

The Stories We Will Tell:
An Exploration of Family History through Autobiography and Record Analysis

by
Anna Peabody

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Marketing
(Honors Scholar)

Presented June 1, 2017
Commencement June 2017

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Anna Peabody for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Marketing presented on June 1, 2017. Title: The Stories We Will Tell: An Exploration of Family History Through Autobiography and Record Analysis.

Abstract approved: _____

Thomas Bahde

The research of genealogy and family history can represent a means of self-discovery, connection, and preservation of the past. The experience is individualistic, unique to the intricate intertwining of lives that helped create and influence who we are today. Through the analysis of historical biographies, family documents, and autobiographical vignettes, I explore the significance of general and personal family history portrayed in a narrative writing style. Studying texts that utilize styles and record analysis to tell untold stories of figures in history, including Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History*, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale*, and Richard White's *Remembering Ahanagan*, I am provided the tools necessary to tell my own silenced history. The following sections of the text will explore that history of each of my four major lineages, combining the tools learned from the researched texts with records compiled for genealogical purposes to construct a narrative for a living document. My own reflections and historical context are used to orient the narrative and give meaning to the chronological events of the past that aligned to tell my story.

Key Words: family, history, biography, White, Trouillot, Ulrich

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Anna Peabody, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mentor Thomas Bahde for his support during the process of this thesis and encouragement to explore the themes in this project. I would also like to thank Eric Hill and Steven Kunert for their support and feedback as committee members.

Thank you to my family, especially my Grandma Linda and Grandpa Mike who housed me as I conducted my research in Chicago and provided so many photos and records for the Emmerich family; my Aunt MaryAnn who helped organized meetings with the Yench family for interviews; and Cousin Sue for the records and memories provided for the Overholt family. I would not have been able to construct the story I did without you.

And finally, thank you to my parents Bob and Rene for their patience, support, memories, and dedication to my success for this project and degree. I am grateful for you and may not have been so interested in family history had you not given me the great family and life that I have.

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INTRODUCTION

The basic drive of any living species is to pass its genetics to the next prevailing generation. Humanity is unique - it has developed methods for preserving not only the genetics of an individual but also a life's story, encapsulated in the histories inherited by each generation of descendants. As time passes there will be stories that inevitably weather and disappear from the minds and memories of generations too far removed from their source. Many figures who had failed to leave a permanent mark will be forgotten, existing on the earth only in blood relations that are oblivious to their past existence.

However, with the use of records and oral traditions, it may be possible to reconstruct long lost stories, reviving a history whole generations may never have been aware of. In an attempt to unearth forgotten histories, to create a permanent written record of the stories left behind by relatives, and to preserve my own stories for generations to come, I place the history of four distinct families into a single narrative context. It is an attempt to understand how different family histories are remembered and how they are forgotten.

Reconstructing the Past

Acting as an archival archeologist required an understanding of what it means to uncover the lesser-told stories of the past. A critical exploration of *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* by Michel-Rolph Trouillot and *A Midwife's Tale* by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich reveals the difficulty of recovering stories from the archival record.

In the context of historical silences, Trouillot considers the story of Henry Christophe, a figure of the Haitian Revolution. The text uses this example of a lesser told history to delve into a much richer discussion on the topic of historical production. To Trouillot, history is constructed with a series of silences, or stories left untold.

“Silences enter the process of historical production at four critical moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of the sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance) (Trouillot 26).”

Trouillot uses these entry points to critically examine the powers that create the silences and narratives. Because different historical narratives are created with unique circumstances of silences, Trouillot uses this as a tool to deconstruct silences of different nature. By generating the new narrative for Haitian Revolution, he illuminates the power of Western history production as it neglected the records, archives, and narratives that revolve around Henry Christophe. By contrast, Trouillot examines the creation of silence “at the moment of retrospective significance” with another historical figure with no lack of abundance in records, archives, and narratives: Christopher Columbus. With the case of Columbus and as he is celebrated today, silences arise where narratives conflict and a designated significance has been bestowed on a figure to mask various interpretations, namely the interpretations from the indigenous perspective.

For the purpose of this project, these entry points of silences are tools to critically examine the power and limitations of creating narratives - and, by extension, silences. With over one thousand potential relatives noted on the family tree, silences are inevitable either through circumstance or author discretion. Silences were created at the moment of fact creation, when records were not taken and stories not documented; they were created at the moment of fact retrieval, when records were not archived or, if they had, were otherwise inaccessible as in the case of online Lithuanian archives; they were created at the moment of fact retrieval, when unrelated records were neglected for those that intertwined to reveal a cohesive narrative; and they were created during the editing process, when narratives were cut and trimmed to align with an overarching significance. As a result, the produced history of this project is also burdened by its power to produce such silences. Because there are stories I will never hear or will never record, they may never be told.

Ulrich strives to fill a silence with the untold story *A Midwife's Tale*, which tackles the narrative of Martha Ballard, a midwife of revolutionary New England. The text Ulrich provides is rich in detail due to the preservation of Martha's meticulous diary. Within the introduction, the existence of this diary is emphasized:

“Without the diary, her biography would be little more than a succession of dates. Without the diary, we would know nothing of her life after the last of her children was born, nothing of the 816 deliveries she performed between 1785 and 1812. We would not even be certain she had been a midwife (Ulrich, 5).”

With the diary, however, Ulrich is able to remove the silence of Martha from the produced history of colonial America. Martha kept daily records of the infants she had delivered, the infants and mothers who died, the neighbors who had visited, the relatives that had moved and married, the changing geography and politics of the area, and even the local scandals of esteemed individuals. This close record keeping allows Ulrich to seamlessly blend record and narrative to create the vision of Martha's life so clearly and completely day by day. It gives voice to a silence history may have never heard - that of the everyday life in the Early Republic period.

Unfortunately, I have no record that compares to the level of detail Martha included in her diary. While this hinders my task to create a narrative beyond dates and names, the method Ulrich uses to fill in the silences with regional historical records is useful as I flesh out early family history. Sometimes all I will have are names and dates, which would so easily slip into the silence if listed without context. There will be times that listing names and dates will be all I can do, with minimal detail about where they lived or what they did. On the occasion of a more complete record with occupation and location, the narrative becomes clearer. It is through the power of record keeping that some silences are created or avoided, and it became my largest struggle to overcome when crafting significance from scarcity.

History & Memory

A related reference that closely reflects the purpose of this project was *Remembering Ahanagan: A History of Stories* by Richard White. In this text, White collects records and compares them to the stories of eyewitnesses to construct the

story of his mother Sara's emigration from Ireland to America. His narrative follows one figure as she moved through history, and although his individual focus differs from the broad familial narrative of this project, the research and style of the work are useful references to guide my own. The balance between history and memory is constantly addressed:

“Sometimes in this book I can only follow memory; more rarely there is only history; but at the heart of the book are those places where history and memory meet. There I can juxtapose the two, compare them, and sometimes suture them together into a fuller, if never certain, account of the past (White 6).”

In sections of this project there are time periods when recorded history is the only resource at my disposal; in others, only memories orally told. Often times history is used to give context to memories, to give reason to common speculation. The recalled behaviors of ancestors might have been born from their circumstances, and their orientation in historical events might have contributed to these circumstances. History is also used to orient the family and by extension myself as they relate to the world around them. For historian Richard White, it supplements memories and provides a meaning to the reader, giving lessons on the culture of the landscape through the eyes of one native Irish and immigrant woman. It is also an area for reflection as he analyzes not only his craft but also what it means to incorporate history into the accounts of his mother.

These methods of writing family stories with recorded history are methods I have approached and attempted to incorporate into this project. Historical tangents help build the worlds in which I imagine my ancestors lived. It provides context to their actions - why a farmer in colonial New England might own a slave, or why my grandfather may have wanted to join the army. Sometimes the contextual research led me to make discoveries about my lineage I would have never made with genealogical records on my own. During the writing for the Newport Peabody's, I studied the historical background for colonial Rhode Island. It was at this stage of research that I recognized the surname of Rhode Island's first governor ("president" was the title bestowed at the time) as a surname found in my own family tree, and from there discovered the relation.

Because personal reflection and writing of memory is another component of this thesis, I will explore *The Art of Time in Memoir* by Sven Birkerts. This text is a guide to writing meaningful and powerful memoirs, using examples from other successful published memoirs to illustrate lessons on written memory. One such lesson was the importance of early memory, that if a memoirist delves into the topic consciousness, then the "writer will be drawn to an excavation of origins."

It is this focus on early sensations and memory that prompted me to start each branch in the family tree with a personal related story from the earliest memory I could remember from each. The sensations bring to life the relatives - the characters in the narrative - for myself and the reader before I delve into the historical origins behind them. This also became useful when analyzing the earliest memories from

relatives, understanding what about their family origins was most important to them in their own lives. Usually, each of my personal memories included in this project plays into part of my own coming-of-age, a steady realization that as the characters enter and exit the stage, hundreds of people from dozens of generations prior will rely on my current generation to tell their story. It is me and my memories that can give them life through the telling of their stories, as well as my own.

The order of these memories is also examined by Birkerts, as he states:

“Not only is the sequential approach a chore for the writer, but it’s often a deadly bore for the reader. The point is story, not chronology, and in memoir the story all but requires the dramatic ordering the hindsight affords (Birkerts, 61).”

This lesson highlights yet another reason why I decided to start each section with a personal memoir: the significance and impact certain ancestors had on my life is foreshadowed with the memory before their lives are even told. Though chronology is an inevitability in the area of genealogy, inserting present-day reflections and sentiments between the chronological telling gives additional meaning to the events and later events in the narrative. Similar to Richard White’s approach, the chronological story is broken up by the author’s personal reflection and current memory to serve as a narrative propeller.

Research

I gathered the research for this project from a several sources. The most prominent source was the online archive of records provided on a paid subscription

for Ancestry.com. These records have been collected and stored since 2013, when I first created an account. This represents the bulk of the historical knowledge of my ancestors and the important dates that are attributed to each family member. These records include census records, death certificates, marriage certificates, birth certificates, and employment applications that have provided the majority of names, birth dates, and death dates. Oral histories provided by relatives, as well as textual records, were also important sources of information. I spent a week in Chicago – an area heavily populated by my maternal relatives – to collect photos, stories, and records they may have had for the Emmerich and Yench family trees. Relatives also emailed or called with their own archive of stories or memories to be used at my discretion. Articles and other secondary sources provided historical context for the locations, cultural practices, court hearings, immigration patterns, and demographics discovered during the analysis of my findings.

Building the Tree

My family tree is lopsided. I was aware of this as soon as I was tall enough to see the branches. It wasn't until I started climbing, exploring, reaching for every leaf and fruit and morsel it had to offer, that I truly saw where the tree began to take strange shapes.

On my father's side, the low branches closest to my reach are thin. They are far too flimsy and sparse for me to stand on. For years, the only living family I had known from this side besides my father were my grandmother and uncle, and neither talked much. Once my grandmother passed away, the lowest branches were all but

broken, the only steady footing I have from comes my father. Yet I can see, up high above the wilted branches, that the canopy holds the lush leaves of distant ancestors. There is promise of fruit there, of stories ready to be told and rich with characters. There is no way to hear those stories from the mouths of people who had heard it first, and so to reach those branches, I must rely on history to fill the gaps. My own family may not carry me there.

As I clamber around the trunk to find my mother's side, I am faced with a much different problem. The branches are too thick to stand on. They cross and tangle and fill my vision with leaves. I have so many living relatives on this side, each with their own memory, each with their own faults of memory. I do not know which fruits are true. I cannot see the canopy. There must be a history that connects these branches to an ancestral home, but if there is, it is hard for me to find. I must rely on memory more than history to get me there.

The texts I have analyzed are outside branches interwoven into the tree, a ladder to help me climb and make sense of the tangles or scarce footholds. Some are more relevant on one side as opposed to others; *Silencing the Past* provided the terms and analysis necessary to understand the production of history and why certain oral stories told by the Emmerich's about their legal battle with the Astor's is not so often told in the history books. *Remembering Ahanagan*, the chronicle of a European immigrant as she adapted to America, taught lessons for the writing of the similar Americanization of my Lithuanian ancestor Tomas Jankus, or Thomas Yench. *A Midwife's Tale* became a reference for constructing a narrative from only records - an

important tool for the construction of the Peabody and Overholt narratives as generational gaps left behind little stories to tell yet rich records to study. And it is *The Art of Time in Memoir* that I am able to give each branch a foundation, equal footing, as I strengthen the memories that lift up all these records, experiences, and narratives at the tree's trunk - the memories from me.

YENCH

It is a warm June morning in 1999 and I am five years old. I sit on a flat plush cushion punctuated with red polka dots to accommodate a baby – my three-month-old sister, Grace – as she rattles plastic keys with a giggle. The constant clatter doesn't bother me. I'm far too busy fixing the Father's Day card I've prepared from school, and I'm particularly fussy over the pink ribbon glued into a bow on its construction paper front. Mama is upstairs folding laundry and finishing chores before our guest arrives.

