

## Stories From My Grandmother

By: Rebecca

I asked my grandmother, Ethel, about my family's history in World War II. Her parents' families were from Poland and Lithuania during this time. Some of them were killed, and some survived. Here is their story.

Her mother's family was from Poland. My Great-Great-Grandfather (my grandmother's grandfather) went to the United States in 1911, expecting the rest of his family (wife and kids) to soon join him. When World War I broke out in 1914, nobody was allowed to travel, so my Great-Great-Grandmother owned a stationary shop in order to support her family still in Poland and help them survive. The war ended in 1918, but it wasn't until 1920 that this family was reunited in the United States. Not everyone in the family was lucky enough to get out though. As my Grandmother said, "However, many cousins remained in Poland and were never heard from again." All of these relatives remaining in Europe were affected when the Germans invaded in 1939. "It affected those of us in the United States who worried about them and the danger they were in, even those of us who were still children because of the torture it brought to our parents." My grandmother was one of those children, feeling so worried and confused.

My Grandmother's father's family was a poor family who lived in a small village near Vilna, Lithuania. She said her grandfather was "A blacksmith who was forced into the Russian Army for the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 and returned-home to die of typhus when my father (my grandma's father) was six months old." By the time my grandmother's father was 11 years old he had to earn money selling things to help support his struggling family. His four sisters had to go out as live-in maids and bring their pay home. Not like today where most teenagers who earn money go out and spend it on themselves. His brother was hiding from the army recruiters and was a brave revolutionary. Around 1920 he (my great-grandfather/my Grandmother's father) came to America with his mother, and four of his siblings, the other two siblings stayed in Europe. My grandmother told me that they both "raised beautiful families and were all murdered by the Nazi's. No one in our immediate family escaped."

"Over 3 million Polish Jews were murdered in these [terrible] ways, members of our family among them," as my grandmother pointed out to me. Jews were differentiated from others and Nazi's took them to labor camps, concentration camps, and death camps. Even before they were taken to these horrible places, many Jews died of starvation and untreated illnesses from 1939-1942.

Although I wish I could say my ancestors' lives had ended like a fairytale, they don't. When I learned all of this information, just as an eleven year old kid, it made me think and wonder. I was surprised, sort of upset, and hurt that the Nazi's would do this to innocent people, my family. Knowing this makes me realize how lucky I am that a tragic event like this isn't going on in my life, and thanks to the brave people who persevered, I now can be free.

In explaining these events in my family's history to me, my grandmother wrote to me, "I'm afraid it is not a pretty story. It has no happy ending, except for those of us lucky enough to live here. But the story becomes part of who we are, as they were part of who we are. And as you, Rebecca, are part of who they were, and will become part of who they might have been. So this is your story now, my darling, as you learn how terrible war can be, and how hatred and prejudice can destroy things that could have been precious and beautiful."

## **My Heritage**

By Sara

Some people say I'm Irish because I look Irish, but I'm really a lot of things – Canadian, Syrian, Polish, British, German and Armenian.

People assume they are only one heritage, but really everyone has lots of diversity in their families.

I've been interviewing my grandparents on both sides of my family and I've been very amazed by what I found.

You'd never really guess my mother's background from the way she looks. She has curly, reddish-brown hair and freckles all over her face. A lot of her grandparents and great-grandparents are from Syria.

What interests me most is that all of my mother's ancestors who were from Syria weren't Syrian. They were Armenian. They were forced to come to Syria because the Turks were taking over Armenia, and they had to flee.

However, my great-grandfather, George K, had to flee again, this time from Syria, because he was Catholic, and the leader of Syria was Muslim, and he killed anyone who wasn't Muslim.

Sadly, George's parents never made it out to America. George was only thirteen when he made it to America, and his last name got changed to K--. He had never met his uncle before he got there and yet his parents had instructed him to go and live with his uncle.

George K. did well in America. He lived happily with his uncle in Patterson, New Jersey, and even learned the family business of silk weaving.

