranium's manifest (Line Number 0009), which can be found on the Ellis Island website, he is listed as Chaim Czerkis, and his relative or friend in the United States is listed as Chaim Bronfman, 208 Cherry Street, Newton, Mass.<sup>35</sup> Who this Bronfman is we do not know, although the similarity of Bronfman with Bravman raises questions.

In New York City, Hymie, as he was then known, lived at first with his half-sister Polly, and worked as a plumber's apprentice through the winter of 1911. Polly and her siblings, Leib, Lena, and Ruby, as noted above, were children of Yoel Volf Cherkes and his first wife (name not known) and were therefore half-siblings of Chaim Dovid.

Disliking the big city, and unhappy with the dirty work of a plumber, the country boy in spring 1911 moved to Norma, near Vineland, in South Jersey, to work on the farm of a Jew named Bennie Puff (phonetic). Norma was a

Jewish agricultural community founded by the Baron de Hirsch Fund of New York City, named after its founder, a wealthy French-Jewish banker and philanthropist who believed that practical training and resettlement on the land were necessary for survival of the Jewish people. Vineland is north of Cape May, near Woodbine which was incorporated as an all-Jewish town. According to my father, Puff had two daughters, but no sons, and he saw Hymie as a future son-in-law. Apparently, neither of the daughters appealed to Hymie, and after six months down on the farm, he left Puff in a huff. Had he remained there, his children might have become farmers in South Jersey. The year was 1911, and, disliking New York because it was too big and crowded, he next tried Boston where he had a cousin.

Hymie, however, always retained a love of farming. When we lived on Harold Street in Roxbury during the early 1930s, an Italian man, named Rocco Bravocco, lived next to us in a big house on the corner of Harold and Homestead Streets. Behind his house was a garden where he grew tomatoes which he sun dried and packed away for making tomato sauce. One evening, Rocco came out with a scythe and tried to cut the grass in his yard. Father and I were watching from our porch, and Hymie, not liking the way Rocco was handling his scythe, went down and showed him how a scythe should be swung.

### **The Boston Years (1911-1947)**

Hymie lived first in Boston with Chaim (Hyman) Bravman, a son of his stepfather, Leib Bravman, at 102 Myrtle Street on Beacon Hill in Boston's West End. That area, very fashionable today, and near where the Massachusetts General Hospital now stands, was at that time a largely Jewish neighborhood. It was also the home of the West End House, a settlement house, as they were called, which conducted all sorts of activities for immigrants, including a highly regarded basketball team, and functioned as a community center for Jews. With Bravman there also lived a man named Reichman, a cousin of Bravman's mother. Reichman would refer to Hymie as "brother," and because people called him "Reichman's brother," Hymie changed his name to Hyman Reichman. When he got his citizenship in the army, he changed it to Richmond to sound more Anglo.

We do not know what kind of work Hymie did in Boston between 1911 and 1918 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army during the final year of World War I. Inducted on July 22, 1918 in Boston, he trained at Camp Upton on Long Island in Company G, 42d Infantry Regiment, and was scheduled to go overseas on November 11, 1918, the day the war ended. He was honorably discharged at Camp Upton on January 24, 1919 with the rank of private and qualified as a sharp-shooter. When he was naturalized as a U.S. citizen, also on January 24, 1919 at Camp Upton, he officially became Herman D. Richmond. (My brother Ed has a copy of his induction notice, discharge, and naturalization certificate.) But despite the change of name, to family and friends he was forever "Hymie."

Hymie married Rhoda Beggelman in East Boston on April 1, 1918, in a religious ceremony in a house which still stands at 142 Chelsea Street, presumably the home of a rabbi at the time. We have a copy of the announcement, published in a local newspaper, which gives Rhoda's residence as 170 Chelsea Street, East Boston, and Hymie's as 411 Charles Street, Boston. She was 19, a salesgirl, and he was 26, and a soldier. After his discharge from the army, Hymie became a highly skilled clothing cutter, a craftsman who, working with patterns, cut cloth for clothing. Cutters originally worked with a large scissors and cut one piece of cloth at a time. But by the time my father came to this work the scissors were electric and the cloth was piled up in layers so that several pieces were cut at the same time. It required dexterity and skill because a slip of the hand could ruin many pieces of expensive cloth. Successful in his work, Hymie was always employed, even during the Depression, and brought home fifty dollars each week for six days of work, on which a family of five could live well in those days, if it watched its budget.

Hymie and Rhoda lived first for a short time in East Boston, next in Orient Heights, just north of East Boston, and then in Beachmont, a suburb of Revere north of Orient Heights. Beachmont was a stop on what, in those days, was called the Narrow Gauge Railway, and today is a part of the Boston "T." Their apartment in Beachmont was on the second floor of 6 State Road, a short street that runs from the center of Beachmont and the T station to the traffic rotary at the south end of the Revere Beach Boulevard. The house, which still stands, is a frame triple-decker, the first house south of the rotary. In that apartment, my sister Minnie (later Midge) and I lived.

And in that same house also lived the newly married Myer and Sarah Karas and their daughter, Ann Karas (later Castleman).

In 1925, the Richmonds moved to an apartment on the top floor of a triple-decker at 19 Wave Avenue, one block from State Road and two blocks in from the ocean. The Myer and Elia Karas families lived in an adjoining triple decker. Those houses also still stand, although the front porches have been converted into rooms.

### **The Roxbury Years**

Beachmont was pleasant in the summer but cold and damp in the winter, and after my brother Edward was born in 1926, the Richmonds moved to Roxbury, at that time a very pleasant middle-class section of Boston. Shortly thereafter, the two Karas families moved to Mattapan where they had purchased newly built houses at the top of Tennis Road.

Roxbury at that time had three ethnic enclaves--Irish, Black, and Jewish. The Irish and Black enclaves were to the north, closer to the center of Boston, and the Jewish section was adjacent to Franklin Park. Bounded by Washington Street to the West, Townsend Street to the North, Blue Hill Avenue and a little further East, and Franklin Park to the South, it was a compact community, almost entirely Jewish, with several synagogues and temples for religious Jews, rich and poor. Indeed, from an economic standpoint, Roxbury was a mix of housing, with wooden triple-decker houses along Waumbeck Street to the north, and lovely wooden and stone detached houses on Brookledge Street and Elm Hill Avenue to the south. The streets were safe at night, and it was rare to hear of a robbery, house breaking, or burglary.

We lived first in a red brick apartment building at 159 Crawford Street at the corner of Walnut Avenue, across the street from the old Morrison School where I attended kindergarten. One year later, we moved to 227 Harold Street, only a short block from Franklin Park and directly across the street from the old Williams School where brother Ed and I attended grades one and two. The Harold Street house was destroyed in a fire a few years ago and no longer stands, and the Williams School, where we learned to read and write, is also gone.

In the Harold Street apartment, Ed and I had shared a bedroom with our sister Midge but as we grew we needed a larger apartment. So, in 1935, we moved around the corner to a large frame house at 12 Homestead Street which still stands. It's the second house in from Walnut Avenue on the north side of Homestead, and was the nicest house we ever lived in.

Originally a one-family home, the house had been divided into a first floor apartment and a second floor apartment where we lived. On the third floor, there was a large, unfinished attic, where we played in inclement weather, and a finished but unheated bedroom. The rooms were large, sunny, and airy, and Ed and I shared a bedroom on the second floor until we persuaded our father that we should be allowed to sleep in the finished room on the third floor. Although it had no radiator, there was enough heat from the rooms below to keep us comfortable in the winter. There were also four garages behind the house, heated from the house furnace. And it was my job, at the age of 11 to 13 to keep the coal-fired furnace going all year round, for heat and hot water in the winter, and hot water in the summer.

Before breakfast, I would go down to the cellar, shovel out the ashes, pile on the coal, open the flue, and then, before going to school, partly close the flue. At night, I would "bank" the fire with ashes and close the flue. It sounds simple, but until I learned how to control the fire and heat, it was not so easy. If the fire got too big, the water in the boiler would overheat and the excess steam would vent through an escape valve, which terrified me whenever it happened. No one ever explained to me how such a furnace operated but I soon learned by doing. And once a week I had to roll the ash barrels out to the curb for collection. Rolling the barrels was no problem, but lifting them full of ashes up a flight of stairs from the cellar was hard work for a young boy. It was also my job to shovel the driveway when it snowed so that cars could exit the garages.

A year or so after we moved in, the owner, an Irish lady who lived in South Boston, offered to sell the house to my father for \$2,000. In retrospect, it was a great buy and Hymie had the money, but he turned down the offer. It was the height of the Depression and bank failures, and he was cautious about investing in real estate, although with the rent from the four heated garages and the first floor apartment, we could have lived on the second and third floors for nothing. Had Hymie bought the house, he would have been able to sell it at a big profit after the war. When I last saw the house in 1994, it was in good condition, and I wondered what it would be worth today.



Hymie worked as a clothing cutter until 1932 when he went into what he called "the gold business." With a new maroon Chevy two-door sedan—purchased for \$525 cash—he became a house-to-house canvasser, buying old gold and silver, jewelry, and whatever else he could find of resale value. From that work he made a decent living until 1947 when he left Rhoda, in another huff, and moved to Miami, Florida, after selling the Chevy for \$50. (Elia Karas once said that Hymie would never buy another car, and he was right.) Strictly a "cash-and-carry" man, Hymie dealt only in greenbacks, never borrowed money, and never had a checking account. In his pants pocket he always carried a big wad of bills held together by a rubber band.

Roxbury, where our sister Midge and my brother Ed and I spent our youth in the 1920s and '30s, was a wonderful place to grow up. With its tree-shaded streets, good public schools within walking distance, and proximity to downtown Boston via public transportation, it was home for many middle-class Jewish families. That part of Boston, as noted above, was completely Jewish, a self-imposed ghetto where most of Boston's Jews lived. In school, from kindergarten through the sixth grade, I can recall only two non-Jewish kids in all my classes. And when people ask me today how I can recognize whether someone is a Jew, I tell them that I recognize the faces of my childhood.

Few families had cars in those days, and most people used public transportation to get to their workplace in the city. Trolley cars, called "streetcars" in Boston, ran along the main routes of Roxbury – Humboldt and Blue Hill Avenues, and Seaver and Warren Streets – and connected to the "El," the Boston Elevated Railway which is today called the "T." Two streetcar lines connecting to the El were only a block from our house, on Seaver Street and Humboldt Avenue, and the Egleston Square El station was a short walk. So, there was really no need for a car, except for my father's house-to-house canvassing..

