

## Twentieth Century Lives

This course looks at the lives of my parents and grandparents who spent their adult years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will contrast their experience with that of the parents of my wife, Tamar, who were born and spent their entire lives in Europe and Israel during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am illustrating these lives with old photos and documents which I will share with the class by using the document camera in the classroom. Although I was born in 1943 and lived much of my life during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I did not experience first-hand the most consequential events of that one hundred year period: World War I, the Great Depression, the rise of totalitarianism, and World War II. The vast technological changes that swept through the world during the last century have profoundly changed the human condition and constitute a break with the preceding history of mankind. We will start the story with a presentation on my four grandparents, maternal and paternal, all of whom were born in the late 1800's. Then we will look at the lives of my parents and their siblings, most of whom were born in the early 1900's. I will then attempt to reconstruct, by contrast, the lives of my wife's forebears. I hope to show how particular individuals' lives were affected by the historic events and discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The course will have four ninety-minute sessions. A short lecture narrative will be sent to course participants with two attachments: A "county history" of the Andersons done in 1890 and 1903; and the text of a short memoir by my mother-in-law, Alice Laski Goldblum, recounting her harrowing experiences during World War II and the Holocaust.

### **The Anderson's and the Smith's**

I start by noting that my mother's family, the Groves, and my father's family, the Andersons, entered each other's lives in the late 1920's in Jackson, Michigan. My father, Charles Stewart Anderson, was the third of that name since the family settled in Jackson County in the 1830's. The first Anderson to set foot there was Robert (1810-1881), who homesteaded a small farm outside Jackson near the (future) town of Rives Junction. The name of this town derives from the named of the township – Rives – and the fact that in the mid-1800's two lines of what used to be called the Grand Trunk Railroad, one going toward Detroit and the other branch going north to Grand Rapids and Lansing, met at this point. When Robert arrived in the area there were no railroads this part of Michigan, and Michigan itself was still a territory. It became a state in 1837. Robert and most of his descendants are buried in the Draper Cemetery in Rives Junction, including my father (and mother).

According to *De Land's History of Jackson County, Michigan* (see attachment), Robert was born in 1810 in County Tyron in Ireland and came to the United States at the age of five with his parents. They settled in New York City in 1815 and Robert lived there until his marriage to Hester Sharrott in 1832. The couple moved on to Michigan in the early 1830's and homesteaded in Tompkins Township of Jackson County and eventually relocated to Rives Township. Robert and Hester had nine children, one of whom was my great-grandfather, Charles Stewart Anderson, born in 1846. Robert and Charles lived on adjoining farms and produced the usual crops and some beef cattle and pigs. Robert died in 1881 but his wife Hester was still living on

the family farm in 1890 at the age of seventy-five. My great-grandfather married Vestilina Fields and they also had nine children, one of whom, my grandfather, Charles Stewart Anderson II, was born in 1876 and like his father and grandfather, became a farmer in Rives Township of Jackson County.

The Anderson family was of Scots-Irish origin, and were among the thousands of Scots relocated to Ireland from southern Scotland by the English government in the 1600's in an attempt to turn the island into a Protestant stronghold. The "Stewart" used as a middle name by several generations of Anderson's could have been a misspelling of the Scottish royal family's name ("Stuart"). All of my ancestors on both sides were strictly Protestant, but a number of my mother's brothers married Catholic girls and the old prejudice against "Popery" ceased to exist in our family by the mid-Twentieth Century.

My father, Charles Stewart Anderson III, was born in 1908 on the farm outside Jackson, not in a hospital. He was the third child of Charles Sr. (1876-1934) and his wife Anna Anderson, nee Smith (1883-1967), and the great-grandson of Robert, and the grandson of Charles Stewart Anderson I (1846-1897). He had two older sisters, my aunts Bertine and Iva, born between 1900 and 1906 and eventually would have a younger brother Robert (1914-1968). The two girls married young, Bertine to Emmet Peek, a tenant farmer in the Jackson area, and Iva to Albert Rump, a photoengraver in Jackson. My grandmother Anderson, nee Smith, was a dour woman when I knew her in my youth. After my grandfather's death in 1934, she remarried a man named Carl Wilson, who suffered from alcohol-induced diabetes and had lost a leg to amputation when I knew him. He had a plastic artificial leg which he took off at night before going to bed (I remember encountering the "leg" in the guest bedroom at our house in Wheaton), he chewed tobacco, and had a tin can in his old Hudson that he used as a spittoon.

