



[www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org)

# CCGS NEWS

*A Publication of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society*

**Volume 9 Issue 4 April 2022**

**Please Join us at our Next Meeting  
Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM, Eastern Time**

Our meeting will be brought to you via [Zoom](#).

Members will receive an email one week before the meeting with an invitation and registration link.

Non-members are asked to email us at [info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org) to receive a registration link.

## *Alien Registration Files with Carol Kostakos Petranek*



The Alien Registration Act of 1940 was a WWII national security measure which directly impacted immigrants who planned to remain in the United States for thirty days or longer. This presentation will examine this often-overlooked resource which may be the key to finding an immigrant ancestor's original surname and village of origin.

**Carol Kostakos Petranek** serves as a Co-Director of the Washington, D.C. Family History Center where she coordinates classes, conferences and community outreach projects. She is a Citizen Archivist at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and volunteers as a Genealogy Aid in the Research Room. Carol is the Volunteer

Coordinator for a FamilySearch/Maryland Archive digitization project of Probate and Estate Records. She is a Research Specialist in Hellenic (Greek) Genealogy and supports this community through her participation in websites, conferences and lectures. Carol gives presentations on various genealogy topics and writes and edits personal and family histories.

## Message from the CCGS President, Walter Murphy

At the expense of stating the obvious, Spring is here and will remain so for the next three months. Over those same three months, a lot of activity will be happening at CCGS in particular and genealogy in general.

By the time you read this, the password for the Members Section on our website ([capecodgenealogy.org](http://capecodgenealogy.org)) will have been changed. This is an annual occurrence and a message was sent to all members revealing the new password. Please don't share it with non-members.

Over the past few months, the Nominating Committee was hard at work developing the slate of names for the seven positions that are up for election this year. The election typically happens at our June Annual Meeting; the slate will be shared with members ahead of time.

Meanwhile, our Bylaws Committee has also been hard at work over the past few months conducting a thorough review of the Society's bylaws. The plan is to have the new bylaws reviewed and adopted by the Board and then presented to the membership for ratification. My hope is that they will be sent to each member by mid-May in anticipation of a ratification vote at the June Annual Meeting.



**April is National Volunteer Month.** While the roles for CCGS volunteers have changed over the past two years, many of our volunteers have continued to keep a number of activities going. Our website, our Facebook page, the Newsletter, the Journal, and SIGs have not missed a beat. In addition, our library recently re-opened and is better than ever.

These are all evidence of our vibrant Society. *Every* position in our organization is held by a volunteer. While we have not been able to have an in-person meeting to show our appreciation, every volunteer should know that their contribution plays an important role in CCGS's well-being. Thank you for doing what you do.

From a more general genealogy perspective, the 1950 census is here. It only took 72 years! My guess is that this will be the first appearance in a census for many CCGS members (including me). The new census will be a good reason to take advantage of our updated library. As I mentioned in last month's message, we have brand new computers. The furniture and books have been rearranged to improve social distancing. And we have installed an air purifier. All of this should make both volunteers and patrons comfortable. So, if you think you might need some help, make an appointment ([librarian@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:librarian@capecodgenealogy.org)) and our volunteers will be happy to assist you.

That's all for now. Please remember to stay *Safe*, and stay *Healthy*.

Walter ([wgmgenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:wgmgenealogy@gmail.com))



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***Special Announcement  
From Computer SIG Leader, Bob Oppenheim***

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness (RAOGK) is an interesting site. It is a place where you might find a volunteer who will take a picture or look up a record for you. Perhaps equally important, there are research guides on a number of location and record type areas that might prove to be extremely useful. Find them at:

<https://raogk.org/>

You also have the option of signing up to be one of the volunteers. Read the conditions and the FAQs carefully before you do this.

**Have you heard about the  
new restaurant called Karma?**

**There is no menu.  
You get what you deserve.**

***And Another Special Announcement  
from Computer SIG Leader, Bob Oppenheim***

Here is a site that is a must visit if you are contemplating a life of crime or if, for any other reason, you would prefer to remain clandestine in your whereabouts. On the other hand, it may be exactly the place that you want to know about if you need to establish your alibi for why it could not possibly have been you that did the dirty deed on April 28, 2016 (or some other date post 2013—it's really flexible on that point).