We lived only one short block from Franklin Park, Boston's big municipal park, with its zoo, golf course, and fields for football and baseball. The park was also a great place for children to explore, with lots of undeveloped land, and trees to climb. In winter, a big hill on the golf course became a haven for sledders, and on that hill each winter the city built two long, wooden toboggan chutes which, in below freezing weather, provided an icy surface for speedy toboggan rides.

Shopping was always nearby, on almost every corner. At the end of the short block where we lived on Harold Street, and only a few steps from our house at the corner of Ruthven Street, there were two grocery stores, a drug store, a bakery, a shoe repair shop, and one block away a tailor shop. One short block to the east, on Humboldt Avenue, there was another drug store, a larger grocery, a barber shop, delicatessen, dry cleaner, another bakery, a Jewish book store, and a few other shops. Other shopping centers, with a greater variety of stores, were only a few blocks further in three different directions.

There were no school buses in Boston in those days, and we all walked to school. Elementary and junior high schools were only a short walk, and Roxbury Memorial High School, the local high school which we attended, was only a few blocks further. Education was co-ed through junior high, but high schools were single-sex. Roxbury Memorial was actually two high schools in one building, one for boys in the east wing of the building, and the other for girls in the west wing, with connecting doors on each floor which no one would dare to open and venture into the school of the opposite sex!

Winters were much colder than they are now – global warming is real – and we had very heavy snowfalls which we kids welcomed because schools would often close on those days, and we could go out and play in the snow. I don't know how tall I was in those years but I can recall snow drifts almost as high as I was. Friendly fights with snowballs were common, and everyone had a sled which was used on the many hills in our community. After snow storms, some streets were officially closed to cars so kids could coast on them.

What did we otherwise do for recreation? When not in Franklin Park, we played on streets and in back yards. We also played games with marbles, which in Boston were called “aggies,” from “agates.”

For organized recreation, the Boston YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association), with its gym and bowling alleys, was only two blocks away on the corner of Seaver and Humboldt, in a big building that had once been a private residence. Most of its activities centered around clubs that met in the building and played baseball and football in Franklin Park just across the street. There were also lectures in the evening, music and theater performances, and semi-pro basketball games on Saturday nights, following by dancing for older boys and girls. I heard my first public lecture there, by

someone who had accompanied Admiral Byrd to the South Pole. And I had my first boxing lesson in the gym there, but after being bopped on the nose a couple of times I decided that boxing was not for me.

Streets were full of people all day -- adults, as well as children, and mothers who did not work then, pushing baby carriages, shopping, or sunning themselves and their infants, much as their sun-loving ancestors had done in Russia. The streets were friendly, safe, and hospitable, and we knew everyone on our block.

One time when our streets were not safe was in September 1938. I was at the YMHA late one afternoon and, as I left for home, I noticed that the winds were very high and trees were falling everywhere. Very exciting it was to be out during such a storm. When I got home I found parents frantic over my long absence. I had been walking the streets during the big hurricane that ravaged southern New England and left more than 600 dead.

At 4 P.M. the streets began to empty as mothers returned to their kitchens to prepare dinner, and children regrouped around their radios to listen to their favorite children's programs. Our favorites included "Bobby Benson," a series about a youngster on a ranch in the West; "Buck Rogers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century," a space adventure story that missed the space age by 500 years; "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy;" "Mandrake the Magician;" and that old standby, "Little Orphan Annie." Each program was fifteen minutes long, and they followed one another from 4 to 6 P.M.

We ate well during the depression, when others were going hungry. Dinner was usually at 6 P.M., after father had returned home from work, always at the same hour, and with the entire family seated at the table. Our dinner menu usually included a homemade soup; a main dish of meat, chicken, or fish; vegetables and potatoes, a dessert, and Jewish dark rye bread without which no meal was complete, except on Friday when we had *challah*. Vegetables came fresh in spring and summer, and canned in winter. Dessert was usually stewed prunes, which I disliked as a child but now appreciate, or canned fruit – peaches, pears, or pineapple. We got lots of minerals and vitamins, as my father would come home from work on Saturday evenings loaded down with fruit and vegetables purchased at discount prices from Italian vendors at the North End market outside today's Sumner Tunnel entrance. On Saturday evening all the ripe produce in the market was sold for bargain prices since it would not last to Monday morning. On those Saturdays my father, who was dark complected and knew

some Italian, would pretend to be an Italian as he haggled with the vendors for the lowest possible prices.

One favorite among Jewish families was rendered chicken fat and *gribbenes* (cracklings of crisp, brown chicken skin). The fat was so tasty when smeared on a slice of dark rye bread but today we wouldn't touch it. Other favorites were pickled herring, *gefilte fish* (stuffed, spiced fish), chopped chicken liver (a Jewish paté), beef stew, *latkes* (potato pancakes), and dill pickles, all home made of course. And, in the European tradition, every meal had soup for the first course, also home made. For Saturday lunch we were "treated" to Campbell's tomato soup, Heinz baked beans with frankfurters, or deli food – corned beef, rolled beef, pastrami, and bologna.

Cash was scarce during the depression years when the average annual wage in 1938 was \$1,731, but food was cheap. Boston at that time was the world's biggest fishing port, and we ate a lot of fresh fish at only 10 cents a pound. Milk was 12 cents a quart, delivered every morning to your door, and each child was expected to drink a quart a day of full milk; low-fat milk had not yet been invented, and fat was supposed to be good for you. A good loaf of Jewish rye bread was only 12 cents, while Wonder Bread went for 10. Wonder Bread was a treat on Sunday night when my sister made toasted cheese sandwiches for us. Home deliveries were routine, and each grocery store had an "order boy" who would deliver groceries to your home free of charge but in expectation of a tip. My grandmother did all her food shopping by telephone, and in Yiddish.

Sweets were also cheap, and we ate too much of them. There was lots of penny candy, and a Hershey Chocolate Bar or Milky Way was only 5 cents. An ice cream cone with "jimmies" (chocolate sprinkles) and a sugar cone was also 5, scooped out of a frozen container by hand. A milk shake or ice cream soda was 10 cents, and a banana split 15. Drug stores all had a "soda fountain," where customers could sit at a counter and savor a milk shake, ice cream soda, or a sundae (ice cream topped with a chocolate or butterscotch sauce). Some drugstores also had lunch counters where you could get a light meal or a sandwich and coffee. And the drug store was where you bought packaged ice cream to take home.

Here are a few other prices that will astound today's youngsters. A daily newspaper was two cents, and there were morning and evening papers, the *Boston Post* and *Boston Herald* in the morning, and the *Boston Traveler* and *Boston American* with afternoon and evening editions. A first-class letter

needed only a two-cent stamp, and for airmail, a five-cent stamp. And there were two home deliveries for mail, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. A pack of brand-name cigarettes was 12 cents, and a carton went for about a dollar. Gasoline was also cheap, 10 cents or so a gallon. I recall a contest once, a few years ago with some family members, to see who could remember the cheapest gas price. Brother-in-law Joe Nathanson took the prize – nine gallons for a dollar during the 1930s, with a free car wash thrown in. And to repair the many cavities that we had due to all the sweets we ate, our dentist charged only two dollars for a filling.

Our schools were all in the neighborhood. After completing our first two years at the Williams School, we attended the William Lloyd Garrison School, three blocks away on Brookledge Street, one street north of Seaver Street near Elm Hill Avenue, and after that, the Theodore Roosevelt School, our junior high school, near Egleston Square.

Until the seventh grade in junior high, we came home from school for lunch every day, and while walking back to school, always stopped off for a piece of penny candy. There were always sweets in the house, and when our numerous aunts and uncles would come to visit on weekends, they always brought a box of chocolates or other candy. We brushed our teeth before going to bed at night but no one flossed in those days, and we had plenty of cavities. If you think that today's dentists are painful, you should have experienced those in the 1930s. Electric drills were slow, and the dentist grabbed your head in an arm lock and drilled away, with no novocaine, regardless of the pain he was inflicting.

We got our first telephone in 1934. In those days you could get a "private" line, as it was called, or a two- or four-party line shared with other people. We started with a two-party line but soon switched to a private line when we found that the other party was listening to our calls. Local calls were not expensive but long distance calls were, since they had to be booked through an operator.

Entertainment was mostly at a local movie house, of which there were four within walking distance of where we lived. The Saturday matinee for children was the high point of the week. In the 1930s, the program usually included previews of coming attractions, a newsreel, cartoon, serial adventure story, two feature-length films, and live vaudeville acts (jugglers, acrobats, comedians, dancers, and singers), as well as door prizes for numbers drawn from a box on the stage. The price for all this was 10 cents

and, if the ushers didn't throw you out at the end of the "kiddie show," you could also stay for the evening show which followed for adults, without interruption. Mother allowed us to go to the movies on rainy days but we had to argue with her to go when the sun was shining.

Television did not yet exist, and we listened to the radio in the late afternoon and evening. As there were adventure programs for children in the late afternoon, there were also programs for adults later in the evening. One of my father's favorites was Arthur Tracy, known as the "Street Singer," with his theme song, "Martha, Rambling Rose of the Wildwood." Only recently did I learn that Tracy, who accompanied himself on the accordion, was a Bessarabian Jew like father, although Hymie did not know it.

Sunday was the big day for radio listening. In the morning, at 11, we tuned in to the Radio City Hour from New York, featuring the Radio City Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Damrosch and featuring singers such as the Jewish tenor Jan Peerce who later became a star of the Metropolitan Opera. My father also liked to listen to a local 30-minute Jewish program, entirely in Yiddish. In the evening, comedy shows were popular – Jack Benny and Eddie Cantor – as well as "symphony" hours, similar to the Pops concerts of today.

We were brought up in a home without musicians but with much music. We had a good radio, and we children were exposed to a wide range of what used to be called "good music." On Friday evenings we listened to the Telephone Hour with stars like Richard Crooks and Lawrence Tibbetts singing selections from the opera and concert repertoires. On Saturday afternoons we heard the Texaco live broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera. I didn't understand the words to all the music I heard as I sat on the floor in front of the radio but I would sing along and imagine myself in the situation of the singer. Radio was great for children's imagination.

