

James Grubman PhD

From: Karen Amato [kamato@sympatico.ca]
Sent: Thursday, August 03, 2006 10:41 AM
To: 'James Grubman PhD'
Subject: family

Hi Jim,

I was definitely planning on writing to you soon - You beat me to it. I haven't written yet, for several reasons. I spent all day yesterday preparing to present the material I had collected so far to the family members who are here. I also didn't want to bombard you, or intrude on your life. Lastly, I needed to think about what I wanted to say...

You can imagine my astonishment when I received your email, so quickly after I had sent mine...and I suppose you must have been even more taken aback.

As a matter of fact, I believe I might have access to the marriage document of Sonia and your father soon. The researcher with whom I have been working tried yesterday to retrieve this at the archives for me. The person who usually helps her wasn't there, so she will try again next week. Since I received your email, I have asked her to send me 2 copies. It will have your father's birth date on it, I believe. I have discovered that my grandfather's b. date was not the one he thought it was! I will keep you posted.

By the way, I mentioned Daniel K. to Petje (the researcher) and she knows him quite well. She says that she spent 2 days with him in Lodz. She seems to think that he does not photograph the documents, as it is not allowed, but that he has people who copy them out for him. If this is true, I am glad to hear it, because I spent 5 hours in the archives of Kielce (information older than 100 years is kept there) copying down pages of information. Later, I wondered why the hell I hadn't photographed them.

As for the Milsztajns, the only survivors were some cousins who live in Israel, and Morris and Fanny. Neither Morris nor Fanny are alive. When my grandfather Morris (Moszek) came to Toronto, he changed the name to Milstone, as did his sister Fanny (Frania). Morris married here and had one child - my father. My grandfather had a dress store at one point, and was involved in manufacturing at another point as well. Fanny and her husband (who have 3 children) also had a dress store, but as far as I know, there was no connection with a department store, certainly no large business holdings, unfortunately!

I would be happy to share the family tree with you. Maybe I should think about how much to send you (The descendant tree is 14 pages long!) and how to do this. It would be an understatement to say that I am not very technologically advanced. Perhaps I could simplify it for you and then send it.

I was very moved by your father's story. Can you tell me a little bit about his life after the war, once he started 'his new life'? What was his profession, his interests? (I know you mentioned chess). What about his religious affiliation? I don't know why I am asking that - this question just came to me. I assume he went by the name Simon Grubman? What year was it that your parents got married? I know you said that they got married right after the war in Sweden. I actually have some memory of being told that your dad called my Aunt Fanny in Toronto to check if Sonia had survived, but I need to verify this. Of course, if your mother feels able to - I realize this is a very delicate situation - I would like to know whatever she can tell you about what happened, what she knew about Sonia and her family in general, etc. I have discovered in my research that every little detail counts. Sometimes one seemingly insignificant fact can lead to something important. And even if it doesn't, it can be enlightening. There are so few people left to tell these stories...

As I alluded to in our conversation, I am in the precarious situation right now of carrying a secret. I discovered in my research - 'by accident' - that the father of a cousin of mine had been married before the war, but I am almost certain that my cousin does not know. His father is 90 years old, and has shared very little about his past. This is definitely a recurring theme... This cousin actually accompanied me on the trip to Lodz. There were so many moments that were 'perfect' opportunities to tell him, but I felt it was not my place - at least while his father is alive. I have spent hours thinking and writing about this. I also discussed this ethical dilemma with my rabbi,

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although I am not a 'religious person' by traditional definition. At this point, my plan is to share the information with my cousin after his father dies.

Given your situation, and given the fact that you are a psychologist, I would be interested in your opinion. I doubt that I would change my mind if you tried to convince me to tell him, - there are too many doubts in my mind - but I would listen. I feel that the weight of knowing I had caused pain to the family - not so much to the cousin, but to the father, assuming his son would confront him - would be heavier than the weight I am carrying now.

It would be crass to refer to 'silver clouds' in the same breath as the subject of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, in the last few months, my research and my travels have brought me closer to many people - some family, some strangers... and I am grateful for this.

Thank you for sharing with me,
Sincerely,
Karen

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