When he was older, he met Sara Y., a woman who was also originally from Armenia and fled to Syria, then America. They soon got married, and had Raymond K, my grandfather.

Meanwhile, on my grandmother Rita's side of the family, Gertrude N. and William S. from Newfoundland got married and had Rita, my grandmother. What I thought was really interesting was that so many of my grandmother's ancestors were from Newfoundland – she has a duo citizenship – in Canada and America!

## **Stories My Father Told Me**

By Andre

My father had a lot of family in the Dominican Republic and every year his mom and dad sent him to the airport with his older sister and his uncle would pick him up at the airport at the other end. He had good friends. They were very poor. He would always bring clothes and sneakers to give them. That's why they were always happy to see him.

My Dad's friends told him about this cave that they found that was in the jungle. He took his favorite horse to go see it. It was a male horse and it was white. He was going through the jungle to go see the cave and after a while he realized he was lost. He was by himself. He saw a small farm in the distance and he went to the farm with his horse and he found a farmer and said, "I'm lost. Can you help me find my way back?"

"He knows the way back," and the farmer pointed at the horse.

My Dad said, "You're kidding, right?"

He said, "No, I'm not kidding. Don't push him to go anywhere, just let him find his way back."

The horse stopped off at a small creek, took a drink, and walked home.

He found the cave that day but he took his friends with him the next time because he didn't want to get lost.

My father promised me that he would one day bring me to the cave to see it.

His family lived on their farm for generations, and he said he would bring me back to the family farm. There are still family members living on it that he has not yet met.

My Dad and his great-great-grandmother were very good friends. Every time people would pick on him, his grandmother would stick up for him. She had long white hair that went down to her knees in a big long braid.

She always used to get these little heart attacks or sicknesses. The family always knew what to do when she got sick. One time, she got sick. This time wasn't like the other times and she was coughing like crazy and she wouldn't stop and she was on the bed that rolls out to the ambulance.

My Dad was about eleven. She took my Dad's hand and said, "Take care of yourself, my son." She never came back.

No one knew how old she was but my Dad says she was definitely past 100 years old.

When my father used to visit his friends, he asked, "What do you do for fun over here?" They showed him rags, and set them on fire, and put them in Tarantula burrows. The Tarantulas would run out and the kids would hit them with sticks and kill them. The people who lived there encouraged them to do this.

They made slingshots and took two pieces of wood, taped them together really tightly, and they found tires that were lying around and they took the rubber off and put it onto the wood to make a slingshot. They took the slingshot and shot the birds. It didn't kill them. They were crows. The crows tried to get away and the cat ran after them. You could hear the "caw, caw," and the cat would eat them.

When my Grandfather was young, he lived in the Dominican Republic. When he was a little boy, his father died. His mother was so depressed that she couldn't take care of her children any more so she sent them away.

While he was young, my grandfather moved from farm to farm and worked on them and in repayment they gave him a place to sleep and they gave him food.

The farm he lived on for the longest was the Mountain Man's farm. The Mountain Man had tobacco plants and he smoked out of a long pipe and he wore a big flat hat.

On one of the farms, my grandfather met a girl and then they got married and they moved to the USA. He tried to join the army but they did not let him because three of his fingers were fused together. He could do everything an average person could do.

Many years later, my Grandfather went back to visit the Mountain Man with my father. The Mountain Man did not recognize him at first but then he said, "Show me your hand." My grandfather showed him; then the Mountain Man laughed and gave him a hug. They stayed for a while.

The Mountain Man said he remembered when cars were invented. It seemed strange that he remembered that, but could not remember at first who my grandfather was.

The man in the mountain died December 2006. The mountain had watched him make the crops and sit on his porch with his big pipe and big flat hat. He never married and he was alone up there. The mountain would watch over him and the mountain gave him company. He lived there so long, the mountain would never forget him.

My father has promised to bring me to the Mountain Man's farm if it's still there.