I decide I'm ready to show her my work. I flash a glance at the bubbling baby as I run upstairs. I had been told to watch her, but what is a minute anyway when she's been here for hours, drooling, muttering gibberish.

"Very nice honey," Mama says as she methodically folds the linens, traced by some far-off spot in the room. She's thinking about something else now. I trace my finger over the bow.

I follow her downstairs after she's finished folding, watching her heavy footsteps fall on each stair as the weight of the laundry basket presses on her hip. Her feet reach the landing and the basket falls from her hands. The crashing thud is almost as loud as the gasp that escapes her.

Grace is blue. The shade of blue I see in old cartoons; the shade the characters turn when they strangle each other and I wonder if it's possible to ever be that shade of blue. Her mouth and eyes are wide open, struggling to coordinate infant muscles to choke, to find air. Mama scoops her into her arms and dials the phone, answering with a voice wild and breathy. The house that was once so still now moves by in

seconds. I plant myself on the stairs. I watch Mama sputtering into the phone, my blue sister peeking over her shoulder.

Our large living room window is soon filled with flashing orange lights and blaring bells that disorient my eyes and ears. Mama is talking to the ambulance crew. She is telling me to wait for Daddy to come home from work any minute now. She is climbing into the ambulance with Grace. Meanwhile I stare at the card in my lap, tugging at the frayed ends of the bow, untying the glue-encrusted knot, wondering what a minute was anyway.

I don't remember what I did then. Soon after the flashing lights left my father came home. Next I remember the dull carpet of an airport as I wait by the loading ramp next to Daddy. A hunched man with leather skin walked up the tunnel sporting a U.S. Armed Forces cap and carry-on bags. "It's Grandpa," my father told me. He's the guest I had heard about, my mother's father. And on the day my sister has almost died of pneumonia, he has come to live with us.

When my sister returned from the hospital, she came packaged with a tangle of tubes and machines to clear the remaining fluids from her lungs. This did not faze her – Grace continued exploring, and destroying, the world with natural curiosity. She would dismantle my meticulously-constructed Lego buildings, smear mashed food into the red fuzz on her head, open a can of bag balm and permanently stain the carpet with the globs she shoveled out of it with a mitten. My mother began calling her a strange name: "Paskuti."

More of these strange words would come from my mother's lips that did not quite sound like the English words I was learning to form on mine. The vowels

lingered too long, the consonants were too biting: “Babushka,” “Pushki,” and I asked her where these words came from. Lithuania, she said.

I learned I was half German, quarter Welsh, and quarter Lithuanian – this because my father believed himself to be half German and half Welsh, and my mother half German and half Lithuanian. But her maiden name “Yench” is not a Lithuanian name, nor is it a name that belongs to any nation. It is a drifting half-name that floats across the tides of every other Americanized surname, converted to hide amidst the daunting waves of early 20th century immigrants. Yet, the name is also so unique that it serves to tell the story of a unique family, and in not having a meaning or tradition, gives one to the Yench family.

Curious about the Eastern European country, I scoured the world map that hung on my wall for Lithuania, and traced the country beneath my finger. The ink of its national borders rubbed off on the pad of my pinky. It is a small country tucked between Latvia, Belarus, Poland, Russia, and the beating shore of the Baltic Sea. Unlike their Slavic neighbors, the natives of Lithuania descend from the original Baltic races.

Lithuanians in 1900 endured a nationwide famine, and so looked to America for new opportunities. By 1912, an estimated 600,000 Lithuanians emigrated to American soil, or one fifth of the nation’s population. Amongst this incredible wave of immigration was my great-great grandfather, Thomas Yench. Except “Yench” was not the name inked onto his immigration papers. Depending on the document, he was either Tomas Jankus (pronounced YAN-coos) from Lithuania, or Tomas Inktz from

Poland. As there is more evidence of the Lithuanian “Tomas Jankus,” I chose to follow this familial thread in creating some semblance of an immigration timeline.

Jankus is a popular Lithuanian surname derived from the common biblical name “John.” It is Lithuanian tradition to change the family name depending on the gender of the person who holds it. Tomas, as a man, maintained the name “Jankus.” If he were an unmarried woman, the name would end with a “-te” suffix, or “Jankute.” Had he been a woman married into the name, the surname would end with an -iene suffix, or “Jankiene.”

But traditions die with assimilation. Tomas Jankus decided on the name Thomas Yench, a blunt, unassuming name that carried no identifying foreign tradition. Yet he would carry with him the language for decades; he still could not be noted as an English speaker on the 1930 census after living nearly three decades in America. Though heavily influenced by the constantly occupying nations of Poland and Russia, the Lithuanian language is uniquely its own in complex grammar and inflection. That rich language fragmented and trickled down through the generations, each generation coming away with a little less, the waves of American culture pounding away at a collective heritage. My mother remembers just three choice words from her Grandma Julia, the only relics I now take with me.

At the age of ten I attempted to carry on some knowledge of Lithuania through an elementary school project: an in-depth study into a country of our choice. I decorated my desk with a proud display of black and red and yellow construction paper assembled into the Lithuanian flag. I brought in a traditional headscarf, a babushka, to show the class. I was enamored with the elegant artisan Easter eggs and

the magnificent castles and cathedrals that littered a lush countryside. It was all I could do to paint the blank canvas of a lost heritage.

On my family tree the blank spaces cannot be painted in. I had found no Lithuanian or Polish records to suggest the family from which Tomas Jankus originated before he set foot on American soil. The multiple names on his naturalization documents only add to the confusion. I sought out his grandchildren in Illinois in hopes of tapping into an oral history, unearthing some lead that would have been denied to me through records alone; however, nothing was there. Even his grandchildren would recount asking him about life before America, only to be met with an eerie silence. And so, in recording the Yench bloodline, I have accepted that Lithuania ostensibly starts and ends with the immigration of Tomas Jankus.

Tomas Jankus was born in Kaunas, Lithuania about March 7, 1877. According to his naturalization documents, he travelled to Bremlen, Germany before boarding a ship to arrive at New York on December 15, 1901, becoming an immigrant at the approximate age of 24. His immigration documentation gives him many names: Tomas Jankus, Tamosuis Jankus, and the final Americanized Thomas Yench. No middle name is to be found, even on his eldest son's railroad employment document, on which son Joseph wrote in place of his father's full name "Thomas Don't Know Yench". Despite the inconsistent names, the description of Tomas Jankus is always listed the same way: white male, black hair, grey eyes, ruddy complexion, five feet and ten inches tall, and 165 pounds. In his photo he has notably large hands, a thick sturdy moustache, and a square face.

Soon after Tomas arrived in America, he moved to Hartshorne, Oklahoma, a self-proclaimed mining capital. In the 1920 census, Tomas (taking the last name “Yanch”) was recorded as a coal miner. As Lithuanians immigrated to America, there had begun a trend of Lithuanian immigrants filling niche roles of labor in enclosed spaces, usually coal mines. In Hartshorne he met a woman by the name of Dorothy Polonis and married her around 1903. She gave birth to three sons in Hartshorne: Joseph Patrick in 1908, Anthony Augustus “Fed” in 1910, and Peter Patrick “Bob” in 1912. Unfortunately, little is known about my great-great grandmother Dorothy Polonis. The only date that can be attributed to her is an estimated date of death in 1912, after the birth of her last son. On Joseph’s railroad employment paperwork, he only recorded his mother as “Deceased” and her maiden name “Unknown.”

Tomas’ second marriage was to Helen Shareva, born in Kaunas, Lithuania on June 16, 1888. After arriving in New York on Christmas Eve day, 1907, she was married to an unknown first husband at the age of 19. Whatever the circumstance that ended her first marriage, Helen remarried to Tomas on April 15, 1914 at age 23, in Chicago, Illinois. With Helen, Tomas had four more children, again all born in Hartshorne: Anne Marie in 1915, Veronica Helen in 1917, Phillip Thomas “Felix” in 1919, and Anella T “Nellie” in 1925.

After the birth of his last child, Tomas and his family moved to Melrose Park, Illinois, a rural area near Chicago. Census records and local newspapers document life for this family of nine. The children were enrolled in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic school and Proviso East High School, the schools that would’ later educate many generations of Yench’s to come. Son Anthony was a natural athlete: he had

earned the nickname “Fed” for his passion of featherweight boxing and competed in his school’s baseball team, aptly named the Proviso Lithuanians. After graduation Fed worked by his father’s side after he became a laborer for Richardsons, an asphalt company that represented the second largest industry in the area. Oldest son Joseph was in service to the U.S. Marine Corps. Enlisted on September 1, 1927, he became a private for “C” Company, Recruit Battalion in Parris Island, South Carolina. Third son Bob worked with cedar chests.

Life moved swiftly for Tomas’ sons and daughters. After Joseph returned from his military service, he married Jeanette Dahl in 1932 and became a father; Bob married to Mary Doyle. Fed moved to Detroit, Michigan and worked as a battery inspector. The youngest of the children were graduating: Anne’s graduating senior quote in 1935 was “So brimful of this merry, vigorous life.”

While in Detroit, Fed met a young woman, Julia Stine, after she had hitchhiked from her home in Hartshorne, Oklahoma to the city. She herself was Lithuanian, born to immigrant parents Mary Laskis and Joseph Stine (originally Staninas, another Americanized surname). In 1895 Mary was born in Lithuania to Cashmere Lisayus and Margaret Pukas, with an unknown number of siblings. By the age of 16 she was married to 24-year-old Joseph, and by the age of 18 travelled with him to America while pregnant with her first child Julia, giving birth to her on November 11 of the same year. A young mother, Mary raised Julia and her younger brother Anthony Joseph while Joseph worked as a coal miner. Whatever reason Julia had to leave home and trek to the Midwest, she had found a husband in Fed Yench.

Julia and Fed wed on June 23, 1935 in Detroit, Michigan. While pregnant with their first child, Fed's step mother Helen had passed away on January 19, 1936 in Oak Park, Illinois, at the age of 47. It is possible Helen's death motivated Fed's father Tomas to become naturalized, as less than three months later Tomas officially declared American citizenship as Thomas Yench on March 25 alongside Helen's name, and with a document that provides the richest detail of any record about his former life in Lithuania including his original name and birthplace. This document solidifies the surname "Yench" for the rest of his branching family line. Thomas Yench would soon find he would not be the only one to carry his newfound legal name, however. Fed and Julia became parents to Thomas Joseph Yench on May 11, 1936 in Chicago.

Around this time, Fed and Julia's younger siblings were also starting their families. Anthony Stine, who also independently moved to Detroit to become a salesperson, married Anne Rubikas in 1936. Veronica Yench married John Gričius in 1938 and Anne married high school sweetheart Carl Anthony Vovola in 1939. Both Yench daughter weddings were covered in detail in the local *The Herald* newspapers beside a full-body photo of the brides. Anne and Veronica walked down the aisle of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church adorned with "white roses and lilies of the valley" and accompanied by a Lithuanian choir. Dresses for the bridesmaids were described in taffeta and tea-rose detail, and both shared a common bridesmaid in Ann Waichulis, their class reunion and bridal shower organizer. Marriages were truly a celebration for the Yench's. Receptions were sizable, numbering over 125 for Veronica's wedding and 250 for Anne's.

Young Thomas Yench, nicknamed “Tommie,” spent his childhood in America during World War II, an event that influenced the overwhelming patriotism he carried throughout his life. On December 7, 1941, Japan launched an airstrike on American fleets in Pearl Harbor when Tommie was five years old, and he likely went to school at Mount Carmel alongside war propaganda. He became an older brother to Anthony Ronald “Tony” on October 6, 1943, and gained a new brother in arms he could inspire to be a fellow soldier. When the American armed forces returned home in 1945 Tommie watched, enthralled, aspiring to one day join their ranks. His father Fed did just that: after the war Fed became a sergeant-in-arms, fighting competitively in the army’s boxing clubs.

1950 was another eventful year in the life of the Yench’s. Julia and Fed’s third and final child was daughter Arlene, born on April 13, 1950. Fed’s brother Phillip had married Anne Martin and started a family, and the youngest of Tomas’ children, Nellie, married Frederick Cousin on September 7, 1950. Later that year, Fed and Julia endured a major life change when Julia’s father died and was buried in Holy Rosary Cemetery, Hartshorne, Oklahoma on October 1, 1950. Now a widow, Julia's mother Mary moved from Hartshorne to Chicago to live with the growing family. Tommie continued his studies at East Proviso where he followed his father’s fighting background and joined Proviso’s wrestling team. He may have also developed an interest in art as he served on an art committee for his school band competition, responsible for creating abstract backgrounds for the performances. Despite his extra-curricular activities, Tommie’s desire to become an American soldier only grew with the declaration of the Korean War in June 1950.