My paternal grandmother's father (Smith) was probably a farmer in the Jackson area and her mother (maiden name "Gibbons") also came from a local family with a long history in Jackson. An old Gibbons family Bible shows a succession of marriages, births and deaths going back to the mid-1800's. The Bible itself was published in 1860. Family legend has it that my first Gibbons ancestor to set foot on American soil was actually a British "Red Coat" who remained in the new United States after the Revolutionary War and settled somewhere in New England before his descendants moved West along the Erie Canal in the 1830's to take up farming in Michigan Territory.

Economic downturns had a lasting impact on my grandparents and then my parents. The Anderson farm, in the family since the 1830s, was sold in about 1921 when the post-World War I collapse of farm prices led many farmers to sell out. The Anderson's moved into Jackson and my grandparents eventually used the money from the sale of the farm to purchase a rooming house and restaurant in an industrial area of Jackson, near the Sparks-Withington factory. They lived in a large "four-square" house in Jackson, probably rented. Like many Michigan businesses, the Sparks-Withington factory made parts for automobiles, including the first electric auto horn. Later, it branched out into the manufacture of radios and – eventually – televisions. During the 1920's, Sparton, as it came to be called, was one of Jackson's largest employers, with hundreds of poorly paid workers, some of whom roomed at the Anderson's and probably also ate

there: a real room and board place. The 1920's automobile boom meant steady employment and incomes for the factory workers, and my grandparents evidently enjoyed relative prosperity as a result. When my parents met, my father was working as a photoengraver, apprenticed to his brother-in-law Albert Rump, the husband of Charles's sister Iva. Sometime just before or after he and Flora married (January 1929) he probably left the trade to help run the boarding house. I am not sure if he worked full-time at the family business, or whether he continued part-time at the photoengraving shop.

My mother told me that she met Charles at a church social in Jackson, a get-together where young men and women could meet under chaperoned circumstances. My father was not a religious person and he only went to the social to meet girls. My mother was new to Jackson and lonely. They met, fell in love, and were married, as noted, in January 1929. Their first child, yet another Charles Stewart Anderson (the 4<sup>th</sup>), was born ten months later at the end of October, just after the stock market crash.

Charles and Flora bought a new Ford Model-A in 1929 or 1930 and had a year or two of blissful togetherness. But the creeping effects of what was to become the Great Depression soon began to lead to layoffs at the factories in Jackson and the boarders at the Anderson's either decamped without paying their bills, or simply continued living there without paying for room and board. By 1934 the business was essentially bankrupt, with bills for food, cigarettes, utilities, etc. piling up and little or no money coming in. To top it all off, my grandfather died of a heart attack (as previously mentioned) and my mother discovered her young husband had a serious drinking problem. My father probably started drinking bathtub gin at the age of 16, shortly after he dropped-out of high school and hired on as an apprentice to his brother-in-law Albert. Albert was a heavy drinker, as was my father's younger brother Robert. While technically not an alcoholic (he probably never missed a day's work on account of being drunk or hung over), my father eventually wrecked his health and ruined our home life due to drink.

A sign of the troubled nature of their lives was the delay in having a second child, but finally almost four years after Charles Jr. was born, a second baby boy, Richard, arrived in August 1933. (As of last report, both these men are still alive. I attended Dick's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in Hilton Head on August 12<sup>th</sup>; Chuck has been out of touch for years, but we assume he is still living at his home in Northborough, Massachusetts at the age of 94 as of October 30, 2023.)