## OUR FAMILY

By Albert

It was September 8, 1932 and my grandfather, Vincent, had just been born, another wonderful gift from the Lord. His Grandmother had been Italian and so were his parents. While he was growing up, my grandfather Vincent was very different from his father, Romano. A smoker and the personality of laziness is what Romano was like. Vincent, though, wasn't like that as a youth, though his mother would say to Vincent, "How come you're not like the boys upstairs"? And he would say "Because I'm the boy downstairs!"

Vincent was always himself, and if somebody didn't like it, then too bad. He is still like that today.

During Vincent's youth, he traveled a lot of the time doing work for the neighbors like housework. He even used to be paperboy delivering newspaper. Since he traveled a lot, he always wanted a way to carry Christ with him. His middle name was Christopher (from "Reprobis"), meaning "Christ Carrier," which many Italian Catholics still believe in today.

So it was one day in New Haven, Connecticut, and one of Vincent's friends told him about Boy Scouts. Vincent loved what he heard and decided to get an application.

"BSA" - wow! What a great thing to be involved in. Such a great experience! I'm a Boy Scout myself, working toward eagle rank!

So anyway my grandfather became a Scout and about seven years later became an Eagle! As a scout master in Camp Saquonsin, Connecticut, Vincent really enjoyed himself and still remembers the wonderful camp today.

When Vincent was a little older he decided to have a wife and married Grandma Caroline and gave birth to my mother Suzanne and my aunts Elizabeth, Cynthia, and Valerie.

Caroline was never that healthy, she smoked cigars and had suffered polio in her youth. She passed away young at about the time my mother Suzanne was seventeen. Vincent married Grandma Kathy after that.

Vincent, Kathy, and the four girls were very happy. There was one day when Vincent was taking Suzanne, Elizabeth, Valerie, and Cynthia in a canoe with him on a lake and a overweight lady went by in a big motorboat smoking a cigarette. My mother then said, "that person is Booeey." You're probably wondering what the word "booeey" means. It's just a family word the stuck with us on my mom's side of the family meaning a lazy person who doesn't like to work or get dirty. We never act "booeey" at all. As a family, we are true outdoor people and love Nature! Without Mother Nature, just think, there would be no wildlife, no Christmas trees, no trails to hike, and just no

beauty. Which is why we love nature so much today. We refuse to ever be booeey!!

So anyway, as time went on, my mother and my three aunts got older and my grandparents decided to have more kids. Their names are Uncle Jimmy, Aunt Kathy, and Aunt Mary and they are all in their twenties today. These three were very special.

When I was younger around the age of eight, Aunt Mary was taking piano lessons. Therefore she knew some songs and she used to show me piano fingerings to pieces and I used to just memorize the pieces. I read music and play two instruments now, the French Horn and Piano.

Also when I was younger I would ask my Uncle Jimmy to tell me a story. He would make them up and I loved them.

Aunt Katie was always a great smart aunt, like a guide, in a way. My mother Suzanne, my Aunt Cynthia, Elizabeth, and Valerie all had kids. They are my cousins, Johnny, Ben, Andy, Alayna, Josh, and Aaron.

I am very proud to be in such a wonderful family!

## **MY FAMILY**

By Daniel

When my great-great-great-grandfather, McBride, was drafted into the Civil War on the Confederate's side, he didn't believe in slavery or even servants. Where he lived, slaves were a part of his neighbors' everyday lives. If he had believed in slavery, all of his descendants may have been prejudiced and racist. My aunt Julie wouldn't be a minister, my uncles Scott and Randy wouldn't be professors, and most importantly, my dad wouldn't be a lawyer or have married my mother, who is Chinese.

Born in Hampton, South Carolina in 1821, McBride eventually bought his own small farm on the outskirts of Hampton. A southeastern town in South Carolina, Hampton was originally described as a "sandy oak ridge."

When the Civil War came, McBride was drafted and given a gun and uniform to go fight. He eventually made it to the rank of Major after fighting in all four years of the war.