Tommie finally got his chance after his seventeenth birthday in May 1953. Graduating from high school and now able to register for the army, he immediately applied and underwent the physical exam necessary for an approval. In return he received a rejected application - his natural eyesight had proved too poor for the standards of the Marine Corps. Only a few months later in July 1953, the Korean War came to an end for America. Tommie, though devastated by the circumstances, held on to his fervent patriotism. Never would he pledge allegiance without his hat over his heart.

Without the prospect of the military, Tommie - now Tom - found work as a draftsman for the General Telephone and Electric Corporation (GT&E) around 1955, applying his drawing experience to technical plans. Tom had met Mary "Linda" Emmerich on a double date and eventually persisted for her hand in marriage.

On April 5, 1960, Fed's father Thomas Yench died in Melrose Park, Illinois at the age of 83. The family tether to Lithuania had been severed, but so had Lithuania's own ties to its national sovereignty. After World War II the Soviet Union had annexed Lithuania and deported hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians to Siberia, killing thousands more as Lithuanian guerrilla fighters unsuccessfully rebelled against the Soviet Union's deportation efforts. An estimated total 55,000 Lithuanians had lost their lives during Soviet annexation (Küng). Amidst this history, perhaps it is not so much a mystery that Tomas would refuse to answer questions about their homeland, shrouded in the same stoicism that became a Yench family trait. By moving to America, he had saved his family from the wars and powers that ravaged the Eastern

European countryside, and left behind generations more loyal to America's flag than Lithuania's.

As one generation ended, another began. On October 1, 1960, Tom married Linda in Buffalo Grove, Illinois and took up residence in Rolling Meadows, a suburb of Chicago. Just over a year later, their first daughter Alicia Anne was born on November 11, 1961 in Libertyville. Tom's brother Tony had graduated Proviso as a member of the football team and boys' choir. American involvement in Vietnam was intensifying as tensions rose, and the war gave his little brother his lost opportunity to join the army. With no disqualifying physical condition, Tony Yench joined the US Marine Corps.

Alicia became a big sister when Maureen Catherine "Rene," my mother, was born on July 22, 1965. Growing up, Rene and Alicia would often spend weekends visiting their maternal and paternal grandparents. Recalling the visits with Fed and Julia, they remember Julia's staunch cleanliness - all the furniture in the house was covered with plastic. Julia was also a great cook and made delicious meals for the family visits. Great Grandma Mary rarely talked or left her room, and when she did talk it was in a funny accent. Mostly grandma Mary was reserved and crocheted patterned wool afghan blankets for relatives. As I write this, one such blanket is neatly folded at the end of my bed with the stitched tag marked "Mary Stine" still legible. It's one of the many my family has inherited.

Tony Yench had arrived from the Vietnam War a sergeant and Rene's godfather. He met and MaryAnn Bock and married her on February 4, 1968. They had their first daughter Carrie Yench on October 17, 1970. Arlene graduated from

Proviso and married neighbor Louis DeLuco. With all kids out of the house, Julia, Fed, and Mary moved to Maricopa, Arizona for retirement. Visiting the grandparents in Arizona was not much different with the exception of Fed's new request: bring a case of his favorite brand of Stroh's beer. Julia would watch game shows on TV and Fed would take walks, golf, or drink with the other men in the basement.

Alicia and Rene were among the first Yench's who did not attend East Proviso, instead attending the local schools in Rolling Meadows. The two walked to school despite the Midwest weather. Blizzards were a common problem in the winter when the violent snow would bite their skin and slosh in their boots as they trekked over hills to and from class. In the spring and summer, bunnies infested thawed yards to ravage blooming gardens. Warm nights would either treat them to the sight of lightning bugs or lightning - either way, the flashes of light in the sky thrilled my mother. On the occasion a lightning storm passes through our neighborhood in Oregon she'll reminisce about the mighty storms she would watch back home.

Life wasn't always easy. Sometimes money was tight. Sometimes their mother and father didn't get along. Still, the girls focused on other things. My aunt inherited the artistic family trait, and my mom inherited athleticism. Rene enrolled in shot put during middle school, took karate lessons until her blue belt (which she later continued in Oregon to become a black belt), and in high school joined the softball and volleyball teams. She thrived in activity and competition. Starting to rely more on her own savings, Rene took up odd jobs, too many for even her to count. Hostess, waitress, hair dresser, secretary, anything that would contribute to her growing funds for a first car and house down payment.

Arguments between Tom and Linda grew more serious. Tom lost his job at GT&E: after the drafting process became automated, he refused to learn the new technology that made his job obsolete. Alicia had graduated and worked as a nanny for their Uncle Lou and Aunt Arlene for a while before she travelled to California, leaving Rene alone with the worsened drinking and yelling. There were two forces that kept Tom and Linda together: raising Rene, and the Catholic stigma of divorce.

Fed died in October 1983, the first of his siblings to pass. Julia and Mary lived with Arlene and her husband Lou in her home in Arizona, along with her three children Jill, Mark, and Christopher.

After Rene had graduated and her parents finally filed for divorce, she became the Maid of Honor for Alicia's wedding to Thomas Michael Teaford, a Washington state ranger, in 1985 after they had met in California. As a ranger he was responsible for hiring new lifeguards for the state lakes, a position my mother was interested in applying for. Assigned to Porcupine Bay, Washington, she moved into the cramped trailer she would be sharing with two other lifeguards my Uncle Tom had hired. Among the lifeguards, she would be living with was Robert Clare "Bob" Peabody.

After enough time living together the two started dating. Bob decided to leave his lifeguard duty to join the US Navy. The couple agreed to move together to Orlando, Florida, where Bob would train at boot camp and Rene studied basic courses at a community college. Due to Bob's submarine deployment on the USS *Francis Scott Key*, they would move to New York and South Carolina, marrying between deployments on May 6, 1989 in Chicago, Illinois. Rene's mother Linda had brought

someone new - Michael Lukachik, a Ford car salesman, whom she had recently started dating.

Eventually the newlyweds moved to Oahu, Hawaii, where Bob was stationed at Pearl Harbor. Bob's service was drawing near its end and the submarine was to be decommissioned in late 1993, a sign for Rene to finally start a family. On November 26, 1993, the Friday after Thanksgiving, my mother delivered me - Anna Marie - at Tripler Army Medical Center, a large medical complex painted vibrant coral against the lush greenery of the Oahu Island. I was baptized catholic at Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, Linda and Micheal were married, and Tom was panhandling. Rene eventually took him in at the apartment in Hawaii, establishing a life for her father as she raised a new daughter. In 1996 Bob had finally left his service and had found an engineering opportunity at Intel Corporation in Hillsboro, Oregon. Tom had found a job as a security guard and had moved into a new apartment. Comfortable leaving her father in relative stability, Rene and Bob left Hawaii and moved into Alicia's house in Prineville while they prepared to find a place in the Hillsboro area.

I retained no memories of my first years in Hawaii. Despite this, when I had visited Oahu again on a high school band trip I was overwhelmed with how much the island felt like home. I wish I could remember the hikes my parents made up Diamondhead carrying me on their backs, or the trips to the sandy beaches and warm salt waves, or the tours of rich culture when they took me to the Polynesian Cultural Center. Yet, the absolute earliest memory I can muster was the day my parents and I moved into the Creekside Apartments in Tanasbourne, just after our month stay in Prineville. I looked up at the second-floor apartment from the street, at the top of a

daunting concrete staircase, set against the backdrop of a cold and grey overcast sky. This was Oregon, and I was not too fond of it.

Memories flash through my mind of the apartment like slides. A balloon floating by the ceiling for my third birthday party, the reruns of Tom and Jerry on the TV, the marshmallow I dropped in the corner slowly consumed by the ants that plagued the apartment, the little girl in the next apartment over that would play chase with me in the yard between our complexes, my first bike on Christmas Day standing in the living room shining purple paint and glittering decals. I was blessed with a playful childhood. My mother became a full stay-at-home mother and I didn't have the need to go to preschool when I could already count to one hundred, a skill that annoyed my parents whenever I proved that I could do it.

Tom, or Grandpa Yench as I knew him, would occasionally call from Hawaii and ask to talk to me. He would call me "button-nose" and I would giggle at the name. I was unaware that Grandpa Yench was struggling once again; he had lost his job in Hawaii and had been evicted from his apartment.

At that age, I had not been faced with anything as grim as a family death. Great-great grandma Mary Stine had passed away on March 7, 1995 in Arizona, but I had never met her. My grandpa on my father's side had also passed away, but I was too young to be affected by it. My most violent reaction to death was perhaps the brutal murder of a caterpillar after I accidentally stepped on it crossing a sidewalk and my mother was forced to console me as I sobbed over the small corpse. There was a day my mother and father stood together in the living room overflowing with tears after a visit to the hospital. I had no understanding of what had happened, but the

sight of crying moved me to desperately try to cry with them. I learned later that I had been crying for the loss of an unborn sibling.

My mother soon became pregnant again, however. I would mimic her growing belly by stuffing sports balls under my shirt and comparing her stomach to mine. I prepared for the intense jealousy and neglect that all children's shows seemed to portray when an only child suddenly becomes an older sibling. I also prepared for the love and care the shows portrayed too.

My little sister Grace Clare had been born on March 4, 1999. I peeked into her small hospital bed, surprised to see a head of orange fuzz. I had known no one in my family with orange hair as the ones that did were grey by the time I knew them. Grace had complications during the birth; she didn't cry when she was delivered and fluid needed to be removed from her lungs. She came home with us the next day.

I remember the day we moved out of the apartment just as clearly as the day we moved in. I was approaching Kindergarten age and my parents wanted to raise me in a real home before I started school at Ladd Acres Elementary. Grace was hardly a month old when we moved. The new house in Hillsboro was big and blue and more spacious than I could hope for. There were four rooms: a master for the parents, one for me, one for Grace, and a guest bedroom at the back of the second-floor hallway that we reserved for visiting family.

Once again in need of help, Grandpa Yench moved from Honolulu to Hillsboro to live with us, unfortunately on the same day my sister was hospitalized for pneumonia. Grandpa lived in the guest bedroom where he would sit in his recliner for hours and watch war documentaries on the History Channel and nothing else. He

emerged from his room to watch shows on the family TV or to sit down for family meals, but mostly to stand on the back patio and smoke. My mother didn't let him smoke inside with the children in the house, especially with an infant recovering from a lung condition, and neither did she leave alcohol in the open for him to easily find. It was a significant shift from the carefree life I had known to the unsure one I was about to know.

Amidst the big change, our parents bought goldfish for our first pets. They let me pick out the two fish and name them - I dubbed large goldfish Virginia and the small goldfish with a black stripe along the back Nicky. I enjoyed watching the fish swim serenely in their tanks, and enjoyed it even more when feeding time came, when the two of them zipped in a frenzy to catch the falling flakes of food. What I did not understand was why Virginia was getting bigger, almost too big for the tank, while Nicky stayed the same size and began to sulk lethargically at the tank corners. After two weeks it became clear; Virginia had been eating all the food at feeding time, leaving little for Nicky and leaving even littler space when she grew. Nicky had died, and on that day I thought I knew the devastation of death. I ran to Grandpa and cried about Nicky's passing, leaving him standing awkwardly staring at a sobbing child and not sure how to handle her.

During the few times Grandpa wasn't watching the History Channel we would find ways to have fun together, usually through teasing. I used to sing the song "American Pie" when I learned he loved the song and quickly ruined it for him after singing it constantly. I had hid in his room to scare him with the blurted lyrics as I popped out from under his bed. At meals he pretended to steal food off my plate

when I wasn't looking as a way of getting me to eat what was on my plate, because the only way I could ensure it was my food was if I ate it before he could. He still called me "button-nose" even as I was growing out of it. Sometimes my toddler sister joined in the fun of teasing him by locking him out of the house while he was out on the patio smoking, the lock clicking under her barely-reaching fingers.

Life still did not get any easier for us. I had tried on hats at a store and contracted lice from one of them; my mother woke me early in the morning to pick my hair for knits before school for a few weeks until I was clean. Just as my sister was recovering from her pneumonia and regaining enough strength to become a difficult child, my mother was feeling sick from stress - she was diagnosed with hypothyroidism and started taking medication. But Grandpa Yench was especially ill. He was getting paler, frailer, refusing to eat his food and not even pretending to steal mine.