Of live performances in my childhood I can recall three. The first was a staging at the long gone Boston Opera House on Huntington Avenue – where Northeastern University now stands – of that old, romantic, and schmaltzy standby, "The Student Prince," by Sigmund Romberg. The second, a visit to the old Metropolitan Theater in downtown Boston (later the Wang Center) where, in addition to a feature film, there were weekend performances by the theater's resident symphony orchestra conducted by Fabian Sevitky, later conductor of the Indianapolis Symphony. The third was a performance in Symphony Hall by the Boston Pops Orchestra, Arthur

Fiedler conducting, when admission to the balcony was only 25 cents. It was depression time and everything was dirt cheap, except that nobody had much money.

And, I must add here that I once performed on the stage of Symphony Hall. I was not a child prodigy, but our sixth-grade class had a little “orchestra” which consisted of small hand-held sets of pipes which were struck with a little cloth-coated hammer, and cymbals which I played. Our little ensemble performed at a convention of school teachers, and I can still remember the rousing applause we received as we played and sang our theme song, “Children of the Garrison School.” I was very disappointed at not being asked to play the pipes, but now I realize that the cymbals were a greater responsibility because one false clang could ruin a performance.

Our social life was limited. Mother had her bridge club which met every two weeks in the homes of members, and I looked forward to those evenings because there were always left-over snacks. My little brother Ed, who was about five at the time, also looked forward to those evenings because one of the ladies would bring her little daughter to the bridge sessions. And while the mothers were playing bridge in the living room, little Dorothy, in the bedroom, was showing Ed how to play doctor.

On weekends, we socialized with extended family members, usually one of the two Karas families who drove to our place in their cars or, after my father bought a car, we drove to theirs. The big social events were family weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, of which there were many. I can still see Abram Beggelman, my grandfather’s brother, dancing the Russian dances that we called “kazatsky” (cossack). Another big event was birthday parties but they were held only for special events like a girl’s sixteenth. Otherwise, we did not celebrate birthdays, nor did we receive gifts on those days, except when we had our Bar Mitzvah. There were no Bat Mitzvahs for girls in those days.

Grandmother, or “Baba” as we used to call her, from the Russian and Yiddish, lived nearby in Roxbury with her seven unmarried children, until she moved to Fuller Street in Brookline. We would often go to her apartment for Friday night dinner or Jewish holidays. There was always plenty of food on the table, and everyone was welcome.

Toys were also limited. We had a few wooden trucks and trains which my father picked up somewhere, and I made model airplanes from ten-cent kits that my mother bought at the Five and Ten Cent Store when she went into

“town,” as we called Boston, on Saturdays. We had a tricycle when we were small but the only two-wheel bike I ever had was one that I put together myself, when I was in high school, from parts I bought or found. Everyone, however, had roller skates, not the expensive in-line type of today with attached boots, but rather simple, metal ones with side-by-side wheels, which clamped onto the soles of your shoes and were tightened with a “key.” With blocks and blocks of good cement sidewalks, we could skate all over Roxbury. On rainy days we stayed home and played Monopoly or cards.

At age ten or eleven I joined the Cub Scouts, and at twelve Ed and I became Boy Scouts, joining Troop 11, Roxbury, which met at the Crawford Street synagogue. There, I learned first aid, how to tie knots, morse code and semaphore, and camping. Our scoutmaster was Lazar “Les” Goldberg, who also became a father figure. Les was a graduate of Boston Latin School who was studying engineering at night and working by day as a shipping clerk in a clothing factory. Our troop had a cabin on the Boy Scout reservation in Westwood, just outside Boston, where we would go on weekends, unless our scoutmaster was there with his schoolteacher girlfriend. It was not a typical Boy Scout cabin made of logs, but a small, compact shack made of packing case boards that Les had salvaged from his work place. Very well insulated, it was toasty warm in winter. In the late 1930s, Les must have lost his job because he joined the Army and was at Hickam Field in Hawaii when it was bombed by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. Shortly thereafter, he attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and was commissioned a lieutenant in the Army Engineers. The last I heard from him after the war, he had finished his engineering studies at Tufts on the GI Bill, had married his schoolteacher girlfriend, and was working as a civil engineer.

My first work experience came when I was in high school, delivering the Boston Traveler six days a week in the afternoon and on Sunday morning. After school, I would go home to drop my books, and then to a little shop on Humboldt Avenue where our local distributor, a man named Eddie Falk, had his office. My close boyhood friend, Arthur Bernstein, already had a route there, and he brought me in one day and I was hired on his recommendation. My route extended from lower Crawford Street across Washington Street, south almost to Green Street in Jamaica Plain, and then back across Washington Street along the western side of Franklin Park. I had close to



100 papers to deliver. Half of them I carried from Humboldt Avenue, and the other half were waiting for me at a midway point on my route. It took about one and one-half hours each day, and I earned \$2.50 a week, a nice amount at the time.

At some point, I left that job and took a better one selling the *Boston Transcript* in downtown Boston. The *Transcript* was a conservative, business-oriented paper similar to *The Wall Street Journal*. Its editorial offices and printing plant were on the old Newspaper Row at the foot of Boston's Washington Street. I would go into Boston by the El after school, pick up my 25 papers at the *Transcript* office, and another 50 copies that I had to carry on the subway to a newspaper stand on the corner of Boylston and Arlington. Then, I would walk to my "beat" at the corner of Beacon and Arlington Streets where I sold my papers among cars stopped for the traffic light on Arlington. My beat was diagonally across from the editorial office of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I have had a fondness for that magazine ever since. Carrying 75 newspapers was a big load for a little boy of fourteen but I managed, and earned an extra 50 cents a week for it, so my total weekly salary was \$3.00, and I could sleep late on Sundays! The *Transcript* folded in the late 1930s, after opposing Roosevelt and his New Deal from start to finish in a city that was strongly Democratic.

And it was at the *Transcript* that I had my first hamburger. Every few months, to keep the newsboys happy, they would throw a party for us with hamburgers and soda. I had eaten ground beef burgers at home--*hackfleish* my mother called them. But my father did not like spicy food, and those *goyishe* hamburgers at the *Transcript* were much more tasty.

At some point during my senior year in high school, I delivered orders on Saturdays for Sparks Grocery Store, on the corner of Wardman Road and Walnut Place, just a few houses from where we lived on Wardman. It too was heavy work for a small, skinny kid, but I earned two dollars a day and an occasional tip for schlepping cartons full of groceries on my shoulders.

Although my father was not religious, Ed and I went to hebrew school for three years to prepare for our Bar Mitzvah. We attended the Yavneh Hebrew School in a frame building next to the Crawford Street synagogue, Monday through Friday for two hours after school, where we were taught to read and write Hebrew, but not much else. It was a waste of time because, at that age, they could have taught us to speak Hebrew in three years. Even worse, they did not teach us anything about Judaism, and how it differed from

Christianity and other religions. It was just rote memory, in the old Jewish tradition, and drill, drill, drill.

Like Ed, I had my Bar Mitzvah in a little *shul* on lower Crawford Street one morning at daybreak when I was thirteen. I read from the Torah and was pronounced a “man.” My parents gave a party at home for the extended family the next Saturday evening, and I got my first wristwatch and a suit with my first pair of long trousers (having previously worn knickers). But there was no caterer, no music, no dancing, no games, and no big bill to pay. That’s the way it was done then.

My mother kept “kosher” at home, and we had a separate set of dishes and utensils for Passover. She lit candles every Friday night but I cannot say that we were a religious family. Father had had a thorough religious education as a boy in Bessarabia and, although he could recite passages from the Torah and other religious readings from memory, he was not a believer. Our celebration of Passover was limited to my asking the Four Questions but, unfortunately, there were no answers or explanations, although my father knew them all.

One Jewish tradition which I recall, and which has endured, is the giving of alms to the poor. Old Jewish men would often canvass our neighborhood begging for a handout, and they were never refused, even if it meant giving them only a few cents. Another solicitation I recall was the seeking of funds, door to door, for Jewish settlements in Palestine. Men would offer a small blue metal box – a *pishkeh*, it was called – into which you were expected to slip a few coins to help plant trees in Palestine. Even today I find it difficult to turn down a funding request from a Jewish social organization.

In our Homestead Street house I also learned that girls could be attractive. The family on the first floor had a daughter who was big, busty, and beautiful, and one summer night I found myself in her living room with a girl who lived across the street, and they taught me how to play spin the bottle and post office, just the three of us. I sold them a lot of stamps, after they showed me how.

Due to my father’s business, we had many fine pieces of silver and cut-glass crystal in the house, which my sister Midge later inherited. Periodically on Sundays, a Mr. Cooperman or Kurt Richman would come to our home and purchase some of the objects father had acquired. I have no idea what father earned at that business but we always ate well and were well clothed. However, we were raised to be economical, as everyone was during the

Depression, and to turn out electric lights when they were not needed. To this day, I go around my apartment turning off lights.

My father was born in that strange, faraway country called Russia, and he was always telling us wonderful stories about his childhood and youth there. As noted above, he came to this country at the age of seventeen as a draft dodger. But since conscription in the Russian army at that time was for six years – and it was a very brutal six – his draft dodging was understandable.

Father was a great practical joker, and one of his favorites was to come into our bedroom on a cold, winter morning and ask if we knew how they woke you up in the Russian Army. When we said we did not know, he would grab our blankets at the foot of the bed and pull them off with one fast tug. He also taught us Russian songs which I still remember to this day, although as a child I did not understand the words. Imagine my pleasure when I heard one of those songs sung years later in the Russian film, “Quiet Flows the Don.” Father loved this country but he never really became an American, and I often thought he might have been happier had he remained in Russia, if he could have escaped the Russian draft and survived the slaughter of World War I and the Holocaust.

Hymie, as he was known, was a very complex man. He was a good provider and came home every evening to his wife and children. But in many ways he was insecure and challenged by an America that he did not understand and often feared, perhaps because he had lived through the Depression. The biggest fakers, he used to say, were rabbis, politicians, doctors, and automobile mechanics.

Our parents did not have a happy marriage. Mother was 19 and a salesgirl when she wed, and she married, as she once explained to me, to get out of her mother’s house where, as the oldest child, she had to change diapers, wash clothes, wipe snotty noses, and otherwise care for her younger siblings while also holding a job outside the house. As a young and beautiful girl she had many admirers but she married the wrong one, and she knew it, she once told me, after she had her first child and could not leave her husband. She had come to the United States from Russia at the age of nine, and although she attended only a few years of grammar school, she spoke beautiful English. There were always books and magazines in the house. Well read herself, she encouraged her children to read, and we had library cards as soon as we were eligible by age. I still remember my number at the Boston Public Library – 424742. The aspirations mother had for herself in the New

World she transferred to her children, and she saw to it that they achieved them.