The first time I learned about McBride was when I was about ten-my dad told me after getting an article about it from my aunt Martha.

I've always been interested in how my family immigrated to America. I used to think that they came over with Christopher Columbus in the Pinta.

I believe McBride has influenced me and my whole family by trying his best at everything that happened in his life.

If I could meet McBride today, I would thank him for his hard work on his very small farm in Hampton. He was obviously very hard working and honest. Also, I would show McBride my baseball card collection because it

shows how much effort and time it takes to really keep something and add to it.

Nine generations of our family had lived in South Carolina.

Wiley Washington, McBride's father, was born in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1797, and he died as an old man in 1890. He was most likely named after George Washington.

McBride's grandfather, Josai, was born in 1762, and was married and lived in Beaufort, South Carolina, an old town on the coast of Port Royale. He died in 1820.

McBride's great-grandfather, Ishaim, was born in Virginia, and moved to Beaufort as a young man. He married and had only one child.

McBride's great-great-grandfather, Abraham, changed his last name to P-- when he immigrated to America from Scotland. He wanted to move from his rather large properties in Scotland to get better crops in America. Though he probably wasn't a full-time farmer, he most likely grew crops.

After the war, McBride married a young woman named Rosa. They had a son named Harry and a daughter who died. After McBride died, Harry inherited the family home and property in Hampton, South Carolina and lived there for the rest of his life.

After Harry was born, he went to school in a local schoolhouse, and the "legend" of his father traveled from father to son, cousin to cousin, until McBride P. was a household name. Harry went to college and began to understand the true meaning of his father's participation in war: *Believe in yourself no matter what you do, no matter what happens, even if you have to do something that you don't want to do.*

After college, Harry became a Judge and married Minnie and they had three kids: Harry Alban, Emily Kea, and English Maline. They all lived in McBride's home, which Harry inherited.

Though Emily Kea and English Maline had families, Harry Alban, born in 1894, got most of the inheritance. Even with all of the money he could have gotten, Harry Alban and his father could not get along, and Harry Alban thought he had only one choice: to run away from Hampton, South Carolina and get a job in Charleston.

When Harry Alban left from Hampton and got to Charleston, South Carolina, he was only twelve years old and he didn't have any family at all in Charleston. Harry needed some sort of income, and he found a job at a bakery. When World War I started, he enlisted and fought in France in his early twenties. Right after the war, he married Edna in 1919. Their children were Harry, Ralph Alexander, and Edward, later nicknamed Bubba. Harry Alban taught himself how to play the mandolin. He also loved baseball. In 1969, Harry Alban died peacefully, and both he and Edna are buried in Bethany Cemetery in Charleston, South Carolina.

The next generation was Ralph Alexander, born on October 1, 1923 in Charleston, South Carolina. He was a smart man who played the piano at

dance halls and wedding receptions, played the organ at minor league baseball games. In 1944, Ralph was drafted into World War II. In January of 1945, he was shot in the left arm in the Battle of the Bulge. Ralph's arm was broken and he was sent home. In 1950, he met and married Rita. Their children were Ralph Alexander, Jr., Michael Edward, Stephen Mitchell, Julia Rita, Martha Elaine, and Scott Laurence. Ralph died on August 19, 1992. He was buried in Holy Cross Cemetery, and Rita joined him there on August 8, 2001.

The next generation was Michael Edward – my father - born in Charleston, South Carolina. He loved music, just like the many generations before him. As a young man, Michael went to The College of Charleston and got a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy. He went to Graduate School at Tulane University and got a Master's in Philosophy. After that, he went to Boston College Law School. There he met his future wife, Shirley. They finished law school in 1987, and got married in 1990. They are both living a happy, healthy, life with their three children.

My hobbies are playing the oboe, collecting baseball cards, and playing sports. And just like the rest of the family, I know McBride's motto:

*Believe in yourself no matter what you do, no matter what happens, even if you have to do something that you don't want to do.*