The young couple could have been crushed by these various setbacks. The saving grace turned out to be Charles's photoengraving trade. Perhaps through union contacts, he was able to obtain a job with a small Chicago photoengraving shop sometime in late 1934 or early 1935 and by the summer of the latter year the Anderson family had relocated to the Chicago area, renting a large house in Berwyn, Illinois where, in July 1935 Flora gave birth to her third child, another boy, Leslie. At some point during the 1930's Charles switched employers, probably due to a falling out with his company's anti-union owner. His new job, in the photoengraving shop at the city's main afternoon newspaper, *The Daily News*, proved to be a life-saver, both for his own family and for my mother's family, the Groves. Her father, Harper, had lost his job as a civil engineer in the mid-or-late 1930s and during much of the time leading up to World War II, Charles was the principal wage earner for both the Anderson's and the Grove's. Flora had already served as a

sort of surrogate mother for the younger Groves, Fred, Philip and Henry. Grandma Grove had shipped the youngsters off to Jackson for summer vacations while Flora and Charles lived there and, upon their relocation to Chicago, the Anderson house became a second home for the boys after Harper and Elizabeth moved their family to Berwyn to be near Flora and Charles. To top it off, Charles's younger brother Robert, married with two small children, also showed up in Chicago. He and his wife, Nancy, were both alcoholics and unable to care for the two children, a boy and a girl, one of whom was nicknamed "Bunny." Charles and Flora helped as much as they could, but the two children were eventually placed in an orphanage or foster homes. While all this was going on, Flora gave birth to Gene in August 1937, John in May 1941, and Michael in December 1943. A final son, Philip, arrived in October 1948, just before the family moved to their first non-rental house in Wheaton, Illinois in November of that year. Charles and Flora purchased this old farm house on nearly an acre of ground from a couple named Conrad, who were retiring and moving to San Diego. The price was \$14,500 and the deal was struck on a contract, with a small down payment with the rest payable over the next twenty years in monthly installments. No one buys a house on these terms anymore.

The war years had actually been good for the Andersons. Charles had all the work he could handle, with ample overtime. Due to his age 33 when the U.S. entered the war; his employer: a newspaper; and his five children to support, he never had to fear being drafted.

### **The Groves and the Hambrights**

My mother's parents were Elizabeth Hambright and Harper Grove. They both were born in the little town of Scotland, Pennsylvania in the 1880's. Their ancestors came out of Germany in the early 1700's and settled in and around Lancaster, Pennsylvania. There they intermarried with Scotch-Irish immigrants who came into the area at roughly the same time. It was these latter folk who gave the name of "Scotland" to this tiny village near Chambersburg in southern Pennsylvania. Both families evidently Anglicized their names at some point after arriving in America, with the German names probably being Hambrecht and Graf. Genealogical research done by one of their sons (my Uncle Philip) turned up a number of prominent Hambrecht's and Hambright's in this part of Pennsylvania, one of whom, Heinrich, played a role in the American Revolution but ended up spending most of the war as an inmate in a British prison ship anchored off Staten Island, New York. My uncle's efforts to trace the Grove, or Graf, lineage was less successful. Suffice to say, these "Pennsylvania Dutch" families had deep roots in southern Pennsylvania and were probably resident in the area for more than 150 years before my maternal grandparents were born. My grandfather's father, Martin Luther Grove, was the manager of a "creamery" in Scotland in the late 1800s and early 1900s. I don't know what my maternal grandmother's family did for a living, but they were probably farmers, like most of the people in and around Scotland in those days.

Harper and Elizabeth were married in 1902 and had their first child, a boy named Brandon, in 1903. My mother, Flora, came along next in 1906, and was followed by six more male siblings over the next eighteen years. Thus, she was the sole girl and had seven brothers. Coincidentally, she would end up bearing seven sons herself between 1929 and 1948, and no daughters.

Harper Grove broke the mold, you might say: he ended up leaving the little town of Scotland and Pennsylvania altogether around the time he was married. We know this because when Brandon was born in 1903, the couple was living in New Jersey. This would make Harper the first of the Grove line to leave this small town and its agriculturally-dominated way of life. His brother Arthur also eventually went out into the larger world, ending up as an executive with the appliance maker Hotpoint. Harper, however, went into engineering and managed to earn the equivalent of a college degree through course work and practical experience. He eventually joined a civil engineering firm and spent about twenty-five years supervising construction projects around the eastern United States, including work at the Jackson State Prison in Jackson, Michigan in the late 1920's. His growing family came into the world in New Jersey, Michigan, and Indiana and eventually the family settled in the Chicago area where his company was headquartered. I mention the stint in Jackson, Michigan because that was where my mother met her future husband, Charles Anderson.