After a trip to the hospital it was revealed why: Grandpa Yench had colon cancer. I didn't understand what cancer was then, but I soon learned what it could do. In the months following the diagnosis an immense strain weighed on our family. Some days my mother would beg desperately for her father to eat his food - any of it, just a bite - but he didn't. I was slowly watching a man die before my eyes. Eventually he couldn't live in the house anymore. He was hospitalized, and I would put my crafting skills to work making a Get Well Soon card to stand beside him on his bedside table. I took his hand in the hospital bed - it was so fragile and limp and scared me from its touch. On his final day, Rene and Alicia stood by his bed. I was made to wait beside my father and sister outside the room, but I could peek in

between the small crack of the door and see the hanging heads of their silhouettes.

Thomas Yench died on April 28, 2001.

Unlike the small deaths I experienced before Grandpa died, I did not react, not immediately. I did not cry or mourn even though I wanted to. I lived through the following weeks feeling only numb. Occasionally the TV in the guest bedroom would flicker on in the middle of the night, right back to the war documentaries on History Channel. His clothes and furniture still reeked of cigarette smoke. After two weeks I sat with my mother on Grandpa's bed and stared at his open closet of clothes and VHS tapes. The silence overwhelmed me, and in the long absence I understood what family death was. I would never hear him call me button-nose or laugh when he teased me at dinner. The severity of my sister's pneumonia became clear to me - if she had died that day, I would have missed her laugh, her curiosity, her growth. I finally began to cry.

Unfortunately, I had experienced the weight of human death just before September 11, 2001. Mom figures if cancer hadn't killed Grandpa first, then 9/11 may well have stopped his patriotic heart. It was not only a difficult time in my family, but now the entire nation had been thrown into a state of mourning and anger and confusion. I was lost with it. It was this year that I studied for my First Communion, and in a search for meaning and comfort I devoted my young self to spirituality. This period of my life was the closest I have felt connected to my religion.

Eventually life became normal again. Grace was still a rather temperamental toddler, but no one was ill or stressed or in mourning anymore. We painted our blue

house bright salmon and installed a trampoline and pool in the backyard, ushering back my playful and carefree self again. Great Grandma Julia could no longer live on her own and moved in with her daughter Arlene and son-in-law Lou in Scottsdale, Arizona. Grandpa Yench and Arlene's brother Tony was diagnosed with lung cancer after retiring as a linesman in Illinois. Because of the distance we could only visit them once during these years.

The only memory I have of Grandma Julia was during a joint birthday party the two of us shared while visiting Aunt Arlene for Thanksgiving. After the hearty turkey meal we blew out the candles on our cakes. Grandma Julia squinted, frail and quiet, and asked me if I was 21. She had turned 90, and I only just turned 12. When visiting Uncle Tony he was much livelier in conversation. The cancer had spread to his brain, but among the serious undertone he was still in good humor as we enjoyed sweets from my sweet Aunt MaryAnn and exchanged stories around his kitchen table.

Grandma Julia died on October 26, 2006. Her son Tony died a few months later and almost the same day as his brother on April 29, 2007. Due to his service, he was buried in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. Arlene still lives in Scottsdale with her family.

The Yench name lives on through the family line of Tomas' other sons and through Uncle Tony's sons Anthony and Timothy, and their own sons. In a way, the Americanized surname Yench, though stripped of the culture it once knew, makes the name extraordinarily unique. As I happened upon the name Yench in my research I could be near certain the person was related to my lineage in some way, which made tracking the history for each member easier than if they bore an established and

common surname that doesn't necessarily indicate direct relation, a way a family culture preserved in the absence of an old on left behind in immigration. This was the challenge as I dove into the research for my paternal grandfather's genealogy: the Peabody's.

PEABODY

It's a summer night in 1996, and I am two years old. The day's heat trapped within the condo is nothing like it is in Oregon, or even Hawaii (if I could remember it). My chubby toes find comfort in the beige shag carpet. I push my hands down into the threads, fascinated as they envelope my fingers. My parents are on the couch; Grandma Gin is on a recliner, and Grandpa Peabody is on the other. They're watching television, but the lack of colorful costumes and silly voices tells me the program isn't Sesame Street or Barney, so I pay no attention. I peer through the narrow pathway out of the living room, between the arm of the couch and Grandpa's recliner. Just beyond the hardwood floor and the kitchen table I can see the sliding glass door that opens to the patio, drafting Arizona's cool desert night air into my grandparents' condo.

I wobble to my feet and patter across the carpet before I realize my path is obscured by Grandpa Peabody's towering calf. He is a large man, nearly a foot above Daddy, and I don't know what to make of his size. His face is what unsettles me. His eyes barely open behind thick obscuring glasses, his jowls droop below the jawbone and his lips are bound in a permanent pout. The floor lamp only accentuates his unresponsive scowl, casting stark shadows into deep creases. There is no kind wrinkle. I slow my pace, press my back against the arm of the couch, and scoot inch by inch around his foot as if he were a sleeping bear. He sees me. Without a change in expression, he gestures for me to sit on his lap. Daddy laughs as he picks me up and hands me over to Grandpa. I have been betrayed.

I am forced onto Grandpa Peabody's lap. I do not to move or look at his face. I am a shy child and stare at the glass of water on the side table, hoping he does not speak to me. But the heat is nice and I think he is laughing, or what I assume is a laugh that bellows from his jowls. Perhaps this is not so bad. This is the only memory I have of Grandpa Peabody.

“Peabody” is a name people are usually familiar with, be it from the prestigious Peabody Awards, the Peabody hotel in Massachusetts, or the time-travelling cartoon dog. It is a hoity-toity name, a co-worker once told me. Had I asked my fellow playground classmates about it, I would have received the recess taunt: “Hey Peabody, do you *pee* on your *body*?” To which I would reply with a swift kick of bark chips to their chins.

A cursory search of the name “Peabody” online results in a background set in England, with the definition of “fancy dresser” and a peacock on the family crest to really drive a stake into the image. But this origin is not so, according to Peabody Genealogy, compiled by Selim Hobart Peabody and published in 1909. This research in genealogy provides extensive clues to the origin of the Peabody family as it derived from Leicestershire, England. The following passage from this book details of the Peabody etymology:

“The name itself was variously spelled even in the same parish and on the same document. The oldest and most prevalent form previous to the settlement of New England was Paybody. Two common words, these syllables are, and perhaps they point back to a man or a succession of men in the fourteenth century (when surnames were crystallizing) who paid the

servants, creditors and employees of barons, manufacturers, or public officials. Body meant person or individual, pay-body would carry the same idea as pay-master or paying-teller. The name, if such be its origin, would be a memorial of ability and trustworthiness.” (pg viii)

The current spelling of Peabody was not found on a document until 1715.

The first Peabody in record can be traced to John Paybody from his will written in old English in 1520. However, it wasn't until 1636 that another John Paybody of Buxbury, born in Leicester, England, immigrated to the American colonies at Plymouth, Massachusetts. He had accrued acres of land which he bequeathed to his sons Thomas, Francis, William, and daughter Annis. Along with their father, Francis and William would become the ancestors of the “Great American Family,” the prestigious branches of the Peabody line.

However, there were more Peabody families in America than those of Francis and William. John I P Pabody, born in 1612 England, immigrated to Newport, Rhode Island and bought land there in 1649. John owned cattle in Little Compton, land once occupied by William Paybody. This suggests the two were kin, though a concrete connection between them was never made. This is the beginnings of what the author dubs “The Newport Family,” one of the few Peabody branches not directly related to Francis and William. This is where my Peabody ancestry starts.

Even as a starting point, the origins of this lineage proves to be murky territory. From town records and John's will, it is known John Pabody married Dorothy Tooley, daughter of Thomas and Rebecca Tully, and with her had seven children. His eldest child was his only son John Peabody born about 1655. John Sr.

was a cattle farmer and was possibly involved in business in Dartmouth and Conanicut Island. Dorothy died and John remarried in 1677 to widow Mary Benton. She died one year later in 1678. By 1687 John was growing ill, however he still retained a strong memory, so he arranged his will on March 22. In the will, he bequeaths to his son John Jr. his deeds as well as oxen, cows, sows, sheep, tools, and an African boy by the name of Thomas Honeyball that was to be in service to the Peabodys for twelve years. To the rest of his daughters and grandchildren, he divided between them a sum of 24 New England pounds. After John's death later that year, the history of the Newport family was left unclear, only pieced together by a few traditional documents.

The revelation that my 11th and 10th great grandfather were slave owners was unexpected, as none of my family lineage originated from the American South. Yet, slaves were not uncommon in colonial New England either, especially Rhode Island, the New England colony that contained the largest population of slaves. These slaves performed more varied tasks than the agricultural labor of the Southern plantations. In this case, Thomas Honeyball may have provided labor to upkeep John and his son's land and cattle, allowing them to expand business. No further records indicate slave ownership for the Peabody's, nor are there any further records for what became of Thomas Honeyball after he was freed. It wasn't until after the American Revolution in 1784 that Rhode Island legislature was passed to gradually emancipate their large population of slaves (Slaves in New England).

From what the author can tell, John Jr. married Rachel Nicolson, born to Joseph Nicolson on April 12, 1658. They were wed in 1660 and had several

children, the eldest being Joseph Peabody born in 1685. Joseph married Sarah Allen on December 27, 1711, just a month after his mother's death. Together Joseph and Sarah had five children, John Peabody being the eldest born in 1712. This is where the haze over the family history lifts as records become more reliable (Peabody, 547).

John Peabody married Dorcas Sweet on January 5, 1734 at Newport. The family was documented as citizens of Middletown, Rhode Island, after the town they had occupied gained independence from the growing population of Newport in 1731. They had one documented son, Joseph Peabody, born on November 9, 1735. Joseph married Barbara Coggeshall, great-great granddaughter of John Coggeshall, founder and first President of the colony of Rhode Island, on July 15, 1756. In May 1757, Joseph became an admitted freeman, someone who could enjoy all civil liberties under the free government, including the right to vote, and was a member of the church. This privilege was earned after a period of time under indentured servitude, which was not restricted to poor or immigrant workers but also extended to the children of the wealthy.

After he gained his freeman status, Joseph and his wife had six children. One of his sons, Benjamin, was born on September 26, 1765 and was named after his older brother who had died in 1762 at the age of one. Benjamin grew up during the revolution and independence of the American colonies from Britain's rule, turning eleven the same year the Declaration of Independence was signed. One of the battles during the Revolutionary War was fought not too far from home at Portsmouth, Rhode Island, named the Battle of Quaker Hill or the Battle of Rhode Island. On the morning of August 28, 1778, the French joined the colonists in their first joint battle

against England. Despite relatively even losses, England was able to drive out the revolutionary forces in a strategic victory, occupying Newport for another year until British forces left for New York, leaving the area available for French allies. By the time the war had ended in 1783, Newport was left in economic ruin from restricted wartime trade, with less than half of the population the area had before the war. Despite this, the Peabody family remained.

Benjamin married Elizabeth Little after the war around 1788. Elizabeth herself had a rich ancestry as the 4th great granddaughter of Richard Warren, an English merchant that first voyaged from England to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 on the Mayflower. Through Warren, distant family connections can be made to other prominent members of the sprawling tree of descendants, from historical figures such as Ulysses S. Grant, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Henry David Thoreau, to modern politicians and celebrities such as Sarah Palin, Taylor Swift, and Matt Damon. Through Barbara Coggeshall own prestigious pedigree, more connections to Susan B. Anthony and Marilyn Monroe can be made.

Benjamin and Elizabeth had seven children including Joseph Burton Peabody, born in 1789. Joseph was two years old when Rhode Island officially joined the United States as the 13th state in 1791 having ratified the Constitution in Newport. Joseph Burton was a teacher when he married Mary Brown in 1812. The couple had nine children, though only seven lived past their adolescence. Their second son, John Brown Peabody, was born November 18, 1815. After his children had been born in Newport, Joseph became a merchant and lived with his wife in the more lucrative New York City.

While living with his father in New York City, John Brown met Elizabeth Carr and married her in 1832, having their first three children in the city. However, John Brown moved his family to a farm in Genesee, Wisconsin by the birth of their fourth child on April 14, 1842. Though the reason for this is unknown, New York City was plagued with fires, epidemics, and economic panics throughout the 1830s, creating an unstable environment for the city's merchants. It is possible John Brown sought the stability and growth in farming in the west. Nevertheless, his parents stayed behind in New York City to watch it recover and flourish into the nation's commerce capital by the middle of the century before Joseph's death in 1866 and Mary's death in 1874.

In total, John would become a father to twelve children, although three would die before the age of ten. His seventh child was Joseph Boyden, born in Genesee, Wisconsin on March 14, 1849. He was raised working as a farmer with his father John and continued to be a farmer after he married Melinda Almira Foster at River Falls, Wisconsin on Independence Day, 1869. Once they started to grow their family, they moved to Baldwin, Wisconsin where Joseph was a carpenter and millwright. They had six children within the decade between 1871 and 1881 and, finally breaking tradition set since Johnv IP Pabody of Newport, did not name any of his sons "John" or "Joseph". Instead, their children were Homer Burton, Grant Oscar, Hattie Bernice, William Benjamin, Percy Boyden, and Roscoe Conklin. This is where the Peabody Genealogy record provided by Selim Hobart Peabody ends, having been published in 1909. Coincidentally, this is where memory and family records begin.