Google: [timeline.google.com](https://timeline.google.com)

**Please Welcome  
*New Members***

**Betsy Wheeler  
Molly Chapman  
Beverly Snow  
Jennifer Freeman  
Kevin Deneen  
Tim and Deborah King**

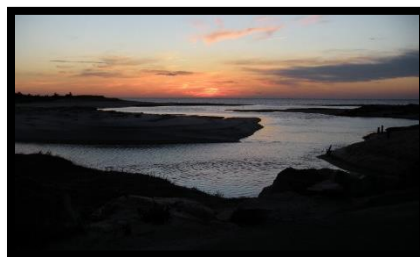
**“Golden Ticket”  
Recipients,  
Three Generations:  
Lloyd Folger (Dad)  
Julie O’Leary (Daughter)  
Julie’s Three Children**

**Final Farewell  
Irene J. Landenberger  
1934 – 2022**

Irene Landenberger, of South Yarmouth, passed away on February 25, 2022.

Irene was a current member of the Society,  
and along with genealogy, enjoyed  
photography, playing Scrabble and MahJong  
and was a regular at her local library.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to her six children and many grands and greats.



**Sunset at Paine’s Creek Landing, Brewster**

## Program Summary, March 15, 2022

Written by *David Martin*

The meeting recording is available for viewing in the Members Section of the CCGS website.

[www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org)



Using *LearnForeverLearn*

**Examine your Family Tree  
for Endogamy  
and Pedigree Collapse  
with  
L. Ray Sears, III**

The Society's monthly program for March 2022 featured a presentation by L. Ray Sears, a long-time member of the Society and Editor of the Society's Journal. Ray has been doing family research since the 1970s and has accumulated a mass of data on **Sears** and related lines of Cape Cod. In the process of analysis, he has discovered what is a common feature of historic families in regions where a great deal of intermarriage has occurred in past generations, with Cape Cod as one of the prime examples in the United States.

Pedigree collapse is a term that refers to a situation where an ancestor occurs more than once—sometimes multiple times—in the same family tree of an individual. On Cape Cod, pedigree collapse is historically common because of many cousin marriages among the descendants of the early (and some later) settlers.

To find pedigree collapse, start by doing a DNA test at 23andMe or FTDNA (Family Tree); then report the results to GEDMATCH. Continue by doing research on the ancestors, and export the data to a GEDCOM. Upload the GEDCOM to GEDMATCH, and locate cousins. Use Family Tree Explorer as the next analytical tool.

Everyone ultimately has pedigree collapse, most often by the 30<sup>th</sup> generation. However, in today's world with more people marrying individuals whose

background is geographically far removed, pedigree collapse may be postponed to many more generations back than 30.

To find your pedigree collapse, list your parents and their siblings, aunts, uncles, and their children. Continue by doing the same for grandparents' siblings, great aunts, great uncles, and second cousins. Look for the siblings of spouses also, and then the ancestors of all of these. These relationships occur because of what Elizabeth Shown Mills has called "FAN"—the Friends, Associates, and Neighbors with whom an individual interacted during their lifetimes.

Consanguinity occurs when two people, who are apparently unrelated, turn out to have a common ancestor. Look for individuals in your family tree who have a common ancestor, and also look to see how many of their cousins were living in that locale at the same time.

Wikitree can be used to create a GEDCOM; download all of the descendants of a person. There are different genealogical software which can create a family tree, one of which is Family Tree Explorer. Create a GEDCOM on Family Tree Maker. One should then analyze the GEDCOM.

Another useful tool is:

[https:// learnforeverlearn.com/ancestors](https://learnforeverlearn.com/ancestors). One should focus on MetaData—information about your data. Also use ExposeData to show parallel contemporary events in the lifeline of an ancestor. Another step is to use Validation Data to check on the reasonableness and credibility of one's data.

The percentage of DNA in common between two people is higher than expected for two random individuals if the two people are associated because of pedigree collapse. The Cousin Calculator feature is another useful tool, which immediately shows how two individuals are related to each other, however remotely, e.g., third cousins, twice-removed, etc., which one would not see immediately when looking at a tree. Thus, pedigree collapse clearly has an effect on DNA relationships.



# Celebrating 50 Years



## Cape Cod Genealogical Society, Inc.

*Building Families Through Genealogy*

*Past ~ Present ~ Future*

1971 ~ 2021 ~ 2071



### Uncover Your Family's History

at the

Cape Cod Genealogical Society Library Research Center

At the Dennis Public Library

*~ Discover the Dash of Your Ancestors' Lives! ~*

DENNIS PORT, Massachusetts – MARCH 2022 – If you're wondering about your ancestral roots but don't know where to start or want to break down challenging genealogical brick walls, drop by the **Cape Cod Genealogical Society Library Research Center at the Dennis Public Library** on 5 Hall Street. Volunteers from the Cape Cod Genealogical Society are on hand to help you with your research on Thursdays from 1 – 4 pm.