Mother once attended a parents meeting where she heard a talk by Patrick J. Campbell, the Boston School Superintendent, who told the mothers that if their child came home from school and said he had received a grade of 95 in a test, they should ask if anyone had received 100. I was to hear that story over and over again as she urged us to excel. It was due to her that Ed and I went to college.

Hymie considered himself to be a good husband. He never beat his wife, did not drink (except a single shot of whiskey every night before dinner), and did not see other women. We always knew where he was in the evening, either reading his *Boston American* (the local Hearst paper) or sitting by the radio listening to the evening news. He never took an interest in our studies, and I cannot recall him ever asking me what I was learning in school or college.

He was the typical old country autocratic head of family. His word was law, and he would brook no opposition and accept no compromise. Often, when he got angry, he took it out on me with his leather belt which he would pull from his trousers and use to flail my behind, until I learned that I could run faster than he could. When I saw him coming with the belt, I would rush out of the house and return a few hours later after my mother had calmed him down. Yet, I loved him, and thought that he was behaving toward me as a father should. We spent many wonderful hours together talking on the porch on long summer evenings or walking in Franklin Park. But our sister Midge did not get along with him at all. As the oldest child, she did not accept his authority, and resisted his rule.

Father's favorite was Ed, although Ed disputes that. Daddy, as we called him when we were young, would kiss Ed on the cheeks – on both cheeks, in the Russian manner – but I cannot recall him ever kissing me. And I was the one who usually aroused his anger and had to flee the house to avoid getting whipped with his belt.

Although the marriage was not a success, we children seem not to have suffered any psychological scars, and our childhood can be truly described as happy. It was full of songs, games, and practical jokes. We had many friends and were never bored. The food was fantastic, and there was always plenty of it. And we were endowed with a strong work ethic.

In 1937, at the urging of my mother, Hymie bought a small grocery store, the Valley Farm Market, in Faneuil Square, Brighton. We moved to Brighton and lived in an apartment at 340 Faneuil Street, second floor. But the store was a bad investment, and my father was not a successful shopkeeper. He sold it after a year, we moved back to Roxbury, and he returned to the gold business. During the year in Brighton, I attended Brighton High School and worked with my mother, father, and sister, clerking at the store.

Back in Roxbury, we lived on the top floor of 12 Wardman Road, just off Walnut Park, a stone's throw from Egleston Square, Washington Street, and the "El." In 1941, we moved to the second floor of a triple-decker at 11 Courtland Road, Mattapan, just off Morton Street and one block from Blue Hill Avenue, the main thoroughfare of what was then the Roxbury-Dorchester-Mattapan Jewish ghetto of Boston.

In 1946, with the "nest" emptying, Hymie and Rhoda, moved from Mattapan to Brighton to be near the Beggelmans who were then living on Fuller Street in Brookline. They found a third-floor apartment at 24 Royce Road, one block in from Harvard Street and Commonwealth Avenue. Arthur Bayes and his bride Rose lived on the second floor.

In 1947, after receiving my Bachelor of Electrical Engineering, magna cum laude, from Syracuse, I left home for what was expected to be a two-year stint with U.S. Military Government in Germany. I had not been overseas during the war, and felt that I had missed something.

Shortly thereafter, Hymie left Rhoda without warning and moved to Miami, leaving only a short note about his unhappiness and her alleged lack of respect for him. He left her no cash and no means of support beyond Ed's \$90 monthly stipend under the GI Bill while he was attending college and living with her. When I learned that Hymie had left her penniless, I began a \$100 monthly allotment to her from my paycheck which continued until her death fourteen years later.

Hymie had left Rhoda once before, in 1944, also to go to Florida, and also leaving her without any means of support. On that occasion, on the advice of her brother Arthur, Rhoda attached Hymie's bank account. He settled, and the suit was dropped. But in 1948, Rhoda divorced Hymie after it was apparent that he had no intention of returning. When Ed returned to Boston from Washington and more space was needed, he and mother moved to a third-floor apartment at 35 Winslow Road, just a block away in Brookline.

One source of discord in the marriage was Hymie's thrifty ways. He would darn his own socks and shirts, and he wore them until they literally fell apart. During the Depression, he would go far out of his way to save a few cents, not unusual at the time, although he never skimmed on food for the family. And, as a true Bessarabian, he was an expert at bargaining over prices. During my boyhood, all my suits were purchased direct from manufacturers in downtown Boston, and at prices far below retail. Nevertheless, to my embarrassment, my father would always bargain for an even lower price.

Hymie did not believe in investing. He was of the generation that had lived through the Wall Street crash, the bank failures, and the Depression, and, in later years I could never get him interested in the stock market, which he claimed would crash again. In politics, he was a lifelong Democrat and a devotee of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

We saw Roosevelt once when he came to Boston in 1932 to campaign for the presidency. The President disembarked from his special train at the Blue Hills station, which enabled him to make a triumphal entry into Boston via Blue Hill Avenue and Seaver Street where the sidewalks were crowded with Jewish voters awaiting his arrival. My father took me across Seaver Street to a promontory overlooking the president's route, and I can still recall Roosevelt waiving to the crowd from his open car as he swept by below us.

Hymie loved his wife and children very much and was a good father in many ways but we all suffered under his authoritarian rule. Our mother had the most difficult time. She was Americanized whereas he was not. She spoke good English without a foreign accent, and he did not. She had friends and her bridge club, while Hymie did not socialize with people outside the extended family. He was tight-fisted with money, and much of the marital discord stemmed from his failure to be financially more generous with mother, and his efforts to control her in a family where he was the sole breadwinner.

Contributing to his insecurity, which manifested itself in frequent outbursts and temper tantrums, was his uncertainty about his place in America and his inability to Americanize. He never lost his East European accent, his speech was grammatically incorrect, and his spelling atrocious. He was, however, a very intelligent man, a shrewd judge of people, and a born trader.

In the early 1930s, during the worst years of the Depression, mother, unable to resist a door-to-door saleslady, purchased a set of the 15-volume Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia. The price, by today's standards, was a pittance, but fearing that Hymie would object to the cost, to be paid out over a number of months and taken from the family food money, she placed the encyclopedia on the mantelpiece in the living room and covered it with a shawl. One evening, as my father was reclining on the sofa, a breeze blew the shawl up and revealed our treasured encyclopedia. Hymie, however, did not object, and he enjoyed perusing the pictures in the books. That encyclopedia was my first exposure to the world beyond Boston and, along with my stamp collection, it encouraged my longing in later years for world travel.

Hymie was a great practical joker, but with a somewhat perverse streak. One Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement), while walking with Ed and me in Franklin Park, we came upon several Orthodox Jews praying at the water's edge, as is the custom with the Orthodox on Yom Kippur. In this case, however, the water was the park's duck pond, and Hymie told us that, through their prayers, the sins of the Jews were being cast into the waters of the pond where they were devoured by the hungry ducks. We gullible boys believed that story for many years, and Ed recalls how he lay in bed that night feeling remorse for the ducks who had eaten all those sins.

On another occasion, Ed was sent by Hymie to the corner grocery store to buy a loaf of bread. That was not unusual but it was Passover, and Ed had to endure the shame of being chided by the store's proprietor that a Jewish boy should ask for bread on Passover.

Similar jokes were played on our mother. Hymie once called her on the phone when we were at our grandmother's house for Friday night dinner. With a false voice, he told her that he was Sergeant Reilly at the local police station, and had a warrant to arrest a Herman Richmond, and did she know where he was. Rhoda, in tears, fell for it and protested that there must be a mistake because her husband had done nothing wrong.

Hymie liked music. He was always singing bits of opera and classical music, and he taught us many songs in Yiddish and Russian. We sang a lot at home and I've been singing ever since. Ed also sang as a child, and learned that he could get a free cookie by singing at the corner grocery or drug store.

Some of the most pleasant moments of our childhood were during the long summer evenings when Hymie would take Ed or me for a walk after dinner in nearby Franklin Park. One evening, we came upon a large field in the park which had just been mowed. Hymie was overjoyed at the fragrance of the new-mown hay which reminded him of his youth in Bessarabia, and he showed me how to bundle up the hay in sheafs, one of which we took home.

Although endowed with very good health, Hymie constantly complained about his "ailments," and he would try every new over-the-counter medicine advertised on the radio. There was never enough room for all of them in the bathroom medicine cabinet, so Hymie, who was very handy with tools, built extra shelves on the bathroom wall to hold all the medicines he had purchased. Medical doctors were the people he mistrusted most. *Ganoven* (thiefs), he would call them. My mother, tired of hearing about his complaints, once suggested that he get a thorough medical checkup. So Hymie went to the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital (now the Brigham-Woman's Hospital) where a doctor examined him, found nothing wrong, and suggested that he take it easy and learn to relax. Another good piece of advice given by the doctor was to have a drink of whiskey each night before dinner, which Hymie did for the rest of his life. And that was in the early 1930s, long before scientists discovered that one or two drinks a day can actually prolong life.

Hymie meant well but he was a traditional authoritarian Old World head of family. His word was law and he brooked no opposition. And to the end, he remained a Bessarabian country boy who never completely assimilated to life in urban America.

### **The Miami Years (1947-1975)**

Hymie lived the last twenty-eight years of his life in Miami, Florida. For several years he worked as a stock clerk in Burdine's department store until he became eligible for Social Security, after which he lived on his Social Security and Veterans Administration pensions, residing in rooming houses and retirement hotels. He lived first in the old Jewish section of downtown Miami until it was destroyed by the construction of Interstate 95, after which he moved to South Miami Beach. On several visits, I suggested he buy a



used car and travel around the country, but he would not hear of it. He loved the Miami area and refused to leave it.

South Beach, in those days, was a somewhat rundown remnant of its former glory, almost completely Jewish, a sort of Lower East Side with sun and cool ocean breezes. There was, however, direct access to a very good beach through a public park which the city fathers had the foresight to preserve between beach-front hotels. Ed and I would visit Miami from time to time, and reminisce with him. He could never understand why our mother had divorced him, and he would blame it all on the Beggelmans.

During Hymie's final years, his health was good except for poor circulation in his lower extremities caused by arteriosclerosis, the result of eating too much meat and other fatty foods all his life, and not exercising. On one visit, I took him to the Miami Veterans Administration Hospital for an examination. The examining physician told him that, had he come a few years earlier, he could have put artificial arteries in his legs, but at his age and the stage of his illness it was too late to do anything.