Grant Oscar, Joseph Boyden's second son, was born on April 26, 1873. According to his application for employment to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, he was nearly 5 foot 10 inches, with brunette hair and hazel eyes, all physical traits that carried down to my father. He married Adelia "Addie" May Rudesill when she was 17 on May 12, 1897 and was hired in Minnesota as a brakeman for the railroad. With no need for help with a farm or mill, Grant and Addie had only two children, a new tradition for the Peabody line. However, this tradition came with consequences - without enough sons to inherit the Peabody name, the lineage under Grant Oscar is currently fading.

Grant's two children were daughter Hazel, born in Shell Lake, Wisconsin on September 2, 1897, and son Joseph Hiram, born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on February 29, 1901. Growing up, the children lived with their parents along with Addie's brother Manley and one of Grant's fellow railroad conductors J D Williams. Joseph Hiram turned 17 just as America had been involved in World War I, and was therefore enlisted into the army on March 17, 1918. When he returned home over a year later on September 24, 1919, his sister Hazel was married to Harold Almquist. His mother, too, had married. By 1920, Addie and Grant were no longer living together. No divorce records have been found, however Addie was married to Emil George Zentzis in the 1920 census, and her third child Dale Emmett Zentzis was born on July 1, 1920. She bore a fourth and final son Don Richard two years later. Despite the strong practice of Catholicism that had developed in this branch of Peabody's, second marriages and half siblings would not be uncommon.

Joseph married Mary E Sidel, daughter of Alois A Seidel and Cecilia Thon, on August 1, 1927. Joseph worked as a mail carrier for the railroad when Mary was pregnant with their first child, and on January 16, 1930 she gave birth to son Donald James Peabody. The following year they would have their second child, Norma, on August 16, 1931. After Joseph's mother Addie died in Spokane, Washington on December 10, 1934, Joseph found a new job as a lather, responsible for constructing walls with lath and plaster.

By 1940, Norma was prepared for her First Communion, a holy sacrament for the Catholic Church required for members about 7 years old. As a Communion gift, she was given a necklace with a thin and short dark silver chain with an equally dark metallic cross hanging from it. The cross is engraved with her initials "N.P." Unfortunately, she would not be able to wear the same cross to her Confirmation, a holy sacrament for older teenagers to confirm their faith. During the early 1940s, Minnesota, along with the rest of the country, would experience a polio epidemic. The pathogen permanently paralyzed and disabled otherwise healthy children, in some cases resulting in death. The highest death rate from polio was in 1946, as 9.8 out of 100,000 people would die from the disease. Minnesota took precautions to keep the disease from spreading, even closing the State Fair that year. Nonetheless, Norma Peabody was already afflicted with polio, and on August 1, 1946, she died from the disease at the age of 14. As a young girl, I inherited her Communion necklace. I kept it safe in my jewelry box for years, sometimes wearing the necklace myself. This May, I lent the necklace to my sister, so that she may wear it to her Confirmation that Norma never had.

According to my father, my Grandpa Peabody didn't talk about his sister very often, and when he did it was the only moment my father saw him cry. She had died when he was 16, and at this age he was also preoccupied with his own future. Donald was a tall man over six foot tall, and during high school was able to play football with professional level players. After graduating, he had the chance to go to university and play professional football; however, because university and professional football did not guarantee good pay at the time, he worked as a lather like his father had. His grandfather, Grant Oscar, died the day before his 75th birthday on April 25, 1948. By age 20, Donald married Betty Zappa on June 3, 1950. With her he had four children in Minnesota, Joseph Frank in 1951, Susan, Carla, and Joanie.

Donald's marriage with Betty ended by 1960. After the divorce, Donald no longer participated in the Catholic Church. Instead, Donald remarried to Virginia Overholt at her Presbyterian church on June 30, 1961. They believed Virginia to be sterile after she had failed to produce children in her previous marriage; however, they soon found that this was not the case.

Donald and Virginia were parents to James Paul on October 10, 1964 when they were 34 and 40 respectively. They moved to Colorado where their second son Robert Clare, my father, was born on December 27, 1966. This nearly generation-wide age gap proved to be a challenge to overcome when collecting family stories - not enough relatives are alive today to remember the generations preceding Donald Peabody.

Robert does not remember much about his grandmother Mary Sidel before she passed on November 1, 1978. However, his grandfather Joseph Hiram, had come to

live with them after the family had moved from Colorado to Spokane, Washington. Similar to my own experience with my Grandpa Yench, Joseph was diagnosed with cancer while he lived with the family. My father would pass hours with his grandfather as he was taught how to play a variety card games, which my father will still play with visiting relatives. Joseph Hiram died on January 1, 1981.

Robert also doesn't have much memory of his father. He remembers Donald had saved him from drowning in a pool when he tripped in as a toddler. He also remembers his father was a staunch Democrat until the Reagan years when he flipped his ideology completely. However, while the family lived in Spokane Donald traveled every week for his business as a salesman, only at home for a few days at a time. Donald also had a problem with alcohol that made it difficult for him to bond Robert and his brother James during those years. Their father eventually completed a rehabilitation program while Robert was a young teen, improving his relationship with his son before he was grown.

Robert graduated from University High School (a school I would later compete against in band competitions in the Pacific Northwest as I attended Century High School) and took up jobs as a shoe salesman and later as a pizza delivery man for Domino's while he studied social science at community college. While earning his bachelor's, he decided he wanted a stable job for the summer, so he applied for a lifeguard job at one of Washington state's lakes to ranger Thomas Teaford. It was then that he was hired and assigned to the same trailer as another young hire, Thomas' sister-in-law Maureen "Rene" Yench.

During his studies for another degree in nuclear engineering, Robert joined the navy in Orlando, Florida, with his new girlfriend Rene. He completed boot camp and was assigned duty to the submarine the *S.S. Francis Scott Key* as nuclear technician. The sub stationed him and Rene in New York, South Carolina, and Hawaii. He shows me pictures of the cramped living spaces and stacked beds he lived in for weeks on end. One picture shows men lounging in the sun and diving off the top of the sub as it was surfaced. Despite The Gulf War that was happening at the same time as his deployment, they were never too close to action. Among his fondest memories was the passing through the Panama Canal.

When the *S.S. Francis Scott Key* was set to be decommissioned in 1993, he settled down with his wife Rene and decided to start a family. I was born on November 26, 1993 at Tripler Medical Center in Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii. Robert's parents had come to briefly visit in Hawaii to meet their new granddaughter, a meeting I have no memory of. By the time we had moved to Oregon for my father's job offer from Intel, Grandpa Peabody and Grandma Gin were living in a retirement condo in Leisure World, Mesa, Arizona. I was taken to another visit - the final memory of my Grandpa Peabody - when I was two. Although my memory of Grandpa was slightly fearful for me, it was a delight for him. I was told he adored having me as a granddaughter, and when I visited it was one of the few times my parents saw him genuinely happy.

Some time after we left, Grandpa Peabody had accidentally slipped and fell on the hard floor, breaking his hip. In the emergency room, the doctors found another complication - his liver was failing. He died from his combined afflictions on August

15, 1998, a year too soon to see the birth of my sister Grace Clare, who had inherited more of his facial features like his thick bottom lip. It was the first death in the family I had experienced, but I was too young to grasp what it meant until the death of my Grandpa Yench.

Right now, my sister and I compose the final generation to inherit the Peabody name. Donald's other two sons, Joseph from his first marriage and James from his second, never had children. Joseph died in 2010 at Fargo, North Dakota from cancer. From Grant Oscar, the name has only been carried down through one son in each generation. My sister and I are not sons, and unless we keep our name through marriage, the name will be a relic of the lineage, mentioned only as a maiden name. Perhaps it is for this reason that documenting this lineage feels like a personal duty of responsibility. As one of the remaining Peabody's from Grant Oscar, if I cannot preserve the name, I can preserve the history for future generations to access beyond only a maiden name. Though we are Peabody's "not related to the prestigious Peabody's of Massachusetts" as some colonial documents explained, there is still prestige in the lives that connect to this line that would be otherwise silenced on our marriage certificates. It is a history I do not want to have silenced.

OVERHOLT

In February, 2015, my father read the following passage, written by myself and my sister, at his mother's memorial in Arizona:

When we were little, Grandma Gin's house was summer vacation. We would spend the days with her playing with her dog and driving around on golf carts and swimming in the pool to cool off under the Arizona sun. Sometimes we studied the portraits on her walls and the bundles of photos in her photo albums, learning more about her life. Being her only grandchildren she would spoil us, particularly with her favorite ice cream cones. No matter how big we grew, we were always children there. We could tell we meant a lot to her, and she meant a lot to us.

Summers had changed when she came to live with us in Oregon and the nearly constant rain, but she brought the sunshine with her. We just had new adventures, with barbeques and sports games and strolls around the flowery streets. It was a different type of vacation, but we enjoyed the time with her all the same. But we couldn't stay children here forever. She watched us grow up and go to high school and college and take on new responsibilities. We're thankful she could be there to see us become who we are now.

We were with her as time went on, but unfortunately that time came to an end. It rains a lot at home now. Her parting smiles and words of encouragement were rays of sunshine through grey clouds. We love our Grandma Gin, and will miss having her in our lives. She is still summer to us.

When it came time to research my paternal grandmother's lineage – the Overholt's – I experienced the same issues as I had with the Peabody's, that is, a rich historical record but a gap in recent memory. The Overholt line has perhaps the best record keepers than the other three family branches discussed in this project, providing for me documents and hand-drawn family trees and newspaper clippings to painstakingly study and enter into my own collection.

Originally Oberholtzer, German for “high woods,” the Overholt's were a Swiss German family that were deeply Protestant as practicing pacifist Mennonites. To escape religious persecution in Europe, the Oberholtzer's immigrated to the new American colony of Pennsylvania to settle in Bucks County as farmers. The first known Overholt on record for my specific lineage is Isaac Overholt, born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1741. He married a woman with the maiden name “Moyer” and with her had at least two known children: John, born in 1779, and Hannah, birthdate unknown.

Though no record kept by the family states why he left Pennsylvania for Ontario, Canada, other accounts from Oberholtzer families explain the mass move to Canada was due to the persecution the Mennonites faced during and after the Revolutionary War. Pacifist by nature, the Mennonites did not want to take sides in the conflict, an act that earned them the title of Loyalists from fervent patriots. Likewise, the English continued to raise their taxes, which made it more difficult to live in the colony. At the time, Canada was an escape for their community that wanted no part in fighting for the freedom of one country or for the rule of another.

John, living with his family in Ontario, met another Pennsylvanian immigrant Sarah Hand and married her in 1804. They had three sons, Isaac, Michael, and Jacob. John would defy the mold of Mennonite pacifism when he joined as a private for the Canadian unit known as Captain Abram Nelle's Flank Company on July 24, 1812. This was the War of 1812, a war spurred by the rising conflicts between American and British forces and allies after America's independence. Canada fought with Britain, and John fought against Americans he might have once known. Although his service to his unit was stated to have ended one month after his enlistment on August 24, 1812, it is possible he continued fighting under different Canadian units after flank companies dissolved in favor of a militia, as he died less than a year later on June 10, 1813 at the age of 34. It is also possible he may have died from injuries suffered at the Battle of Stoney Creek, a battle that took place in Ontario, Canada on June 6, 1813 as British forces overwhelmed an American camp. Though a decisive victory for British defense in Canada, 23 of their men were killed and over 100 injured. John was not among the list of men who died that day, but he may have been among the injured to succumb to wounds four days later.

Jacob Overholt was the youngest son of Sarah and John, born December 9, 1811, roughly half a year before John joined the war. He would have never known his father. His mother Sarah raised him and his older brothers until he met and married Rachel Claus, a descendant from one of Canada's original settlers and daughter of John Overholt's fellow soldier Nicholas Claus. He started his large family with the birth of his eldest son, Nicholas Claus, on November 7, 1835 who they named after Rachel's father. The couple would go on to have five more children until they

decided to move to Allamaker County, Iowa in 1851 to start farming in America. In Iowa they had three more children, totaling nine.

In 1860, Nicholas married Ellen Maranda Woodward, with whom he had his first child Charles the same year. While pregnant with their second child, Nicholas could not stay at the farm to raise the children - the United States was divided, thrown into a Civil War between the northern Union and southern Confederacy. Like his grandfather before him he had joined the fight, though this time in effort to unify America instead of defending against it. Nicholas became a Sergeant for Company D, 6th Iowa Cavalry. During his service from 1863 to 1865, he kept a detailed log of his deployments and travels, a verbal map his descendants use to march in his boots through the Midwest front. Like Early Republic midwife Martha Ballard's journal, his log contains almost no punctuation and is plagued with erratic spelling and capitalization, although the typed transcript in my record attempts to mitigate the writing errors while retaining the style. The logs record his march from Davenport, Iowa to Fort Randall, South Dakota.