Mother was born in Boonton, New Jersey, but the family lived there only briefly, and her childhood and adolescence were a constant whirl of new homes and schools. Flora graduated from a public high school on the south side of Chicago in 1924 and quickly got a job as a secretary in the Loop, the city's business center. But her father's move to Jackson meant she had to quit her job and follow the family to this small city in southern Michigan, a place where she knew no one and where she missed the excitement and the big city atmosphere of 1920's Chicago. She also found herself pressed into service taking care of her younger brothers, including the newest (and last) arrival, Henry, who was born in 1924. I should say my mother aspired to greater things, she wanted a career and even tried for a while to take courses at Wayne University in Detroit, but due to financial strains, she had to drop out.

My grandfather, Harper Grove, developed an interest in family history during the 1920's and went through the trouble of doing a genealogical search in order to establish his eligibility to join the Sons of the American Revolution. I never met my grandfather Grove, he died a year before I was born at age 59 of cancer. By all accounts, however, he was a bit of a dreamer and prone to buying fast cars and smoking expensive cigars. He also loved opera, or at least the most popular arias (according to my mother) and he doted on his only daughter, my mother to be. As with so many people, his life was upended by the Great Depression. The downturn in the economy meant that large construction projects – at least in the private sector – were put on hold and he was laid off from his engineering position and never really worked full time for the last few years of his life.

My Grandma Grove lived on for another twenty years after Harper's death, dying in her sleep of heart failure in 1963 at the age of 81. She was a cheerful, somewhat ditzy lady, whose ability to overcome the trials of life made her a pleasant companion. She and Uncle Henry, who lived with her until her death, spent many a Sunday afternoon at our home in Wheaton, Illinois, where a heavy luncheon followed or preceded by a little touch football or an informal basketball game allowed the Anderson boys to work off their nervous energy.

World War II had an epochal impact on the three younger Grove boys: Fred, Philip, and Henry. Fred (1918-1941) had just completed college at the University of Illinois when the war broke

out. But already in 1940, although the U.S. had not yet entered the war, he volunteered for the U.S. Army Air Force. He wanted to be a flyer, but he washed out of flight school due to poor eyesight. Undeterred, in late 1940 or early 1941, he went to Canada where he was accepted into the Royal Canadian Air Force and shipped to England for further training. Many of the RAF's leading aces were in fact Canadians. Fred may have been one of the few Americans accepted into the ranks of this elite corps. But, in July 1941, while on a training flight along the coast of England in a two-man plane, he crashed into shallow water and died. He is buried in a small churchyard cemetery in Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire, just a few miles from where his plane went down. Later inquiry by my cousin Eddie produced a letter from the RAF historical office stating that the plane experienced mechanical problems of some sort, leading to the crash.

Phil and Henry Grove were drafted in time to join the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944. Phil earned his captain's bars and served under General Patton. He was awarded a Purple Heart after being shot through the ankle at the very end of the war in Europe. Henry's experience proved to be much harsher. A sensitive youth, he should never have been put into the infantry, but the U.S. Army needed bodies and so he was. During the bitter winter of 1944-45, he, like so many other young recruits, felt the full brunt of the Nazi counterattack known as the Battle of the Bulge. His war stories told to his nephews in the 1950's elicited laughter, but he had in fact experienced stark terror as German "buzz bombs" rained down as he was carrying his Christmas dinner from the mess tent. Diving into a ditch he later emerged in a catatonic state. He eventually was shipped back to the U.S. and received a medical discharge. Histories of the war estimate that as many as twenty-five per cent of American soldiers suffered some form of disabling nervous breakdown fighting on the Western front in Europe. General Patton famously slapped one such unfortunate while on a visit to a military hospital in Italy. But the condition known as "battle fatigue" or "shell shock" was no different than an actual physical injury in its disabling effects.