Hymie died in the Miami Veterans Administration Hospital on February 2, 1975, at age 82, after suffering a stroke and never regaining consciousness. I visited him in the hospital a few days before his death, and he showed no signs of recognizing me. According to his death certificate, the cause of death was arteriosclerosis, gangrene in a lower leg, and sepsis. On my instructions, he was cremated in Miami, with no interment of ashes. His Social Security No. was 021-20-1533; his Veterans Administration File Number was C-16455830. He left a bank account of \$14,000 which I offered to split with Midge and Ed. Midge turned down her share, so Ed and I shared equally his life savings of \$14,000.

Almost to the end, he was endowed with good health and great strength. He had a full set of beautiful teeth until his final years when they all became infected and had to be pulled. Although he never used a toothbrush, he confounded dentists by never having cavities. He did, however, massage his gums with salt and a finger, and rinsed his mouth with salt water after every meal. Had he learned to eat correctly and exercise regularly, he might have become a centenarian, but to the very end he was a meat and potato man, with lots of sour cream and cottage cheese. But that was before we all became concerned with diet and exercise, and knew that there was such a thing as cholesterol.

A "ladies man" to his dying day, Hymie was very attractive to women. Ed recalls visiting him in Miami one month before he died. In the lobby of his hotel, Hymie was conversing with four women to whom he introduced Ed. One of the women took Ed aside and said, "For a man his age your father is quite a man, if you know what I mean," as she poked Ed meaningfully in the ribs.

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### THE RICHMOND CHILDREN

Hymie and Rhoda had three children: Midge (born Minnie), Yale Wolf, and Edward Leon.

Midge (Mindl in Yiddish, after her great grandmother) was born on December 31, 1919, in Beachmont but grew up in Roxbury after we moved there in 1926. Her best friend was Janet Kaufman who lived on Ruthven Street, around the corner from where we lived on Harold Street. Most girls did not go to college in those years, and Midge took the commercial course at Roxbury Memorial High School for Girls. After graduation she worked for several years as a sales person in the picture department at Jordan Marsh Company in Boston.

A pretty, lively, and personable girl, Minnie, as we called her then, was very popular with the boys and had many admirers, several of whom were serious suitors. However, she was waiting for the right man, and she recognized him when he came along. In 1942, after a short courtship, she married Joseph Nathanson, a high school athletic coach and math teacher. The matchmaker who introduced them was Joe's sister, Hovey (Evelyn), who worked with Midge at Jordan Marsh.

Joe was born into the large family that owned Nathanson's Hotel, a Jewish resort in Millis, just outside Boston. Joe's parents, who met and married in Boston, had come to the United States around the turn of the century from Russia's *Grodno guberniya*, not far from where the Beggelman and Karas families originated. Joe's father Max had been a bugler in the Russian army, and we do not know how he escaped from that service, whether by serving his full tour, buying his way out, or desertion. In any event, while blowing his bugle he is believed to have collapsed a lung, and years later, when a

doctor in Boston recommended that he move to a higher altitude, Max and his bride moved inland to the “heights” of Millis, twenty miles southwest of Boston. It was there that they bought the farm which became known as Nathanson’s Hotel.

The Nathansons were a close-knit family with nine children, all of whom worked as youngsters at the hotel where they acquired the work ethic of their parents. Joe and his brother Norman, who later became a highly skilled oral surgeon, helped in the kitchen, waited on tables, played in the resort’s orchestra for their Saturday night dances, and provided company for lonely female guests. It was in that hotel and its kitchen that Joe learned the essentials of running a resort which were to serve him so well when he and Midge founded Camp Matoaka, a girls’ summer camp in Maine.

Joe had been an all around athlete at Millis High School, Cushing Academy, and the University of New Hampshire, starring in football, baseball, and basketball. After graduation he had a tryout with the Boston Red Sox and slammed every pitch they gave him either out of the park or up against Fenway’s famed left field wall. The Red Sox were impressed and offered to sign Joe, not in his regular position of outfielder, but as a catcher, which they needed. Joe, however, turned down the offer because, as he explained to me once, he did not want a catcher’s broken fingers and other injuries which would affect his batting abilities. It was, as he told me, the biggest mistake of his life.

Joe had been in Army ROTC in college, and after graduation he served a year of active duty as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Coast Artillery in New Hampshire, during which time he played semi-pro football with the Portland (Maine) Sagamores, and a semi-pro baseball team in New Hampshire. When the United States entered the war, Joe was called up as a 1st Lieutenant in the Coast Artillery and assigned to Fort Monroe, Virginia where he trained in anti-aircraft artillery.

After Joe had been at Fort Monroe a few months, he invited Midge, whom he had been dating in Boston, to come down for a visit, and she went without hesitation. Our mother had qualms but did not object, and the next morning Midge, who had never been beyond Boston, took a train south. A few days later, Midge called home and announced that she had just married Joe. The civil ceremony took place in Old Point Comfort, a small town across Hampton Roads from Norfolk. A Jewish service followed in Millis several months later.

Midge accompanied Joe on several assignments around the country until he went overseas, first to Africa, where he commanded an anti-aircraft artillery unit, and then to Belgium and the Battle of the Bulge. When the war in Europe ended, Joe remained in Europe while the Army decided who would go home and who would be sent to the Pacific theater to continue the war against Japan. During those months in Europe while the troops were being demobilized, Joe did what he knew best – he coached an army football team.

While Joe was overseas, Midge lived at Nathanson's Hotel in Millis where Joe's father and mother were in residence with their five daughters. Midge was taken in by the family, and there she learned how to run a hotel, farm, kitchen, and everything else one needs to know about the hospitality business. That apprenticeship was to prepare her for the next stage in her life with Joe.

After Joe returned from the war – discharged as a major – they bought their first house, in Framingham, a Boston suburb. Joe worked as a high school math teacher and coach in nearby Wayland, and later as vice-principal at Weeks Junior High School in Newton, and then principal of Newton South High School's Goodwin House. After earning a master's degree in education administration from Harvard, he worked in the Newton public school system for 35 years.

Joe was a great practical joker. When he was studying for his Master's degree, he returned home late one night, got undressed and after quietly slipping into bed in the dark, he whispered into Midge's ear in a falsetto voice, "What time does Joe get home?" Midge screamed and jumped out of bed.

In 1947, Joe and his sister, Sissy (Jean), and her husband Henry Marcus, founded Camp Manitou for Boys on East Pond in Oakland, Maine, near Waterville. Four years later, in 1951, Joe and Midge founded Camp Matoaka for Girls, in an old sheep farm in Smithfield, across the lake from Manitou. Into that camp, Joe and Midge put many years of hard work, as well as a lot of capital, to make it a success. It eventually had some 300 campers from Boston to Miami, as well as South America and Europe, and a staff of 110.

Midge was a wonderful wife and companion to Joe, and camp mother to all the campers. Her obituary in the *Boston Globe* (January 29, 2003) said that she could fill in for an ailing chef and cook a meal for 300. She was never depressed or upset by events but always positive and cheerful, and

never said a bad word about anyone. She cared for her campers with hugs and kisses, as the following story illustrates.

When Midge began to suffer from Alzheimer's disease, Ed and his wife Lisa visited her in Florida. They met at Joe and Midge's condo and planned to go out for dinner. When Joe said it was time to go, Midge said, "I can't go and leave the children here all alone." They told her that there were no children, but she insisted. So Ed took her hand and walked her through every room, opened every closet and showed her that there were no children in the apartment, and only then did she say, "OK, let's go."

Joe and Midge had retired to Hollywood, Florida where they became avid golfers. After Midge came down with Alzheimer's, she was in a nursing home in Hollywood from 1993 until January 24, 2002 when she died at age 83. Joe had died earlier, on July 17, 1998 in the Manor Care Nursing Home at Boca Raton, Florida, at age 85, of complications after a stroke. Joe's obituary was published in the Boston Globe, July 19, 1988, with a death announcement a few days earlier (sorry, no date). They are both buried in the Boylston Lodge Cemetery, Baker Street, West Roxbury, MA. They had been happily married for 56 years. Joe and Midge had three children--Susan, Michael, and Peter.

Susan Nathanson, formerly a teacher, lives in Wellesley, MA, with her companion and old high school beau, Phil Kaplan. Her marriage to John Grant ended in divorce. Susan and John had met as students at Boston University, he in phys ed/health ed, and she in therapeutic recreation. Susan put in 35 years helping to run Camp Matoaka in the summers. In the winter months Susan was Director of The Dover Extended Day Program in Dover, MA for three years, and after teaching Elementary Physical Education for one year at The Pine Crest Academy in Boca Raton, FL she became Program Administrator and Director of the Fiske Extended Day Program in Lexington, MA where she has been for more than 20 years. In 1999, Susan also began a Decorative Handpainted Wall & Furniture business.

Susan and John had a daughter, Lara Grant, who graduated from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, and works for the Oracle Corporation in San Francisco. Lara, who graduated from Ithaca College, married Ryan Sean McGurk from Fairfield, CA in 2005. Ryan, a graduate of UCal Berkeley, received an MBA from MIT. They have a daughter, Olivia Joy McGurk, born in 2009.

Michael and Paula, and their daughter Rachel, lived in Boca Raton, Florida, from where they directed Camp Matoaka activities during winters, and spent summers at the camp in Maine until they sold it in 2004. They now live in Maine where they keep busy buying and renovating old houses, when they are not skiing in Vail or traveling in Europe. Their daughter, Rachel, graduated from Skidmore in 2007 and has been working in sales and marketing for Estee Lauder Corp. in New York City.

Peter Nathanson married H  l  ne Bousquet of Paris, France, who had been a counselor at Matoaka one summer. They have three children, Zoe, Alice Midge, and Meg, and live in Paris where Peter, a guitarist, works as a musician, and H  l  ne teaches English. The Chateau Monbousquet, which produces a very good St. Emilion wine, was in the family of H  l  ne's mother. Peter and H  l  ne were divorced in 2005.

Yale Wolf Richmond, was born in Boston on August 12, 1923, and was graduated from Roxbury Memorial High School for Boys in 1939, and from Boston College in 1943 with a degree in science, after which he served three years in the Army. In 1947, he earned a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering *magna cum laude* from Syracuse University, and in 1957 a Master of Arts in history from Columbia University.