Most days Nicholas comments on the long miles marched, the condition of the muddy or sandy roads through the prairie, and the weather if it was particularly disruptive or pleasant. From small comments where he inserted his personal reflection, it was clear he had a strong relationship with both his fellow soldiers and his wife. He regularly refers to his men as "the boys," as when he met up with them in Iowa City where he "got there and found the boys all right and Glad to See me." When passing through a town with attractive women, he writes "Saw Some hansom girls toDay... the boys had a great time with the girls." However, he had no time for

the girls, as he regularly wrote letters to his beloved wife. “Received three letters from the little Woman at home,” he writes on March 28, 1863, “tickled me most to Death.” Whenever an expected letter from Ellen, who he would occasionally refer to as Nelly, did not arrive, he would comment “felt Disappointed and lonsome.”

The recorded sentiment of the citizens they encountered along their march reflects the feelings Nicholas had towards the Union and the Confederacy. At Union-sympathizing towns or farms that graciously housed the troops, Nicholas found delight in singing patriotic songs under “splendid flags” and feasting with his men. When the troop came across a Secessionist farm, he was blunt: “stole a lot of his chickens.”

The log transcription in my possession does not chronicle further than May 1863, however it is known that once his troop arrived at Fort Randall at Sioux City, South Dakota, they engaged in operations against hostile Sioux Indian forces at several forts across the state until the end of the war in 1865. He returned to his Nelly and children on his farm in Iowa, where his second child Lewis Wallace had been born in his absence in 1862. They then had a third son, Franklin M Overholt, born on June 11, 1866. They would continue to have five more children, totaling eight.

After 1880, the family moved from Iowa to Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, Franklin married Minnie Holton in September 12, 1888 and became an engineer at a flour mill. The couple would have four children, the eldest being Clare Franklin Overholt on April 28, 1889.

Clare grew up to become an electrician, earning a second wage for his household at the age of 21. He met Alice Marie Lucas, daughter of Virginia “Jennie”

Amelia Fletcher and Herbert Lucas, as his dance partner while taking ballroom classes. When he asked for her hand in marriage, she would agree on one condition - that her parents may move in with them once they were married. He agreed to the condition and Clare and Alice were wed on September 12, 1917, moving to a small hobby farm in Edina, Minnesota with Alice's parents. Herbert, though previously a coppersmith, worked with his wife Jennie with the truck farm selling vegetables from the garden.

Clare and Alice were the parents of three children - Donald Hartley, born on June 14, 1918, Clare Fletcher, born on January 14, 1921, and Virginia, born on March 2, 1924. The children did not have fond memories of the farm. Their mother Alice worked as a bookkeeper at St. Barnabas Hospital after having earned her business degree at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and their father Clare was one of the original employees at Honeywell, Minneapolis: a manufacturing company for heat regulators. Therefore, the children were mostly raised by their grandparents who were disciplinary and demanding, especially of young Virginia "Ginnie" when tending the farm and animals. Donald would sit in an apple tree all day to avoid getting punished for misbehavior, and a parrot would mimic Jennie's yelling voice.

During the Great Depression, other relatives would stay with them on the farm, however the small farmhouse was not nearly big enough to house everyone. Grandma Gin showed me this in one of her photo albums, pointing at the grainy black-and-white porch and recalling having to sleep there at night with cousins because there wasn't enough room inside. Her diet during the depression was mostly consist of grains and rice, among the few food staples the family could afford. It was

this revelation that explained why Grandma would avoid burritos or meals with rice when we went out to eat at restaurants around her retirement home - she couldn't stand it; it took her to an unpleasant time of her childhood. This was the first hint I had towards understanding the consequences history can have on family stories and behaviors. Our order at a restaurant in 2009 was influenced by an economic depression in the 1930s.

Donald had met Beatrice Eugenia "Gene" McDougall, a Minnesota School of Business graduate, on a blind date. After graduating from the University of Minnesota with a forestry major Donald became a forest ranger. He proposed to Gene after hiking up the top of a hill in Red Wing, Minnesota, on December 7, 1941, hearing the news of Pearl Harbor once they had climbed down. Ginnie's brothers Donald and Clare joined the war in the summer of 1942, Donald as an officer in the army, Clare as a B-17 pilot for the air force. Ginnie no sooner graduated from St. Louis Park High School when many of her male classmates went to join her brothers in the army.

Donald was stationed at many localities during his service, moving Gene and their new daughters Laura and Susan "Sue" across the country, as Sue remembers. After the war, she spent Christmases with the family at the farmhouse, which had additions built onto it since the depression. Clare settled down with Martha Elise Dobbin and had two children, Kathleen "Katie," born on the day the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and later their son Mark. Ginnie returned from her studies for an accounting degree to marry Curtis Alfred Hagen, a corporeal for the US Army during WWII, on November 6, 1946. She also returned to become a caretaker for her mother Alice as she had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Alice passed away December 3, 1946. In her obituary entry in the newspaper, it tells how proud she was of her sons having served for their country. She left behind her own mark on the genealogical records for the Overholts - she had transcribed the Civil War journal of Nicholas Overholt, the same copy in my possession. Because she died so early in the lives of her grandchildren, however, none are able to recall any stories or moments they may have shared with her. Time can erase stories from memory faster than it can erode ink from newspaper clippings.

Father Clare remarried to Harriet Lucas, Alice's first cousin, some years after Alice's death. Donald continued to move across the state with his family working as a medic. Clare was athletic and an outdoorsman, taking his family to regularly hike and fish. Ginnie and Clare worked at Honeywell as their father had. However, unlike her brothers, she had not yet started a family. It was not for lack of trying - doctors speculated the couple was sterile. Ginnie and Curtis divorced, and Curtis remarried to start his own family. Therefore, Ginnie resolved the problem of reproduction must have been with her.

On June 30, 1961, Ginnie married Donald James Peabody. Just a few months later, her father Clare died on December 11, 1961. She would not have known she would have children that would never get to meet their maternal grandfather until 1964, when she became pregnant with her first son. James Paul was born in Minnesota, and two years later Robert Clare was born in Colorado Springs after the family had moved closer to Ginnie's brother Donald and his family where they owned a hotel in Durango, Colorado. Robert, as his brother before him, was baptized Presbyterian on November 5, 1967 in Colorado before the family moved to Spokane.

It is in these abnormal instances throughout the Overholt lineage that I realize how miniscule the chance that I exist truly are. Had Ginnie been sterile, or stayed in her marriage where she would not have produced children, my father, and therefore I, would not have been born. Had Nicholas Overholt died in action during his battles against hostile Sioux Indians in the Civil War, he would not have returned to father my great-great grandfather. Had John Overholt not fathered his son in the six months before going to fight in the War of 1812, he would not have been able to return to father him after the war ended. Yet, these margins, sometimes by only six months, aligned perfectly to create the stories and documents I find today. If it had not been so, this document would have never been written.

It is also true that I would not have existed if my father did not decide to work as a lifeguard, or if he was not hired by my Uncle Tom to the same lake my mother was assigned. In this regard, I have my uncle to thank for my birth just as much as my parents.

As my parents were raising me in Hawaii, Donald and Ginnie retired to Mesa, Arizona in a retirement neighborhood named Leisure World, along with Ginnie's brother Donald and his wife Gene. Brother Donald died on January 12, 1996, two days before his 78 birthday, and husband Donald died soon after on August 15, 1998. Her brother Clare passed away on September 27, 2001, and his wife Martha a year later on September 10, 2002. To my knowledge, I never got to meet anyone other than my grandfather. A whole generation of stories was fading away before I could hear them.

Ginnie, who my sister and I would call Grandma Gin, was still healthy and active as she lived in Leisure World with her Shih Tzu Truffles. Truffles as a good and patient dog that put up with our child fingers prodding as we tried to pet her, and was even more patient when we brought a dog of our own, a Chihuahua named Popeye, that was hyperactive and curious and ran around her in circles. Grandma Gin would take us out to restaurants or drive us to the pool in her golf cart equipped with multi-colored pool noodles. At night, she would give us Drumsticks as a special treat. The walls and bookshelves were filled with old pictures and photo albums that my sister and I barely paid attention to, except on the occasion that she pulled the pictures out and told us the stories behind them.

Aunt Gene also lived in Leisure World in a condo not too far from Grandma's, and during our summer vacations we would go to Arizona to visit them both in between trips to the community pool. Aunt Gene collected figurines and plushies of elephants that adorned her living room. While the adults talked, she entrusted me with her fragile paper dolls to play with, and I moved the paper cut outs of Victorian ladies and gentlemen around the shelf gingerly, creating their dialogue in my mind. After watching me play so well with the dolls, she gifted me a paper dollhouse, a book that opened to reveal a complete two-story Victorian paper house once it unfolded. On March 15, 2010, Aunt Gene passed away at the age of 94. I still have the paper dollhouse to remember her by, tucked in my closet.

During my first year of college in 2012, Truffles died. Living alone with nothing to care for, my Grandmother's health deteriorated until she eventually suffered from a stroke in 2013. Though alive, she could no longer speak fluent

sentences, and her thoughts had to be interpreted one garbled word at a time. My parents decided she couldn't live along in Arizona anymore, and much to her discontent, she was moved to an elderly home nearby our house in Hillsboro. I travelled to Arizona with my parents to her condo in Leisure World to help clean it out and prepare for renters. It was then that we rediscovered all of the genealogical my grandmother was keeping - the newspaper clippings, the drawn family trees, the earliest known history of the Overholts, and the transcribed Civil War log of Nicholas Claus Overholt. Among the documents were memoirs of her brother Clare's children and grandchildren as they remembered him after his death. This, as of yet, was my last visit I would take to the condo in Arizona.

We discovered the records she kept when I had just started to take an interest in genealogy, and I added these documents to my record collection immediately. My parents and I brought them back with us, along with a 1918 Thomas Edison Amberola she inherited, a music player that uses cylinders instead of records. We brought back the many boxes of cylinders for the Amberola and played them at home, marveling at the old-timey music that it played. I had so many questions to ask of my Grandma, but unfortunately, I couldn't get any more stories from her as she struggled to speak basic sentences. Her health gradually worsened until she passed away with my parents by her bedside in February 2015 at the age of 90.

I don't have many memories of the Overholt's or the Peabody's. The generational gap left me without the oral traditions the Emmerich's of my mother's living maternal family will so often tell. I wonder if this was the purpose of collecting so many genealogical records, to leave behind a history that future generations will

read and glimpse at a narrative that they are merely another chapter of in the absence of living ancestors to tell them. It is what they can do to leave behind their legacy, as Great Uncle Clare's daughter Katie reminisces on in her written memories of her father:

But memories of a person are funny things. They come in flashes, in moments glimpsed, like a slide show, except that there are feelings attached. It's almost like you're living a movie in your mind, remembering like that, in fits and starts.

Yet when it comes to matters of the heart, it isn't "memory of events" that counts in the end. It's the "hum" of a person that's left behind, a melody without words, that sings in the soul.

EMMERICH

During the winter of 1783, the frozen Chesapeake Bay waters locked a ship from Germany in place for two months, tantalizingly close to New York. A German passenger, John Nicolas Emrick, was cooped up in his chilled corner of the ship. This was not his first trip to America. He had already built a promising business there in fur trading during his previous fourteen years in the country, reveling in all the rich opportunities the new nation had to offer.

It was during these stationary months that Emrick met an eager poor boy, the son of a German butcher. Perhaps he saw the same entrepreneurial spirit he harbored as an immigrant, and decided to stoke that flame, considering the boy a potential business partner. Emerick taught him the trade. Once the winter waters thawed and welcomed the ship to American soil, Emerick took the boy to an old furrier, Robert Bowne, to learn how to work as a furrier properly. Three years later, in 1786, the deal was official. The partnership was written, specifying the division of the business: two thirds would rightly be owned by Emerick, and one-third would belong to his young co-partner. Signed John Nikolas Emerick, and John Jacob Astor.

Of course, history will only remember one of these names. We learn it as early as second-grade, removing worse-for-wear social studies textbooks from our cubbies. Flip to Chapter 4. I attended school in an Oregon school district; naturally the teacher tells us to read about the great American expansion President Jefferson secured with the Louisiana Purchase. Read about Lewis and Clarke and Sacagawea as they explore this new land and traverse the Oregon Trail. Read about the brilliant entrepreneur

John Jacob Astor as he brought the fur trading business to the Pacific Northwest, becoming one of the richest men alive. Astoria, Oregon, was named after him.

Remember this. It will be on a test.