My grandfather Grove lived to learn of his son Fred's death, but he succumbed to kidney cancer in 1942, before his other sons were called up to fight. By this time the Grove's had moved to a small apartment in River Forest, a leafy suburb adjacent to the commercial district of Oak Park. Grandma Grove worked as a sales clerk at the Marshal Field's store in Oak Park and got a twenty per cent discount on all purchases. We made frequent use of this perk. The Groves remained in this fourth-floor walk-up until 1956, when she and Henry bought a small house not too far from our place in Wheaton.

The oldest Grove son, Brandon, who was 38 in 1941, had perhaps the most interesting World War II experience. After finishing his PhD in Paleontology (the study of fossilized plants and animals) at the University of Chicago in 1929, Brandon took a job with the Vacuum Oil Corporation (a successor to Standard Oil later merged into Mobil Oil Corp.) and was sent to Europe to explore for oil. In September 1939, he and his Polish-American wife, Helen, were living in Warsaw and he was prospecting for oil in southeastern Poland (which at that time shared a border with Romania, where there actually were commercially important oil deposits). Around the time of the German attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, Grove and his family fled the country by car into Romania, eventually making their way to Istanbul and then back to the U.S.

In 1941, however, Brandon was in Spain, supposedly prospecting for oil, but perhaps also providing reports to the American Embassy in Madrid on conditions in that country, a major escape route for people fleeing the Nazis. He had a poignant exchange of letters with his younger brother Fred just before the latter's untimely death in England. The Grove family, in other words, was harshly affected by World War II, while the Anderson's enjoyed relative peace and prosperity on the home front.

### **The Post-War Years**

With the move to Wheaton in 1948, the Anderson's life fundamentally changed. Charles became a long-distance-commuter, boarding the 7:08 train every morning at the Northwestern Railroad station in Glen Ellyn and returning most evenings on the 5:08 train from Chicago's Northwestern station. The 32-minute trip included only one stop before arriving at Glen Ellyn, some 23 miles west of the city. Charles would sit in the smoking car, reading his copy of *The Daily News*, or maybe playing a few hands of gin rummy with some of the other male passengers. Until the mid-1950's, the railroad continued to use old steam locomotives to pull the aged train cars, but around 1955 the railroad started to modernize the commuter service with double-decker "push-pull" diesel-powered trains. By the early 1950's Charles was working at Wallace-Miller Photoengraving, located on the near north side of Chicago. He was a copper etcher, a cut below the color etchers at the shop, one of whom, a Jew named Shaeffer, became Father's *bete noir* and the object of his blatantly anti-Semitic dislike. He mocked his accent – "Not dat way, dis way" – Dad would complain at the kitchen table while drinking a can of beer, aping Shaeffer's whining intonation. The younger Anderson's did not know it at the time, but their father suffered from a serious inferiority complex and assuaged his feelings with drink.

Flora, on the other hand, instilled in her sons the belief that they were actually better than most other people: more educated, more urbane, and potentially richer. She pushed to make sure the boys did well in school – she had been the PTA president at the Irving Elementary School in Berwyn until the family moved to Wheaton. She even took part in state-wide PTA activities, famously attending the organization's annual state convention, held in Peoria. But with seven children to raise, she had little time for activities outside the home. Her husband cared nothing for socializing with the neighbors and had no close friends, preferring to spend his evenings drinking, smoking endless cigarettes, perhaps doing a crossword puzzle, or making conversation with visiting young friends of his sons. Unfortunately, after a few beers, he lapsed into heated exchanges with Flora, usually about her plans to spend money on things he was sure we could not afford.

The climax of Charles's life came in April 1961, when at the age of 53 he was informed that Wallace-Miller was going out of business and he would soon need to look for another job. Although he lived for another fifteen years, he never found another steady photoengraving job. In fact, photoengraving as a trade was being replaced by lithography, sometimes called "off-set printing," which did not call for his copper plate etching skills. He could have trained as a lithographer, the union even would have helped him make the transition, but he proved unable to make the change. Flora had already taken a job at Wheaton-based Scripture Press, a religious publishing house, and the Anderson's managed to carry on financially, but Charles sank further

and further into depression and dipsomania. He finally died of cirrhosis of the liver in January 1976. Like his long-dead father, Charles was a victim of economic and technological changes beyond his control and eventually succumbed to these forces.