During his "military" career, Yale was assigned to the College of the City of New York to study electrical engineering under an accelerated army program intended to continue the production of engineers and medical doctors during the war. Given the choice of engineering or pre-med, he chose engineering and completed most of the undergrad course in eighteen months before the program was discontinued. (Had he chosen pre-med, he would be a doctor today since all of the pre-med students went on to medical school under the army program.) Needing only one more year for his engineering degree, he attended Syracuse University on the G.I. Bill. On graduation from Syracuse, he received three good job offers, including one from GE, but, instead, decided to go to Germany for two years with U.S. Military Government and see Europe before settling down as an engineer.

After two years with Military Government, Germany in 1949 became independent, military government ended, and the State Department offered to take on some of the Military Government Officers to continue working in Germany. By that time, Yale was fluent in German, had done well in his work, had managed to stay out of trouble in occupied Germany, and, after passing an oral exam, was accepted into the Foreign Service.

Yale served thirty years in the Foreign Service with postings in Germany, Laos, Poland, Austria, and the Soviet Union. After retiring in 1980 as a Deputy Assistant Director of the U.S. Information Agency, he subsequently worked as a staff consultant to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, U.S. Congress (1980-83), and Senior Program Officer at the National Endowment for Democracy (1983-1992).

A specialist in educational and cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Yale in retirement began to write. Among his books are *U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges, 1958-1986: Who Wins?* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1992, 1996, 2003, and 2009); *From Da to Yes: Understanding the East Europeans* (Intercultural Press, 1995); *Into Africa: Intercultural Insights* (Intercultural Press, 1997), the latter co-authored with Phyllis Gestrin, and republished in a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2009); *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); *Practicing Public Diplomacy: A Cold War Odyssey* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); and *Understanding the Americans: A Handbook for Visitors to the United States* (Hippocrene Books, 2009). Yale's "best seller, *From Nyet to Da*, as of this writing, has sold more than 33,000 copies in four editions.

Yale married Pamela Cheatham, also a Foreign Service Officer, of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania on May 29, 1958 in Arlington, Virginia. A graduate of Smith College with a major in music, Pamela later earned a Master's in International Affairs from Columbia University. A talented linguist, she learned new languages easily and was conversant, at various times, in French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, German, and Russian. Pamela had to resign her commission upon marriage, as female Foreign Service Officers were required to do in those years when their husbands were transferred overseas. After the family returned to the United States from Moscow in 1969, she worked, in turn, as a music teacher, remedial tutor of children and young adults, and math instructor for high school teachers of math. Eventually, she found her true calling as a family therapist for which she earned a Master's degree from Virginia Polytechnic University and a Virginia state certificate. Pamela came from an old Southern family with roots in Virginia, Georgia, and Florida from pre-revolutionary times. She was pretty as a picture, a natural athlete, very smart, and for a man who, at

age thirty-five, was ready finally to settle down, irresistible. As is often said, opposites attract.

Pam and Yale had three children: Hania (born December 19, 1958, in Warsaw, Poland), now a dance teacher in Naperville, IL; Samuel Cheatham (born March 12, 1960, in Warsaw, Poland), of Alexandria, VA; and David Page (born September 6, 1963, in Washington, DC), an accomplished cellist, who lived in Gold Hill, Colorado, above Boulder, until his death from AIDS on April 30, 1995 at age 32. Hania married Pierrick Hanlet, a nuclear physicist and math teacher, in 2004. She gave birth to a baby boy, Pierre David, in Naperville on April 19, 2005.

Opposites may attract, but attraction sometimes takes a toll, and after thirty years of marriage Pamela divorced Yale on May 18, 1989. It was a difficult time for Yale, but he made a rapid recovery after he met Phyllis Joy Gestrin who turned out to be a real joy. After nine years of a “trial marriage” Yale popped the question and married Phyllis Joy on March 28, 1999 in a Jewish ceremony at her apartment in Washington, and his life has been a joy ever since. Phyllis, with a BA and MA in math from the University of Chicago, earned a PhD in Physiology/Psychology from the University of Washington, and an MA in Public Health from Harvard. As a specialist in African public health, she served five years in Somalia and two in Zaire with UNICEF, five years on the staff of the Peace Corps in Washington, and seven with the U.S. Agency for International Development, working on African health before retiring in 2000.

Edward Leon Richmond was born in Boston on July 17, 1926. After graduation from Roxbury Memorial High School in 1943 and study at Boston College, he served in the Navy during World War II. After the war, he completed his bachelor's degree at Boston College where he also earned an MA in American history.

After receiving his MA in June, 1949, Ed made a *petit tour* of the European continent. He spent two days in London, two days in Paris, and then on to Germany where he spent a month with Yale in Wasserburg am Inn, the town near Munich where Yale was U.S. Military Governor. They had a grand time together, tooling around in Yale's convertible Skoda, and made a trip over the Alps as far as Venice. Since the Germans in Wasserburg addressed Yale as *Herr Gouverneur* (Mr. Governor), they were not sure how to address Ed so they simply called him *Herr Bruder*.



Returning to Boston, Ed worked five months for Arthur Bayes at Arthur's Bootery, a subsidiary of Solby Bayes, located on Tremont Street above Phil's store. Then, Phil asked Ed to come into Solby Bayes with the promise that, since he had no sons, Ed would eventually take over the business. With some hesitation Ed accepted, but after 6 months of selling shoes, Ed realized that he would be a short timer and, at the end of 1950, he accepted an intern job with the government in Washington. (How are you going to keep them down on the sales floor of a shoe store after they've seen Paris?) Ed left Boston for Washington in March, 1951, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Ed worked in Washington for several years as a civilian with the Navy Department, and then, in 1954, with the Internal Revenue Service in Boston. After marriage, he attended Boston College Law School, graduating in 1959, and practiced law in Boston for forty years, specializing in construction law, civil rights, real estate, and business and corporate law. One of his cases went to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1979, after the start of his divorce proceedings, he left his Boston practice and opened a law office in Newton Center. Ed retired from active practice in 1996. He was also active politically in Newton where he served as an alderman (city counselor) for fourteen years.

Ed had married Rita Copel in 1956. Rita, a native of Mattapan, was an accomplished pianist, a graduate of Boston University, and had also studied at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. (Sounds similar to Yale's Pamela, doesn't it?) Ed and Rita lived for many years at 833 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton Center, not in wealth but in one of those big old houses that are common to the Avenue. They had four children. Angel (née Wendy), Stephen, Ron, and William.

Angel, in the travel business, managed a Garber Travel Office in downtown Boston. She married Bruce Campbell, a machinist, and they had two sons, Cameron and Ian, and lived in Woburn, MA. Angel and Bruce were divorced in 2006, and Angel and the two boys are now living in Winchester, MA. She works in nearby Woburn where she books business travel for FCM Travel.

Stephen, a graduate of Johns Hopkins University and NYU Law School, is an environmental attorney and lives in Sudbury, MA with his wife, the former Julie Weinstein, and their two sons Benjamin and Jordan.

Ron, a graduate of Tulane University, was in business in Maynard, MA, and lived with his wife, Ha Nguyen, a graphic designer, and their two

children in Concord, MA, before dying in 2010, at age 45, of hystiocytic sarcoma, an extremely rare form of cancer in humans. They had a daughter, Mai Nguyen Richmond, born in 2004, and a son, Tal Nguyen Richmond, born in 2007.

William, a graduate of The American University, Washington, DC, lives with his wife Cherrilyn (Cher) Flemming, a nurse practitioner, and their sons Kijana, and twins Dylan and Ethan, in Madison, CT, near New Haven where Cher works.

Ed and Rita were divorced in 1981, and three years later Ed married Lisa Liss, a former school teacher and librarian in the Cambridge school system. Lisa, of New York City, is a graduate of McGill University and has a Master's degree in library science from Queens College, New York. Lisa has a daughter, Erica, a punk rock musician, who now lives in New York City.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

Abba Eban, *My People: The Story of the Jews* (New York: Random House, 1968). A scholar, philosopher, historian, and former Israeli diplomat tells the story of his people up to the founding of the Israeli state. It's a good read.

Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). A "must read" in order to understand the differences between Jews in the three parts of Poland that were partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

G. Bejgiel, *Mayn Shtetle Berezne* (Ral-Ganim, Ramat Gan, Israel: The Berezner Society in Israel, 1954), in Yiddish, with photos. A history of the Jews of Berezne, written by a relative.

Ellen Eisenberg. *Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882–1920* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995).

Zvi Gitelman. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 To the Present*, second expanded edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). A very readable and evenhanded history of Russian and Soviet Jewry, with 200 photos from the YIVO Institute.

Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia, 3 vols.*, (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 2010-11. A monumental study with a helpful glossary of terms, lengthy bibliography, extensive index, and copious footnotes.

Antony Polonsky, Ed., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 17, *The Shtetl: Myth and Reality* (Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.) A collection of papers delivered at a conference at University College, London, in 2001. The editor is Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University.

Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of the Polish Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). A balanced account of Polish-Jewish relations through the centuries, and the fate of the eastern Polish shtetl of Bransk.

Antony Polonsky, ed., *Polin Vol. 17 – The Shtetl, Myth and Reality* (Portland, OR.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009) A collection of articles by well-known authors.

Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (University Press of Maryland, 2000). An account, translated from the original German, of how the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) changed the author's life and the lives of her children in Russia.

Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl*, foreword by Margaret Mead (New York: Schocken Books, 1962). A detailed account of life in the shtetls of Eastern Europe as they had existed before the Holocaust. Although Zborowski was later exposed as a Soviet agent, his book, nevertheless, is well worth reading.

## APPENDIX A

### LETTER FROM COUNT BROEL PLATER

[Translated from the Polish by Yale Richmond. Editorial comments by YR are in brackets.]

Jacek hr. Broel Plater [“hr.” stands for *Graf*  
(Count)]  
ul. Stachowicza 12/8  
30-103 Krakow  
tel/fax 0-12 422 98 02  
2 February 1999

Esteemed Mr. Yale W. Richmond,

I confirm receipt of your letter of 21 January 1999 but cannot help you much in the search for your family roots in Dabrowica or in the village of Krupa whence comes your mother whose family name was Karas. I refer you to the common history of Roman Catholics and Jews in the year 1648 at the time of the rebellion of Bohdan Chmielnicki [Khmielnicki]. That singular historic event does not exemplify the joint life of religious communities in that area over the centuries.

I wish to emphasize, that in writing “jew” in the lower case, I do that in accordance with the Polish spelling practice, which directs that the names of religious and national groups be spelled in the lower case.