In 1816, John Nikolas Emerick died on a fur-laden vessel and was buried in Philadelphia, though conflicting reports say he may have been lost at sea. The will he left behind was born out of the fear he had for his ruthless business partner, revealing a 90-year trust fund of his fortune and estate, Astor being the trustee. After those 90 years, that fortune would have to be paid to the descendants of his two brothers Christopher and Valentine (himself a childless bachelor), and a sum "not exceeding fifteen thousand dollars to be paid to the Astor estate at the time of settlement, such sum to be paid in consideration of all expenses and faithful execution of this will."

The trust was not faithfully executed, and the Emerick's saw none of the fortune that together accounted for at least \$39,000,000. History books will leave Emerick's name off of Astor's biographies. After all, Astor was a self-made man, and only received some help from an anonymous friend. Don't worry, this won't be on the test.

This is the story anyone with the name Emerick, Emmerich, Emerich, Emrick, or Emrich will hear as they grow up, wondering what portion of the fortune they may still be entitled to, and how rich they could have been if it hadn't been for the injustice of it all. I am a Peabody, my mother a Yench, her mother an Emmerich, and we have all inherited this story too. After first listening to the tale of John Nikolas Emerick, and reading the copies of legal papers for myself, I wished I could take the worn books from my second-grade cubby and scribble the name "John Nikolas Emerick"

beneath every page Astor's visage was plastered on. The name Astor is to the Emericks as the name Hatfield is to the McCoy's.

And like the Hatfield's and the McCoy's, we fought - not with blood but with law. The Emerick descendants have filed lawsuit after lawsuit against the Astors, demanding that \$39,000,000 be paid in full. The first of these lawsuits were filed in 1852 (after Astor's death), 1880, and 1905 (the date the trust ran out), with no success. However, when the complaint was filed in 1902, a legal representative of the Astor estate allegedly admitted to the existence of the trust and the fund amounting to \$39,000,000. But the Emerick's, totaling 300 heirs at that date, did not possess the will at the time, and could not prove their claim (Lady).

It wasn't until a fourth lawsuit in 1928 that the Emerick's gained new legal traction. A story almost as romanticized as John Nikolas Emerick's life and death was the story of his found will. In the April of 1927, Edna Carnahan, a descendent of Emerick, found an old inherited leather chest in her attic and decided to rummage through it. Inside was an ancient hidden compartment covered in dust. She opened it to discover the precious papers John Nikolas Emerick left behind - his will, his signed partnership with Astor, and the letter revealing his distrust of his business partner. On such letter writes "Since I am afraid that Astor is not the man I thought him to be at the time, when I made him one-third partner, I am leaving documents in my suitcase, to protect my belongings and my possessions." Unbeknownst to Edna, the contents of this chest were used in the 1852 lawsuit, which had failed because the trust had not yet run out.

So Carnahan went to court, and along with three other Emerick descendants, represented 900 Emerick heirs to the claim of \$39,000,000. Though the claim could have been appraised much higher after a century of interest, accountants were not prepared to state what the new claim would have been. The case was held in the United States District Court in New York, titled Carnahan v. Peabody. The defendant, Charles A. Peabody, was a trustee of various Astor estates. Peabody is my maiden name, and upon discovering the name of the Astor defendant, I researched my paternal ancestry in a panic that I may be linked to the long-perceived family "enemy." After discovering the genealogy record of every Peabody born in the United States before 1900, I realized the connection between me and Charles A. is a mystery beyond our 1600s ancestors, and even if the connection were known, it would be far too distant to matter. No need to swear new allegiances.

The Emerick's presented their findings to the court, accusing the Astor descendants of concealing and refusing the Emerick's their rightful inheritance. However, the court found that time was not on the Emerick's side. When Emerick agreed to a 90 year trust with Astor, he did so out of the best interest for the business, and also to refuse inheritance to his brothers with whom he had a falling out. In the court's view, 90 years would allow the business to grow under Astor, and perhaps out of spite give the inheritance to Emerick's distant descendants so that no living relative he knew at the time could receive it. This, however, was ruled to be invalid because such a passage of time was unlawful, despite there being no laws against it at the date that it was signed.

The court also found it suspect that the lawsuit was filed 111 years too late. If the descendants did not know of John Nikolas Emerick before the discovery of his documents, then they did not have a strong claim. They accused the Emerick's of negligence for not filing a lawsuit earlier during the 90 year trust, unaware of the 1852 lawsuit until years after the case was dismissed. Even if the Emerick's did have a claim, the courts did not want the Astor's to be harassed by hundreds of Emerick's for their share of the fortune, especially as the number of self-proclaimed "Emerick's" were growing after each public report of the case (Lady).

Another lawsuit was filed in 1956, again unsuccessful. My great uncle, Daniel Emmerich, had once collected and accumulated file-cabinets worth of documentation and evidence to support the claim for the Emerick estate. I've heard him tell stories about the hardship of finding enough proof. Because there are Emerick's, Emmerich's, Emerich's, Emmerick's, Emrick's, and Emrich's, and every conceivable variation, the family tree connecting John Nikolas to all of his living heirs is near impossible to track. After each generation that files a lawsuit, the number of heirs grows.

I had once been enchanted with the idea of the Emerick's finally winning a case, finding justice, and distributing the wealth among the rightful heirs, as little a share as it may be. Maybe the next generation's lawsuit would be different, and the Emerick's could find redemption from their reputation as a family of scammers. Maybe I could be the one to trace every living heir to John Nikolas Emerick. The want for overdue justice partially fueled my passion for genealogy, yearning to find

the way I was related to John Nikolas Emerick. After four years, I still don't know. But my passion is now driven by something else.

My mother used to speculate that had the Emerick's rightly inherited the money when the family was entitled to it, there is a good chance several generations would not exist as they do today. My grandmother, a farmer's daughter, might not have married my poor grandfather if she had inherited any substantial wealth. Even if my mother were still born, she might have been able to live comfortably and not have to work a string of odd jobs that eventually led her to my father. And I might not have been here to unnecessarily tell the story of John Nikolas Emerick, as he might have finally been remembered in history textbooks.

John Nikolas Emerick did not receive justice from Astor. Now, over 200 years later, justice might never be dealt with a lawsuit. Even if every Emerick could be accounted for, even if an ancient 90 year unlawful trust could be considered valid against precedent, even if the court ruled in favor of the Emerick's against the powerful family of the Astor's, the money would be so far divided along both families that the share should not be worth the effort. The money would be spent and forgotten.

What won't be forgotten is a unique family story that every descendent will have a chance to romanticize and pass down to the next generation. The Emerick descendants inherit a different fortune. They have knowledge that not even textbooks have, and they don't need to be bound by documents and evidence to tell it. When I had searched for the story online, forums full of Emerick relatives I had never heard

of claimed they were told the same story growing up as I had. It has become more than a business transaction - it has become tradition.

The Emmerichs of Today

On a nondescript day, at an unknown place or date when I am not older than four years old, I have been dressed in my finest pink overalls adorned with Winnie the Pooh brand stitching and my short blonde hair is tied in pigtails. Mama makes sure I look my best for my first visit with Great Grandma Emmerich.

Mama leads me through the doorway, and I see the elderly woman is in a rocking chair at the corner of the room. Her hair is short and curly and creamy white. I have little concept of what a great grandmother is or what that means to me, but Mama and Grandma encourage me to go to her anyway. I shift my shiny white shoes across the carpet as I do, watching as my feet create dark patterns trailed across the floor. I think she is laughing, but I do not look up. I do not make eye contact with strangers.

“Your mama tells me you can sing ‘You Are My Sunshine,’” she says. “Can you sing it for me?”

I nod. Mama sings it often enough as a morning alarm, while she peppers my sleeping cheek with kisses and opens my window blinds to bathe me in daylight. The happy tune has been branded into my consciousness. I recite the chorus from memory while staring at Great Grandma Emmerich’s floral dress draping from her knees. I twiddle my fingers behind my back.

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey.

Despite my stage fright, I have convinced myself I am quite the singer. My timid voice finds strength near the end of the chorus, or perhaps that is her voice singing along with me.

You'll never know dear how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away.

She claps and laughs and I finally look up at her face. Her eyes are bright blue, popping against wrinkled white skin, and her lashes are long. It is a warm face that melts my shyness away. I take to her in an instant.

When I think back to my Emmerich heritage, I am taken to that image of Great Grandma Emmerich sitting in her rocking chair and asking me to sing a song for her. However, Grandma Emmerich was not an Emmerich by birth – her full maiden name was Ruth Catherine Borre, married to Joseph Jacob Emmerich who died long before I was born.

As I gathered research in Chicago, my Grandma Linda found a stack of paper bound by a paper clip, titled “Ruth Catherine Borre Emmerich, Biographical Sketch and Memoirs.” The document contained a thirteen page account of Grandma Emmerich’s life as she recalled it, compiled by a Jeri Monroe in March 2008.

Grandma Emmerich recounts her birth on November 7, 1916, born in a big red house on “Route 22 East of Highway 83 in what is now the Village of Long Grove.” Her mother was Catherine “Katie” Louise Barg born on May 30, 1889 in Evanston, Illinois, and her father was Peter Joseph Borre born on August 29, 1889 in

Cook County, Illinois. It was in Cook County that Peter worked on his local family farm along with his parents.

Ruth Catherine Borre, christened in the Wilmette Catholic church, was the third of four children. The eldest, Bernard “Barney” John, was born on February 12, 1913 in Gross Point, Illinois, followed by his sister Helen Mary on August 20 1914 in Cook County. The youngest sibling was Roy Henry, born March 8, 1918, also in Cook County.

Ruth remembers living with her paternal grandparents who she knew as Mary and John Borre. Mary was born Mary Anna Peyo on April 27, 1866, and John Borre was born on June 20, 1866. Though both were born in Gross Point, Illinois, Ruth recalls her Grandmother Mary to have spoken only German. “When my sister Helen and I tried to understand her,” she remembers, “sometimes we would just giggle and that would really irritate my grandmother.” She also remembers Mary only sitting, doing nothing except order her or her siblings to fetch her some water, which required them to trudge out to the barn.

Both Mary and John lived with them until their deaths. Ruth and her siblings had even witnessed their grandfather’s embalming as they held his visitation at the house, and they were scared by the buckets of blood that were taken outside. They refused to travel to the basement alone, afraid of their grandfather’s ghost.

At the age of five, Ruth and her family moved to a white farmhouse on Arlington Heights Road with sixty acres that her father had bought. It was an old and established farmhouse, estimated to have been built in the 1840s, and Ruth had come to know it as the Borre farm. They became vegetable farmers, also known as

“truck farmers.” Growing up with rigorous farm chores, Ruth was a self-proclaimed tomboy. She ran and weeded and planted and trimmed and competed with the German farmhand her father had hired just to prove she could do the work better. She never played with dolls and instead preferred football, baseball, and boxing. She also fostered a love for music and dancing, even becoming one of few female drummers of her age.

While the eldest of her siblings attended school at Gridley, Ruth and her younger brother Roy attended Long Grove along Arlington Heights Road. Both were one-room schoolhouses. Walking to school was a daunting experience in winter – with only a dress, black bloomers, and boots, she trudged through snow that would pack into her boots and would need thawing by the stove.

The family was not rich – as Ruth says, “We were really quite poor when I was a kid; lots of people were then, but we always had plenty to eat and we had family. Family is still very, very important to me.” She revels in her memories of Sunday dinners as her mother slaved over the duck and chicken meals or the Christmas festivities as her mother baked cookies and decorated the tree. They would only receive one gift on Christmas, usually homemade, and would only get candy on Christmas or Easter. On Christmas morning they would hop into their father’s hay-covered sleigh for the four o’clock mass, and the horses would trot with jingle bells fastened to their necks.

Around the age of fifteen, Ruth started to take jobs doing housework for families to earn money, listing her responsibilities such as cleaning, washing, cooking, and gardening. She recalls working for a few families for around \$6.00 a

week. On one night during her housework, she went outside to burn trash in a trash barrel, accidentally sending sparks and paper flying onto the family's land. A fire had caught. Neighbors had come to aid her with their hoses, and Ruth called the fire department to quell the growing fire. The family congratulated her on her quick thinking once the fire was out and no one was hurt, but she says she'll never forget how she caused a total of twenty acres to go up in flames.

Also around the age of fifteen, Ruth met Joe Emmerich. She did not elaborate on the occurrence, only adding that she "knew that I wanted to be his wife someday."

Joseph Jacob Emmerich was born on April 11, 1911 in Aptakisic, Illinois to Joseph Andrew Emmerich and Christine Elizabeth Schmitt. Joseph Andrew was the son of Peter Emrick, who had immigrated to America from Germany. Peter was born in Schweich, Germany in 1839 to parents Peter Mathias Emrick and Catherina Dixius. Through Peter Mathias, I have been able to track several more generations of potential Emerick line all the way to a Hans Emrick of Germany, 1502.