In the early post-war years, we continued to see both our Anderson and Grove relatives, but the latter more than the former. My father's oldest sister, Bertine, and her husband Emmet Peek lived as tenant farmers on a 200-acre dairy farm outside Jackson. The house had no indoor plumbing and the water came from a well with a pump powered by a windmill situated next to the house. There was electricity and I remember going out to the milking barn with my Uncle Peek early in the morning where he would attach the electric milking machines to the cows' udders. Later, a truck would come by from a local dairy to pick up the milk in large metal containers. At the house, we could drink the unpasteurized milk, still warm from the cow. Uncle Peek had a large, orange Allis-Chalmers tractor when I visited the farm and even took me along on trips to the pastures, towing a wagon with forage for the cows, or plowing a 20-acre plot to be seeded in feed corn. I visited the farm with my cousin Carol Peek back in 1993, but it was abandoned and bisected now by an interstate highway going up to Lansing.

We also visited my Aunt Iva, Father's other sister, living in Jackson. She was long-widowed from her late husband Albert Rump, and had lost her only son, Albert Charles, in an auto accident sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Grandma Wilson lived on in Jackson after her husband Carl passed away, but visiting her house meant boredom, so I was always happy to say good bye.

The Groves, however, were a more frequent presence in our lives. Uncle Henry and Grandma Grove were regulars at Sunday dinner. We used to drive into River Forest from Wheaton to pick them up (they had no car and neither had a driver's license) and then drive them back after lunch. Uncle Phil had finished law school at the University of Illinois soon after the war (I remember driving down to Champaign-Urbana to pick him and his law books up after his graduation). He took a job with Chevron Oil Company in their New Orleans office and went South, never to return. He even developed a modified southern accent. Uncle Harper, known as Junior, lived during my youth with his family (five children eventually) in Elmhurst, a short drive from Wheaton. He worked for the Department of Defense as a "packaging engineer." Then there was Uncle Edgar and his wife Alice and their two children Shirley and Eddie. Edgar was the black sheep of the Grove family, having married a girl who he got pregnant and whose family actually owned and operated a roadhouse-type bar called The County Line, on the Cook County side of the border with DuPage County, where Wheaton was located. Wheaton was "dry" and those needing a drink had to leave the city limits to wet their whistles. Uncle George had also married early after getting his girlfriend pregnant and eventually got a divorce and ended up marrying a school librarian, Marian, and settling down as a real estate agent in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. We saw them from time to time. I remember in the 1960's when young people were protesting the war in Vietnam that George opined that they should all be lined up and shot. Then there was the almost mythical Brandon Grove, whose expatriate life for Vacuum and then Mobil Oil took him to Cairo, Tehran, and finally London, where he lived in lordly splendor in a vast apartment overlooking Hyde Park and went to the office in a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce, all



courtesy of his employer. I first saw Brandon at Grandma Grove's house when she and Henry lived in Wheaton sometime between 1956 and 1958. I remember he balanced his drink on the knee of his crossed leg as he sat on the sofa. In 1969 I stayed at his retirement apartment in London – still opulent, but not nearly as grand as the company-provided place – as a grad student en route to Paris where I was purportedly preparing a topic for my doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, which happened to be Brandon's alma mater.

The Groves were just more interesting than my father's people and most of them lived not too far away. More importantly, the cultural divide between my father's family and my mother's was vast and unbridgeable. The Andersons in Jackson were like many people who were born, grew up and died in the same town: very conservative and provincial. Of course if the "town" happened to be Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York, one could modify this generalization somewhat. But even in such big cities, after several generations of living in the same place, families develop a certain myopia and tend to believe that their way of life is really the only way. During the 1993 visit to Jackson that I mentioned earlier, my cousin Carol Peek (who bore a strong resemblance to my father) told me he had not seen his brother (whose name I cannot remember) in over twenty years, even though they lived in the same area. They had a falling out over something, and they ceased to have any further contact. This sort of family feud situation is more common than we might think, but is more striking in a small town than in a family spread across the broad geography of the United States.