I must also emphasize that the determining difference between coexisting inhabitants of Volhynia shows up as religion and not nationality.

In the eastern parts of the former Polish Commonwealth there lived a Ruthenian [Ukrainian] people, of whom the majority were Orthodox, a community of the Mosaic persuasion, and a smaller number of Roman Catholics who were landowners and administrators of all sorts. In that political arrangement, there was a sense of nation, and those who wielded power, of course, regarded themselves as Poles. The remainder had no need to declare their nationality.

The Jewish community was very cohesive, and I probably don't have to explain to you the reasons why. For religious considerations, it was distant from relations with people of another persuasion. And there were other concerns. The Jewish community was open to cooperation with the ruling power, for that assured better living conditions. Until 1775, that cooperation was with the Polish authorities, and after the Partitions [of Poland], with the [Russian] tsarist authorities.

Nationality differences begin to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century when a young Ruthenian intelligentsia appears. Nationalist slogans are promulgated, declaring that they are Ukrainians. With the support of the Orthodox church, reaching back to the distant time of the eleventh century, including in history the "liberation struggles" which were in reality rebellions of Ruthenian peasants provoked by various firebrands against Polish rule (e.g. the Chmielnicki rebellion).

After the recovery of [Polish] independence [in 1918], nationality divisions are already seen within the Polish state, and among the national minorities was the Jewish people.

I am in possession of a monograph published in a legal manuscript in 1938 by the Circle of Teachers of Public School No. 1 in Dabrowica, from which comes the information given below:

The town of Dabrowica, from the thirteenth century, was the capital of a duchy ruled by the Dukes of Dubrowski. After the Tatar invasion, the dukedom was taken by Lithuania, but in turn its owners are the Holszans princes, written as Holszans-Dubrowski. After the extinction of this family, the estate and the town of Dabrowica passed, in succession, to the Wisniowski, Firlej, Solomirecki, and Sapieha families, and in the year 1674 to Prince Jan Dolski. After his death, through his daughter again to the Wisniowiecki and then to the Brzostowski families. In the year 1775, Count Antoni Broel Plater bought the town and the estate which remained in the hands of that family until September 1939.

In 1919, the town of Dabrowica obtains the right of local self-government.

The town of Dabrowica lies between the 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>d</sup> latitude north, and between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> degree longitude east. Through the town flows the Horyn [Goryn in Polish and Russian] River, a tributary of the Pripet. The

residence of the Count Platers was located in Worobin, 2 kilometers from the town. Many buildings in the town were built by the Plater family.

Dabrowica, on January 1, 1938, had 7,550 inhabitants of which there were:

--with regard to religion:

366 Roman Catholics

4,137 Orthodox

3,030 of the Mosaic confession

10 others

--with regard to nationality:

366 Poles

4103 Ruthenians

34 Russians

10 others.

The work cited above does not say much about the Jewish community which was rather closed [to outsiders]. The document reveals, however, that in Dabrowica there were:

--3 synagogues

--the educational-cultural association, "TARBUT" [a Jewish school system], which had a private elementary school, to grade three, in its own building near Kosciuszko Lane. The director of the school was Mr. Moishe-Ber Fiszman [Fishman]. The association had a large library, a Public Health Society (T.C.Z.) which provided food assistance to poor Jewish children and provided medical treatment (Dr. Aron Romanowicz and the dentist Leja Baronbojm ) [Leah Barenboim, ed.].

The Jewish Confessional Community was headquartered in Sarny.

Replying to your questions I must state that:

--based on historic evidence, it must be established that in the year 1648 there were no Platers in Dabrowica.

--I do not know of any other publication on the subject of Dabrowica than the above cited. -- The Plater family has its own historic monograph in "Materials on Polish Biographic Genealogy and Heraldry." There lived in Dabrowica, in succession, Count Antoni Broel Plater (1750-1832), Ignacy

(1791-1854), Victor (1843-1911), and the last owner Witold (1893-1962) who served until 1939.

--Peasants in Volhynia spoke Ruthenian (not Russian), and Jews predominantly used Yiddish. The Polish language was obligatory for official business. In school, it was the Polish language and, from the second year of instruction, Ruthenian. In the private Jewish school, Polish as well was used equally with Yiddish.

--The contacts of my father with representatives of the Jewish community were not limited to business, but included matters of finances, although not for the Dabrowica community. We did not live in Dabrowica so we did not have contact with the local community. I know that my great grandfather [probably Victor] helped in the building of the synagogue, but which of the three synagogues it was I do not know. He also helped in the building of the church, and there, at his burial, the three confessions, one after another, bid him farewell.

In conclusion, I might add that in my own family home there are no recollections of Dabrowica. I was never there. My father traveled to Dabrowica to look after the estate but he never took his children with him. That was a result of events that took place in Dabrowica in 1918.

Revolutionary Bolshevik enthusiasts of Dabrowica proclaimed a "Republic of Dubrowica" and began a bloody terror. In the course of their short rule they murdered thirty people. Among the revolutionaries were refugees from Russia, followers of Petlury [a Ukrainian nationalist insurgent], and railroad workers. The mass murder was carried out during the "Worobin action," in which were murdered two brothers of my father and nine workers of the estate who were defending themselves in the palace against attackers from "the revolutionary committee." The attackers, not being able to defeat the defenders, set fire to the besieged house. When those who were besieged surrendered and put down their arms, they were at once killed. The political commissar of the detachment detailed to the "Worobin action" was the Dabrowica Jew Sandler. After the invasion of the Soviet Army in 1939, Sandler arrived in Dabrowica, returning to his home town as an officer in the NKVD [KGB predecessor].

This is as much information as I can give you about Dabrowica,

Very truly yours,

/s/ Jacek hr. Broel Plater



## **APPENDIX B**

### **FRED KANDEL INTERVIEW**

Kandel, Fred, born 1931  
Survivor/Hidden  
Berezhno

Kandel recalls that life before the war was happy. His family lived in a large home with his grandparents and an aunt and uncle. He remembers little anti-Semitism in Berezhno, which he describes as having a large and active Jewish community.

When Germany invaded Russia in June 1941, Kandel's family moved to his grandfather's farm outside Berezhno. He recalls living there with many family members who all felt that the farm would be safer than living in town. Kandel remembers seeing the Russians retreat and states that some of his family talked of going with them but all remained on the farm. When the Germans marched through, his grandfather was beaten by soldiers who had asked neighbors where the Jews lived.

Eventually all Jews in the surrounding areas were sent to the ghetto in Berezhno. Kandel remembers living with his entire extended family in a small room but recalls little else from this period. He was sent with his younger brother, parents, grandfather and uncles to work in a nearby labor camp. Here they lived in barracks and worked digging and stacking soft coal. Kandel states that women working in the camp commander's quarters overheard an order that the camp inmates were to be sent back to the ghetto in Berezhno for extermination, and they warned the other prisoners. Most of the inmates escaped into the forest.

Kandel's family, led by his grandfather and uncles who knew the woods, back roads, and local farmers, survived. Kandel states that many others were captured because they were unfamiliar with the area. Kandel recalls frequently running from Ukrainians and Germans who staged sweeps of the forests and marshes. He remembers one farmer in particular who often risked his life to help the Jews in hiding. He recalls that many Ukrainians were anxious to turn Jews in to obtain sugar or salt from the Germans. Kandel's family survived in the forest by begging and stealing food and

clothing and building well-camouflaged shelters. They spent much time near the Russian partisans, who were parachuted into the woods, and he recalls feeling safer knowing that they were nearby.

Kandel was liberated in 1944 and his family went to a town near Kiev, where they lived in a bombed-out building and endured many air strikes. Eventually they moved to Lodz, Poland, where they found several other surviving Jews. The family continued on to displaced persons camps in Austria and Italy and later immigrated to the United States in 1948.

Interview Information: Date: May 25, 1983. Interviewer: Donna Miller. Holocaust Memorial Center, West Bloomfield, MI 48322, Fax: (248) 661-4204

[www.holocaustcenter.org/OralHistory/synopsis.php?file=Kandel](http://www.holocaustcenter.org/OralHistory/synopsis.php?file=Kandel)

## APPENDIX C

“Berezna Cemetery” A report of the International Jewish Cemetery Project of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (AJGS)

BEREZNE: (Yiddish) see Berežno

BEREZNO US Comm. No. UA17270101

Berežno is located in *Rovensky Uyezd* (Rovno County). The cemetery is located at Pionerskaya str., rest park. Berežno was also called Berezne (Yiddish), Berezhne (German) and Berezh-na (Hungarian). The town is located at 51.0 longitude and 26.45 latitude. Berežno is 56 km from Rovno. The present town population is 1,000 - 5,000 with no Jews.

Town officials: Village Executive Council of Berežno, Kievskaya str., 5 [tel: (03653) 54953]. Local officials: Production association of communal services of Snitko: Andrey Romanovich [tel: (0365) 356149]. Regional: Bureau of protection memorial oblast local lore museum of Rovno, Dragomanova, 19 [tel: (03622) 21833].

Town officials: Shapiro, David Lvovich of Berežno, Andreevskayastr., 61 Berezne, Tsiolkovskogo str., 31 of Sheyhet. Others: State oblast archive of Rovno, Moskovskaya str., 26a [tel: (03622) 33004] Israel, Yad Vashem.

The earliest known Jewish community in this town was in the 18th century. The Jewish population as of the last census in 1939 was 2800. Some noteworthy historical events involving or affecting the Jewish Community were Khmielnitskiy's pogroms and World War I. The Jewish cemetery was established in the 18th century. The last known Jewish burial was in 1941. The type of Jewish community which used this cemetery was Hasidic (Karlin-Stolin). No other towns or villages used this cemetery. The cemetery is not listed and/or protected as a landmark or monument.

The cemetery location is suburban, located on flat land, isolated, marked by no sign or marker. It is reached by turning directly off a public road. The access is open to all. The cemetery is surrounded by no wall or fence. There is no gate.

There are 1 to 20 headstones. More than 75% of the surviving stones are toppled or broken, whether or not in their original location. Locations of any stones that have been removed is not known.

Stones are dated from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. The cemetery has only common tombstones. The cemetery contains no known mass graves.

The present owner of the cemetery property is the municipality. The cemetery property is now used for recreational use (park, playground, sports). Properties adjacent it are recreational. The cemetery boundaries have not changed since 1939. The cemetery is visited occasionally by private visitors (Jewish or non-Jewish).

