

## THE GUTMAN BRANCH OF THE FAMILY As told to Josy

There were five children in the Gutman family. In the early 1900s Sam, the oldest, left for America, settling in Chicago. (Here Malvina, Josy's mother, would find him among many other relatives when she arrived from Europe in 1916). He now spelled his name "Goodman". He would marry Ann Kochman, and by 1926 they would have three children, a daughter Florence and then a pair of twins (Nathaniel Roy and Shirley).

The birth of the twins never ceased to amaze Sam's wife. Awestruck, she would phone Malvina every morning to recount the latest particulars. Without fail, around 11 o'clock the phone would ring and there would be Ann, calling with the latest report.

"This one hiccuped," she would announce.

"That one spat up."

"Both missed their naps."

"Each grew a new tooth."

"They both smiled together."

"The bath water was too hot."

The conversation, always one-sided and detailed, was lengthy (usually close to an hour), dwelling on the most minute particulars. No matter how many times Malvina tried to change the subject or say good-bye, back they were again, back to the twins. And sometimes there were two or three such calls in one day.

It got to the point that she began to dread it every time the phone rang.

"The next time she calls," she cried out one day in exasperation, "just tell her I'm not home!"

Sure enough, the next morning the phone rang at exactly 11 o'clock. Three-year-old Josy ran to pick up.

"Let me speak to your mother?" Ann told her, to which Josy replied, "My mother says to tell you she's not home!"

It took more than a year before Ann would speak to Malvina again.

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The rest of the Gutman family, Sam's brother and three sisters, remained in Poland, mainly around the town of Cielcik, near Lodz. Over the years Herman married Lola Putzman and had a son, Nathan, and a daughter, Irene (who later would marry Joel Kawinoki). Halcia, Sam's sister, married Nathan Jacobovia and had two boys with him: Josef and Lolek. Another

sister, Mania, married David Jacobwitz, producing a son, Stanislov. The third sister, Genia, married Chaim Tchorz and they had three daughters: Neomi, Stella, and Ruth.

By the 1930s the political situation in Europe began to look exceedingly grave. Chaim, seeing how world affairs were going, decided it was time for him and his wife, with their three small daughters, to leave Poland. Urging the rest of the family to do the same, he chose Palestine as his destination. He pleaded not only with his in-laws, but with all the rest of the family, to leave also. Nobody paid attention.

“Things will blow over” they responded. “Things will change.”

Among those remaining behind were his wife’s cousins, Simon and Halcia Charlupski, with their young daughter and a small son named Richard. Except for Richard, all the rest were doomed to die in the coming Holocaust.

On September 1, 1939 the Nazis invaded Poland. Jews were herded into ghettos and later transferred to concentration camps. By the end of World War II Richard Charlupski was the only one of the family to come out alive.

He was twenty-two years old when he got out of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Alone, displaced, the only survivor of a family of several dozen people, he wandered around Europe from place to place, totally lost. Eventually he found himself in France. There he met a wonderful family who took him in and made him feel like part of their own. Hungry for a feeling of connection, yearning for the closeness of family, he made these people the center of his world; they were all he had.

One day they announced to him that they had decided to depart for Australia. Business opportunities, they heard, were better there than in post-war Europe, money was to be made in manufacturing. They urged Richard to come with them. Having nobody else in the world, he decided to go. Together they all left France and settled in Melbourne, where Richard eventually opened his own business manufacturing and selling women’s knit suits. Gradually this grew into a successful enterprise. The Jewish community especially knew of Richard Charlupski’s women’s wear, and his reputation for quality and fairness soon became well established. Although he never married, he had finally found a niche for himself in this far-flung corner of the world. He was financially successful. Yet he would always yearn deeply for family, and he continued to seek information about anybody that might have survived, as well as for family he might never have known about before.

He would visit Poland several times, finding only one classmate from his childhood there. At one point he even went back to the town of Nieszawa where his maternal grandparents, Abraham and Ruzia Czarnecka Margolius, had lived. "It was a sentimental journey," he would later write in a letter to Josy. "Nothing was waiting for me."

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Meanwhile as soon as World War II ended, Genia Gutman Tchorz in Palestine began searching for any of her family that remained. Through the Red Cross and the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) she placed ads in various Jewish newspapers around the world.

One day in the spring of 1946, Josy's father Jacques in Philadelphia came across her notice while skimming through a Jewish newspaper.

"I know these people!" he exclaimed, spotting the names of Genia Gutman and Sam Goodman in the ad.

It was just a few weeks after Malvina, Jacques's wife, had died. One of the last things she had done while already sick in the hospital had been to co-sign the papers authorizing Jacques to bring Kryisia Feldmark, his niece and only Holocaust survivor on his side of the family to America. Now coming across Genia Gutman Tchorz's notice, he was able to accomplish another service for a displaced family member. Immediately he wrote to Sam Goodman in Chicago informing him about the ad. In this way, through this chance occurrence, Sam and his sister Genia were finally put in touch with one another.

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In 1948 Palestine became officially recognized as the State of Israel. By now Genia's daughters had grown up and married (Neomi to Stefan Kohn, Stella to Michael Piekarski, Ruth to David Waislitz). Neomi had two children, a daughter named Anat Bracha and a son named Tzvi Alexander. Stella's two children were Ronit and Jonathan, while Ruth had a daughter Hedy and two sons (Alex and Avey).

After several years Ruth's husband David got the idea that they should move to Australia. At first Ruth resisted strongly, not wanting to leave her sisters and family in Israel. David and the children decided to go first, settling in Victoria near Melbourne. Ruth continued to make visits back and forth, eventually joining them permanently.

After one trip she arrived in Melbourne exhausted. Her daughter Hedy, picking her up at the airport, exclaimed, “Mom, you look awful! You need to get your hair done. Right now! Come on, I’ll drop you off at the hairdresser on the way home. I can pick you up there later.”

With her hair done and Hedy not back yet, Ruth decided to get a manicure to fill in the time. Waiting her turn, she sat down next to two women, also waiting, deep in conversation.

“My grandson’s being bar mitzvah,” one was telling the other, “and I haven’t got a thing to wear. I think I’ll go to David Jones’s and look for a nice suit.”

“Why David Jones’s?” the other responded. “You should go where all the Jewish women go – to Richard Charlupski’s. He has wonderful stuff and good prices, too. You can get a real bargain there.”

“What?” screamed Ruth, jumping up and grasping the woman by both hands. “Richard Charlupski! Where is Richard Charlupski? I must have his phone number! Right now! Right this minute! How do I reach him? How do I get in touch with him?”

The women stared at her in amazement.

“I need his address!” Ruth cried. “His phone number! I must have the address and phone number! Right now!”

Stunned, the lady gave Ruth the phone number, amazed at the audacity of this stranger.

Ruth raced to the phone at the other end of the shop.

“The nerve of some people!” the woman gasped to her friend. “What they won’t do for a bargain!”

Hands shaking, Ruth placed her call. As soon as he answered, she caught her breath. Then in as calm a voice as she could, she spoke.

“Richard,” she said, “this is your cousin Ruth.”