Peter married Mary Murer, another German, on November 29, 1866 before leaving together for America. Once settled into the city of Chicago, Peter and Mary began to grow their family to a massive size. Joseph Andrew was born in 1879, the last of six children. Unlike subsequent generations, however, the number of children was not justified for farm labor as was customary - Peter Emrick, or Emmerich as it would be changed between the 1870 and 1880 census, was a painter.

Joseph Andrew married Christine Elizabeth Schmitt on February 28, 1905 and became a farmer. The couple were parents of seven children - Leo in 1906, Rosalie E in 1907, Louise M in 1910, Joseph Jacob in 1911, Victor H in 1913, Albert Leonard

in 1916, and Marie Catherine in 1918. Peter Emmerich had died on August 26, 1913. Joseph Andrew later became a steam fitter for the plumbing industry while many of his sons were skilled as carpenters or millers, including Joseph Jacob.

After saving up money from her housework jobs, Ruth and Joe married on a cold Wednesday on April 28, 1937. Joe, she said, had no money as he gave all his earning to his parents until the wedding. Nevertheless, they held a reception with half a barrel of beer and danced into evening.

While Ruth was pregnant with her first child, Joe lost his full time job and the two moved back into the Borre farmhouse. James Bernard “Jim,” was born in 1938. The family moved to a small white house south of the family farm and west side of Arlington Heights Road. Ruth gave birth to her second child and my grandmother Mary Linda on June 4, 1939. She also had a miscarriage while living in this house.

Now a family of four, they moved into the town of Long Grove and rented a house off the back road across from the Village Tavern, where Ruth worked as a waitress. Though only there for a few months, Ruth gave birth to her third child while living here, John H “Jack” on September 18, 1941.

Upon yet another move, they rented a house from a Mr. Firnbach on Buffalo Grove Road for thirty dollars a month. It was close to the St. Mary’s church, and the neighboring Firnbach’s twelve children gave her own children plenty of company. Once they moved in, however, Ruth soon found welts on her arms and legs from the fleas that infested the house, and she took on the challenge of ridding the house of them. She gave birth to her fourth and final child, Daniel Bernard “Dan,” on March 15, 1943.

Linda has little memory of her grandfather Joseph Andrew. He always had a pipe in his mouth. Towards the end of his life he had been suffering from cancer and she remembers his face shrouded by bandages, revealing only his eyes. Joseph Andrew died on October 6, 1943 and was buried at St. Mary's Cemetery, where many Emmerich's have been buried since. Upon one visit to the cemetery when I was young, every other gravestone we passed by carried with it a story from my grandmother and great grandmother - either as a relative or a neighbor.

It was around this time that World War II was raging in the Pacific, and so her husband Joe was called into military service. Joe had served on PT boats and wrote to Ruth every day. Meanwhile Ruth received \$130 per month from the military and used every penny on her and her four children and all the medical expenses that arose. For a short time, her sister Helen had moved in since her husband, a carpenter named Gus Salmen who she had married on February 3 1940, had also been called into service. However, with three children of her own – Carol, David, and Glen – Ruth asked her to move into their mother's house. "It made me crazy with all those little children and their bickering," Ruth says.

Joe was not the only one of his siblings to serve in the war. His brother Albert, godfather to his daughter Linda, had also been drafted. He was a handsome, blond man as my grandmother described him, but Albert would not return to see her. On June 24, 1944, Albert gave his life on Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands fighting in the Pacific at the age of 27. I once visited the World War II Memorial on a field trip to Washington DC, a wall that spans the landscape and is covered with golden stars, each signifying 100 fallen soldiers in the war, and I stared at one singular star to

remember the one hundredth of it that my Great Uncle Albert would represent. Joe, however, was able to return home to his family. Linda remembers answering the door to find the stranger who claimed to be her father. It wasn't until Linda asked her mother to come to the door was he let inside. After the war Joe became a machinist, changing parts for machines and making saw blades.

Linda went to school at St. Mary's grade school and remembered it not uncommon to find classmates that were related to her in some way. She would visit with many of her aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her Uncle Leo married a large, happy woman named Edna, adopted a daughter, and lived off of 100 acres of woods as a farmer, hunter, and fisherman. Uncle Victor was a nice, quiet man and married Helen Josephine Jiran on June 30, 1945. Aunt Rosalie married Michael Miller, a metal spinner and bar owner, and with him had five children - Shirley, Ronald, Jeanette, Rosemary, and Sue. Aunt Marie married Ferdinand Joseph "Fred" Weidner on May 24, 1947 and with him also had several children. Aunt Louise, however, would never be married. She had fallen in love with a train engineer the family affectionately called "Uncle Jack" as he would attend family gatherings by her side. Yet, he was already married to another woman, separated but not divorced as it was frowned upon in the Catholic Church.

Linda had many memories of the Borre farm, playing with her brothers. Their grandmother was a city girl and kept her own rock garden on the farm. The family would hire hobos from the nearby train to work on the farm in return for shelter and meals. Among the many farm and race animals on the farm were sows that the boys tried to ride, and were soon scolded for doing so. During one particularly

traumatizing visit, Linda was chased up a tree by a bull, waiting until her mother and grandmother could distract the bull long enough to rescue her.

At home, Linda attended Eli Vernon high school. She began her first job at Palwaukee Municipal Airport (now known as Chicago Executive Airport) and spent a year registering and timing flying students during their training. Her brothers, Jim, Jack, and Dan, all inherited the talent of a carpenter. They also all married early before the age of 20. Jim married Mary Barbara Hermes, Jack married Virginia "Gin" who later became my mother's godmother, and Dan married Joan Marie Lessard.

On April 6, 1955, Victor died suddenly of a brain aneurism. Three years later, his mother Christine died of a heart attack on July 3, 1958. Meanwhile, Linda's brothers were starting their own families. Jim became a father to Dorothy Marie in 1960, Diane Ruth in 1961, and Joseph Henry in 1963. Another son, James Bernard Jr., was born in July of 1966 but died a victim of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) September of the same year. Jack had four sons - Ronald, Kenny, Allan, and Brian, as well as an adopted daughter Jenny. Dan was a father to two sons, Michael "Mike" and Daniel, also known as Danny or Little Dan. Linda started her own family with her husband Thomas Yench and her two daughters, Alicia and Maureen "Rene," my mother.

During Linda's marriage she made her living doing housework for other families. One of her clients, Bonnie Anderson, traded her housekeeping services for art lessons, sparking Linda's passion for painting. Her house in Rolling Meadows too small for two children and a German Shepherd named Lady who played with young Alicia and Rene until it was a hassle to keep her. In need of an addition, Uncle Gus,

with the help of his son Glen, built a family room onto her home in Rolling Meadows which still stands to this day, its dark wood paneled walls adorned with her many framed painted portraits.

Rene remembers good times with her cousins, especially Danny, who had only been born a year before her. She helped her Grandpa Joe build a cabinet, feeling confident that she had contributed to his good work with a few measures of wood, and her Aunt Louise entrusted her with her collection of porcelain dolls to play with. The kids would visit their Grandma Ruth and Grandpa Joe's cabin, which they had built themselves on a lake in Spooner, Wisconsin. In the summer and on Rene's birthday they would vacation at the cabin, diving off the wooden dock into the lake. Alicia recalls her Grandma Ruth play 8-tracks of Tom Jones and light up the room with her dancing. During the winter relatives including Uncle Leo would use the frozen lake for ice fishing.

However, the family would experience many losses within the decade. Leo's wife Edna died in 1968, and Ruth's mother Catherine died on April 15, 1969. After her death, her husband Peter moved into their daughter Helen's house, but had become distraught over his wife's death. He died later that year on November 12. Marie Weidner lost her son in a car accident Dennis on October 23, 1971, when he was only 19. Rosalie's daughter Shirley passed away in April 1973, and her husband Michael passed a month later in May. Five years after losing both of her parents, Ruth also lost her husband, Joseph Jacob Emmerich, on January 28, 1974. No longer wanting to upkeep the summer cabin in Wisconsin by herself, she had sold it. Leo

died on March 17, 1975, and my mother remembers how devastated she was after learning of her Aunt Louise's death to colon cancer on September 5, 1976.

After Linda's divorce, she became a dental assistant for two years until she was offered a job working as an art instructor at Main Street Art Center. It is here where I had started taking art lessons from her. Although Rene and her husband Robert Peabody were raising me and my sister in Hillsboro, Oregon, we would visit Chicago every few years to visit the large extended family. The passion my Grandma Linda had for drawing realistic forms and faces was one she had instilled in me, and it is still a hobby for me. My Aunt Alicia also had a talent for painting, and her paintings hang along the same wall as my Grandma's.

Separate from our family in Chicago, my cousins, my sister, and I were raised in Oregon. For holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas we would gather in either Hillsboro or Prineville for a feast. Cousin Megan would be out with friends and I would stay with my cousin Jacob while he was playing video games, which fostered my competitive nature. Our Uncle Tom would shovel and pack the snow on the hills of his backyard to create a smooth slope my sister and I could sled down all afternoon. Occasionally Grandma Linda would fly to Oregon with her husband Micheal Lukachik, a ford car salesman she had married on May 13, after they had been introduced by mutual friends. We would spend the days with Grandma Linda and Grandpa Mike learning card games or taking art lessons.

So far removed from my connections in Chicago, I would not fully understand the names of relatives that were beginning to pass away. Before my birth, Marie Catherine Weidner had died on November 13, 1987 and her sister Rosalie on August

24, 1991. Roy Borre had died on March 29, 1992, the same year as his son, Alan Roy who had died on May 4. Roy's wife Alvira decided to remarry to Stanley Raupp on November 27, 1993, however she passed a few months later on July 3, 1994. Barney Borre died on January 14, 1994. Linda's brother Jack succumbed to cancer on August 9, 2003. Rosalie's daughters Jeanette and Rosemary Corrine passed away on May 28, 2007 and August 23, 2008 respectively.

I had begun to understand the names after Uncle Dan's wife Joan passed away on May 20, 2011. My mother and I visited Chicago after Joan's passing and met with Uncle Dan in his large, hand-built home. It was by this time that I had developed an interest in genealogy, prompted by the desire to log every Emmerich for the sake of the long-told Astor story. Uncle Dan had collected records of the Astor account during his own search and obliged to tell me the stories he had heard as we sat by his kitchen counter overlooking the wide open windows to the sprawling green lawn.

Great-Grandma Ruth at the time was 95 years old and suffering from ailments in her old age including hip replacements. Understanding this may be my last visit with Grandma Ruth, we gathered in her retirement home and feasted on meals made with her own recipes. I remember her room decorated with several wolf ornaments, from wolf beanie babies on the recliner to decorative dishes displayed on the wall depicting wolves howling at a full moon. We left with the recipe of one of her best dessert dishes: chocolate éclair cake. She was still as active as ever, participating in the bingo nights and rummy games with the other home residents.

She would continue to write to all of her family, sending out at least seventy greeting cards a year to her children, grandchildren, and dozens great-grandchildren.

One particular letter moved me to tears, as she confessed her preference to die than the loss of her legs and ability to move and dance. She recalls her reaction to the doctor's suggestion to remove her legs in her memoir: "I said absolutely no!" To honor the time I shared with her when I was young, I sang a minor key version of "You Are My Sunshine" in the talent show my senior year at Century High School.

Grandma Ruth's condition worsened, and Linda took her mother in to live with her. On January 25, 2014, Ruth Catherine had passed away at the age of 97. My mother returned to Chicago for the funeral.

Two years later, I travelled to Chicago myself for a week to collect records and stories from the Emmerich's that still lived there. I visited my Great Uncle Dan and Great Aunt Mary Ann to collect stories from the Emmerich's and Yench's respectively. My Grandma Linda and Grandpa Mike housed me and examined the records and photos they had in cabinets and albums. It was in these records that I was able to find Ruth's memoir which became integral to building my knowledge of the Emmerich's.

The memoir ends, "I know that I have been blessed."

REFLECTION

When creating the narrative of my family from the records I had, originally I saw was the chronological list names and dates that eventually ended with those of me and my sister. As I built it, however, it became clear that this interweaving of lives was more complex than a list. Themes emerged about names and stories and generations, about the silences of world history and the cosmological chances that the people alive today exist as they do. Where I had thought branches were scarce, fruit were plentiful if I searched within the spaces. Where I was confused by the tangle of leaves and branches, the tree became clearer as I made sense of a single vine to lead me through the thicket. The research of context as well as the focus of a significant narrative helped me view the tree in its entirety. In this process, I realize I filled not only the silence of my family history, but also my own silence in the family history yet to come. I see a peeking branch from the trunk, still new and sprouting its own fruit. This view of the tree is just as much my legacy, left behind for future generations, as the one I still have to create for myself.

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