The crucial factor in my family's early history was the Great Depression. Had the good times of the 1920's continued to roll, the Andersons would have probably remained in Jackson and the Anderson boys would have grown up in a different America from that of metropolitan Chicago. We would have maintained closer contact with the Anderson side of the family than with the Groves, but, given my mother's aspirations for her sons, we might well have gone on to college in Michigan and then to careers far from our boyhood home. Of course such counterfactuals are of limited use in explaining family (or any sort of) history, but by posing this different scenario we get a clearer sense of how important the larger historical forces are in shaping our destinies. For the Groves, World War II certainly had a life-altering impact, especially for the three younger members of the family. Whereas, for the Andersons, the war provided an almost exciting backdrop to boyhood memories, with such things as paper drives and metal collection drives about their only direct involvement in the war effort.

### **The Goldblums**

I will turn now to the experience of my wife Tamar's family: the Goldblum's and the Laski's.

The Goldblum family came from the Polish city of Radom, some 60 miles southeast of Warsaw, having settled there probably in the 1700's after moving from Germany. From the 1790's until 1919, this area of Poland was part of the tsarist Russian Empire. By 1900, Radom had a large Jewish population, the Russian Imperial Census of 1897 enumerated 28,700 people in Radom of whom 39 per cent (11,200) identified as Jews. By the outbreak of World War II, the Jewish community of Radom had grown to some 30,000 people, one of the largest in Poland. Jews dominated the local economy, with numerous tanneries, metal working factories, and the

professions ([do you want to say businesses?](#)) largely Jewish-owned. The community built a large synagogue and despite discrimination, the Jews of Radom enjoyed a prosperous and happy life. A silent film done by an amateur photographer in 1936 shows the city's synagogue and laughing crowds of Jews, young and old, congregating outside the building, apparently as part of a holiday celebration. It is a bright sunny day but the happy people in the film would mostly be dead or imprisoned in a matter of a few years. Approximately 28,000 of the 30,000 Jews of Radom perished in the Holocaust.

The Goldblums were a [highly](#)-religious family, ~~but~~ also [enterprisingopen minded](#). Tami's paternal grandfather and grandmother allowed their children to grow up freely, and several of the boys went on to become lawyers and doctors and, in the case of Tami's father, Arthur, an engineer. The Goldblum family, in other words, was not a traditional Jewish family. The parents were devout Jews and Zionists, but outside their parent's home, the boys were free to live their own lives. None of them followed traditional Jewish law and they were quite cosmopolitan, some having studied abroad and fluent in several European languages.

Hersz Eljasz Goldblum, Tami's grandfather, was born in Piotrow, Poland in 1859 and died in Radom in 1933. His father, Samuel, was a teacher and Hersz was considered an exceptionally smart young man and thought to be destined to become a rabbi. Instead, he became an industrialist, one of the pioneers of the metal industry in Radom. In 1899 he built the first metal forging factory in the city. The plant produced pipes, heavy equipment parts, and other metal products. Later other entrepreneurs – mainly Jewish -- opened other metal-working factories in Radom. Most of them either worked with Hersz before going into business themselves or later collaborated with him. He was also involved in public affairs. He was the chair of the Jewish community for a while and was involved in every social welfare organization in Radom. He was also a member of the Zionist organization in the city. In 1927 he hosted a large group of people planning to emigrate to Palestine, converting part of his factory for them to live in as they trained in various trades there. Eventually they went to Palestine and established a kibbutz.

Hersz married Rachel Spiritus, the daughter of a wealthy landowner (date unknown, but probably in the 1890's) and they had seven sons (one of whom was Tami's father) and one daughter. Two of the boys died as children, the rest survived World War II and the Holocaust by fleeing to Russia and eventually making their way to Israel.