This cemetery has not been vandalized. There is no maintenance now.

Within the limits of the cemetery there are no structures.

Vegetation overgrowth is a constant problem, disturbing graves. Serious threat: vandalism (On this place is rest park. Local residents moving tombstones). Moderate threat: uncontrolled access and vegetation. Slight threat: pollution.

The following documentation were used in complete this survey: see at section 14. Other documentation exists but was not used because it is not accessible. The site was visited for this survey by Kirzhner Moisey of 263005, Lutsk, Grushevskogo prosp., 18, apt.38 [tel: (03322) 34775] on 13/09/1996. Person(s) interviews for this survey were Vasil Efremovich of Tsiolkovskogo str., 24/16 on 13/09/1996 and Kravchuk Sergey Avramovich of Kozatskaya, 15 on 13/09/1996.

This survey was completed by Kirzhner Moisey of 263005, Lutsk, Grushevskogo prosp., 18, apt.38 [tel: (03322) 34775] on 16/09/1996.

## APPENDIX D

### The Jewish Cemetery In Dubrowica

Properties adjacent to the cemetery are residential. The cemetery boundaries are smaller now than in 1939 because of housing development. The cemetery is visited rarely by organized individual tours. It was vandalized during World War II, but not in the last 10 years. It has no maintenance now.

From the International Jewish Cemetery Project–Ukraine

DUBROVITSA: US Commission No. UA17230101

Town population in 2002 was 5,001-25,000 with 11-100 Jews.

Town officials: Town Executive Council

Vorobinskaya Street 4, 265500 Dubrovitsa, Ukraine; [Phone: (03658) 21048].

Local officials: Department of Communal Service -,

Kommunalnaya Street 7, 265500 Dubrovitsa, Ukraine; [Phone: (03658) 21085].

Field CodeChanged

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Ellis Island Wall of Honor**

On the Ellis Island American Immigration Wall of Honor, the following members of the Beggelman/Karas family are inscribed:

Elia, Fannie, and David Karas	Panel 215
Joseph Beggelman Family	Panel 490
Herman Richmond	Panel 554

## **AFTERWORD**

I hope that other members of the extended Beggelman/Karas family who come after me will want to continue this family history as more information from the past becomes available, and events of the future are recorded.

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem already has its records on the internet, and The Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) has been collecting material on Jewish genealogy for many years and has been putting all their microfilm records on the internet. Also, more and more vital records – births, marriages, and deaths – are being catalogued and put on the internet. With such resources it will be possible to do more family history research from a home computer. And for those family members who do not have the time or patience, researchers in Eastern Europe will do it for you, for a price.

I regret that some parts of this family history may not be complete, and the formatting not without errors. That is because, after many years of work on the family history, I have decided to publish it, as is, and distribute it to family members.

Yale Richmond

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and their Culture* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1988), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For life in the shtetl, see Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), and in more detail, Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is With the People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> I have been unable to trace the Molinski family.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. G. Bigel, *Mayn Shtetele Berezne* (Tel Aviv: Berezner Society in Israel, 1954), p. 16. This is the *Yizkor* (Memorial) book for Berezna, and copies may be found at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC; Brandeis University Library; Yale University Library; Bar Ilan University, Israel; and other libraries that maintain a collection of Yizkor books. The Yale University Call No. is DS135R93B77.

<sup>6</sup> Some scholars believe that East European Jews had their origins further east. Additional research may resolve this.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. iv (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 606-7. More information on Berezna may be found in older editions of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. For a map of Berezna, see Bigel, *Mayn Shtetele Berezne*, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Gilad Ben-Baruch is an obstetrician-gynecologist who is head of the Gynecology and Maternity Center at Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer, Israel. His sister, Dalia Bodner, a pediatrician, lives at 19 Yeshayahue Street, Ramat Gan 52233, Israel.

<sup>9</sup> Beigel & Beigel Ltd., P.O.B. 9, Industrial Area, Barkan 44820, Israel. They can also be found on the internet.

<sup>10</sup> The best map I have seen is Map No. 35-2, Series N501, Army Map Service, Eastern Europe, which has Dubrovitsa and Krupovye in English. This map may be found at the Boston Public Library or a large university library.

<sup>11</sup> For the other children of Yitzkhak and Mindel Karas, see the family tree prepared by a cousin (by marriage), Jacqueline Huhem (6492 Goodwin St., San Diego, CA 92111), attached as Appendix F. Be aware, though, that some names may be spelled differently.

<sup>12</sup> Sima's family name is not known but it may also have been Karas because marriage within families was common in Krupa.

<sup>13</sup> Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1998), pp. 53-57. Kugelmass and Boyarin write the name as Plyater, which is probably a Yiddish corruption of Plater.



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<sup>14</sup> The brutalities of the Khmielnitsky uprising are recalled in a common Yiddish expression, “*in Khmielnitsky’s tsait*” (in Khmielnitsky’s time), used to describe a very difficult time for Jews in Ukraine and Poland.

<sup>15</sup> See the letter from Count Jacek Plater in Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> Morris Feingold is a mystery to us. If Feingold was really Joseph’s uncle, he must have been married to one of Joseph’s sisters whose name we do not know.

<sup>17</sup> A daughter, Frances, the third child after Rhoda and Phil, died in infancy in East Boston, presumably a victim of Sudden Death Syndrome.

<sup>18</sup> This story comes from our cousin, Jacqueline Huhem, who interviewed Shmuel in Israel in 1986. Azar Karas (1913-1977)<sup>1</sup> and Shmuel Karas (1921-?) are sons of Itsik and Brocha Karas.

<sup>19</sup> For another first-hand account of the Holocaust in Berezna, see the story of Fred Kandel in Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> Today, some two-third of Moldovans are ethnic Romanians; and the rest are Russian-speaking minorities. Russian, however, was the only official language until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. And although today, in an independent Moldova, more than nine-tenths of the population can speak Russian, language still remains a divisive issue.

<sup>21</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian government had denied Jews the right to purchase liquor licenses.

<sup>22</sup> The historic role of Jews as purveyors of alcohol explains, in part, why so many North American Jews are in the liquor business. Bronfman, for example, the name of the Canadian family that controls the Seagram Company, actually means “distiller” in Yiddish.

<sup>23</sup> For an account of the Holocaust in Bessarabia, see *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: MacMillan, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Place names, given here in parentheses, are alternate spellings in other languages, such as Russian, Romanian, Polish, Ukrainian, etc.) Because these territories shifted back and forth between empires and states, the cities and towns have been known by different names at different times. Similarly, Jewish family names may vary in spelling, depending on whether a place of birth was Russian, Romanian, Polish, Austrian, or Hungarian at the time. For example, we have Burstyn, Burstin, Burstein, and Bernstein, all of which mean “amber.”

<sup>25</sup> Alternate spellings are Briceni, Britchany, Britshan, Brychany. For more on Brichany, see the *Yizkor* (memorial book), *Britsheni ha-yehudit bemahatsit ha-mea ha-aharona* (Brichany: Its Jewry in the First Half of Our Century), (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Brichany 1964), in Hebrew), Yivo 3/70219.

<sup>26</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 1370.

<sup>27</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and New York: KPI, 1986), p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> “Pale” is an archaic term for an area enclosed by a fence or boundary.

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<sup>29</sup> For more on Circassians in Israel, see William Claiborne, “A Tight Community Resists Assimilation, in *Washington Post*, 16 March 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Regarding Khazaria and its Jews, the most provocative work is Arthur Koestler’s *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*. Also, see the article on Khazars in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and Arlene Blank Rich’s article, “Are We Descendents of Khazarian Jews?” in *Avotaynu, The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, vol. 11, no. 2 (May 1986).

<sup>31</sup> In Yiddish and Russian, a particularly nasty cuss word is *cholera*, used in the sense that the person so cursed should come down with the deadly disease. It was only in 1883 that Robert Koch was able to isolate the cholera bacillus, a discovery that led the way to close supervision of water supplies, and strict disinfection and quarantine protocols.

<sup>32</sup> Another Cherkes (no relation) from Brichany whom I have contacted and met is Martin Cherkes, an associate professor of finance at Columbia University’s School of Business.

<sup>33</sup> To see what Bessarabian shtetls actually looked like in those days, and how Jews lived at the time, see the Russian film, *Komissar*, shown from time to time in art theaters. Filmed in Kamenets-Podolskiy, it’s also a great story about the interaction between Jews and Russians during the Russian civil war of the early 1920s.

<sup>34</sup> Leib is listed in the Ellis Island records as Leib Cerkes. Immigrant names were often misspelled by immigration officials who did not know foreign languages.

<sup>35</sup> Chaim Czerkis is obviously another misspelling, because on the manifest his “Last Place of Residence” is listed as Kielmencs (another misspelling), which clearly identifies him as Chaim Cherkes.

Ada, the family beauty, relaxes and grows more playful, unimpeded by her rule-driven, religious husband. Vivie, once terribly wronged by her sister, is now the family diplomat and an increasingly inventive chef. Unmarried Bec finds herself forced to choose between the family-centric life she's always known and a passion-filled life with the married man with whom she's had a secret years-long affair. But when a terrible accident occurs on the sisters' watch, a summer of hope and self-discovery transforms into a lifetime of atonement and loss for members of this close-knit clan.

The Boston Massacre took place on March 5, 1770, and began as another protest, this time over the large presence of British soldiers sent to the city to protect customs officials after the passage of the unpopular Townshend Acts. The massacre took place after a number of citizens had gathered outside the Old State House on what was then King Street and began insulting and harassing the soldiers on guard. Around 10 p.m. on the night of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere was sent by Patriot leader Joseph Warren to ride from Boston to Concord to warn the colonists, as well as Samuel Adams and John Hancock who were in hiding in Lexington, of the approaching British army. Revere warned many colonists along the way and arrived in Lexington around midnight.

Explanation and interactive map of the Battle of the Berezina. (November 26, 1812 - November 28, 1812). As the French army retreated from Russia, they were faced with the troubling prospect of crossing the Berezina River. Usually frozen by that time of the year, an unseasonable thaw kept the 100 yard wide river flowing strong, forcing the French to find a bridge. Directly in the path of the French army and determined to keep the French from crossing the river was Admiral Chichagov with 34,000 soldiers. Further north, General Wittgenstein with 30,000 soldiers was moving to join with Chichagov to hold the French back, while Field Marshal Kutusov with the main Russian army pursued the French army f