Tami's father-to-be, Arthur (Artur, in Polish) was born in 1902 and spent his youth in Radom before being sent to the University of Liege in Belgium to obtain an engineering degree. Evidently he had learned enough French to enable him to study in this university. During the 1930's he lived and worked in Radom. He did not marry before the outbreak of World War II and together with the rest of the Goldblum family, he fled Radom at the outbreak of the war. They ended up as refugees in the central Asian area of the Soviet Union along with thousands of other Poles, Jews and non-Jews. After Hitler turned on Stalin in June 1941 and the Soviet Union found itself in a life-and-death struggle with Nazi Germany, Stalin agreed to release the Poles from the internment camps where they were being held in Uzbekistan in order to go to Iran and then on to Palestine. Palestine was ruled at the time by Great Britain under a mandate from the League of Nations. Arthur and his brother Mieczyslaw enlisted there in a Polish-language brigade organized by the British. They were then dispatched to Italy where they joined non-Jewish Poles in a special unit of the British army. The British had appointed Polish general Wladyslaw Anders to command the Poles, who would go on to perform heroically in the battle to

take the Monte Cassino monastery from the Germans. Arthur Goldblum, a college-educated Polish Jew, about forty-two years of age, fought as an infantry soldier in the bloody campaign up the Italian peninsula. After surviving the Holocaust in Poland, he survived the killing fields of World War II in Italy.

Following the Allied victory in 1945, Arthur and his brothers, sister, and mother had to decide whether to try to return to Poland and put their lives back together there, go to England, which offered Arthur and his brother Mieczyslaw, citizenship due to their wartime service, or try to go to Palestine, which Britain still controlled. Two of the brothers as well as Eva and her husband decided to return to Poland rather than ~~stay-go to in~~ England. In the end, by the early 1950s, the entire family, including Tami's grandmother had settled in Israel, which had become an independent state in 1948. But it was in England that Tami's father met his future wife, Alice Laski, another refugee from Nazi terror. They were married in London in 1950, when Arthur was 48 and his new bride a mere 27 years of age.

Despite entreaties from his new wife's English family, Arthur and Alice decided to emigrate to Israel and boarded a ship for Haifa in early 1951. Alice was pregnant with the future Tamar (named after Alice's late mother) and the couple faced new hardships as they sought to carve out a new life in the sand dunes outside Tel Aviv. They settled in the town of Holon where some of the other Goldblum<sup>2</sup>s had already established residence. Tami's father, who spoke no Hebrew, obtained work as an engineer with the state water agency on the construction of a giant irrigation system channeling water from the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret in Hebrew) to the Tel Aviv area and on to the Negev desert city of Beersheva. His work was well paid, and by the late 1950's the Goldblum family enjoyed an above-average standard of living, testified by the fact that theirs was the first house in the neighborhood to have a telephone and then, in ~~the early~~ 1967<sup>0</sup>'s, the first television set. Tami grew up surrounded by Goldblum uncles and her Aunt Eva, who bought her a new Volkswagen Beetle as her high school graduation present. ~~Eva's son,~~ (Tami's only cousin) Adam, ~~the son of her uncle Yakub~~ was the only other Goldblum descendent. He had a rather troubled life, with an unsuccessful marriage to a non-Jewish Polish lady who essentially deserted him. They had no children, so upon Adam's death in 2004, Tami remained the only surviving member of the once numerous Goldblum family.

Sadly, Arthur died suddenly of a heart attack in ~~1967~~1968, shortly before Tami's ~~sixteenth~~ ~~seventeenth~~ birthday, leaving Tami and her mother to carry on by themselves. Tami's mother – often referred to by her assumed “Christian” name of “Krisha,” – was much younger than Arthur and lived on in Israel until her death in 1996 at the age of 73.

### **The Laski's**

We know little about Tami's maternal grandparents, Joel and Tamar<sup>a</sup> Laski. Joel was a lawyer in Warsaw and provided his wife and only child, Alice (Alicia, in Polish), with a solid middle class life style. The family lived in an apartment in downtown Warsaw and does not seem to have practiced their religion. Like the Goldblum<sup>2</sup>s, they were Polish-speakers and, in the case of the Laski's, may not have even known how to read or speak Yiddish, much less Hebrew. In her memoir, Alice, born in 1923, describes an idyllic childhood growing up as the pampered only child of a relatively well-to-do family. Alice Laski Goldblum's memoir (Attachment B), handwritten in her less-than-perfect English, tells us all we need to know about her heroic struggle to

stay alive during the war years and her eventual emergence after the war into a new life in Israel with Arthur and Tami.