The library subscribes to services like **Ancestry® Library Edition** and **American Ancestors: The New England Genealogical Society** and is also a **FamilySearch Affiliate Library** that powers genealogical research to the world's top universities, schools, and genealogy centers. Simple to use, *Ancestry® Library Edition*, *American Ancestors*, and *FamilySearch* databases are stocked with billions of records such as census data, city directories, cemeteries, wills, probates, and immigration information. The Dennis Public Library also has digitized newspaper archives that can be gold mines for family historians.

The Cape Cod Genealogical Society maintains a non-circulating library of genealogical resources within the **Cape Cod Genealogical Society Library Research Center at the Dennis Public Library**. The holdings include a varied wealth of resources relating to genealogical research, with an emphasis on Cape Cod. A special partnership with *FamilySearch* allows patrons to access many records not available through public means. The library is staffed by knowledgeable volunteers willing to help anyone requesting assistance. There are two computers allowing patrons to access many popular genealogical databases. The current catalog can be found on *LibraryThing.com* – ID **CCGSLibrary**.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DASH! Too often, researchers focus on the birth and death dates to measure a person's life. However, there is so much more! Discover the stories of the people who came before you, discover the people in their neighborhood, their joys and sorrows, and journeys.

If you would like to book a consultation with one of the  
Cape Cod Genealogical Society Volunteers,  
schedule a session through our online booking system:

<https://tinyurl.com/yh76hyys>.



For additional information, please contact Kathleen Doherty Kaldis at [Librarian@CapeCodGenealogy.org](mailto:Librarian@CapeCodGenealogy.org)

***Become a member today!***

**Cape Cod Genealogical Society**

[www.CapeCodGenealogy.org](http://www.CapeCodGenealogy.org)

Rogers, F. Kimball. Provincetown. Boston, 1877. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/75694545/>.



Coming Soon!  
Opening Day at Fenway Park

Friday, April 15, 2:10 PM  
Minnesota Twins at Boston Red Sox

## Accessing Local Newspapers: The Barnstable Patriot and the Yarmouth Register

For several years now, since all back issues of the *Barnstable Patriot* and the *Yarmouth Register* have been digitized, it is possible to access those historic newspapers through a connection with some local Cape Cod libraries.

Back issues, dating to the start year of the *Barnstable Patriot* in 1830 and the *Yarmouth Register* dating from its beginning in 1836, provide valuable genealogical information about Cape-wide individuals – neither newspaper was centered only on Barnstable and Yarmouth.

The Dennis Public Library, Hall Street in Dennis Port, is one of those libraries, and is also the location of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society's genealogy library within the larger library.

Society members are encouraged to take advantage of this valuable Cape Cod repository by connecting through Dennis Public Library as a part of the Society's partnership with that Library.

Log onto [www.DennisPublicLibrary.org](http://www.DennisPublicLibrary.org), and go to the upper tab on Special Collections; on the right side of that page will be a heading for Digital Newspapers—just click on that and follow the instructions to access the back issues of either the *Register* or the *Patriot*.

# *A Case of Multiple Identity – Solving a Mystery*

by David Martin

Zoom Webinar

Friday, *April 8*

12:00 Noon to 1:00 PM, Eastern Time

*The Cape Cod Tufts Club* extends a special invitation to CCGS members and friends, and also invites alumni, parents, friends of Tufts and members of the Intercollegiate Alumni of Cape Cod and Islands and the general public, to learn how to solve a genealogical puzzle that has roots that date back to the 1800s.

The speaker, Professor/Dean Emeritus from Gallaudet University, *Dr. David Martin*, will present on a long-standing mystery that is near and dear to his heart. A mid-19th century ancestor seemed to have no identifiable parents, a very common name, and many possible options for what could be true.

Starting with very little information, the investigator on the case pursued many avenues involving probates, divorce records, medical records, Native American archives, DNA and military pension records. The most important clue discovered? A Civil War Military Pension application from service in the Union Navy. This document, among other things, revealed a concussion this relative sustained from the cannons on the ironclad ship, the *Monitor*, as it battled with the South's ironclad vessel, the *Merrimack*. Through many indirect "detective" leads and blind alleys, the enigma was finally solved with a variety of techniques that may help others to track down elusive ancestors.



This event will be held via Zoom webinar. Please join us! To register, please visit this link:

<https://rsvp.tufts.edu/event/56da03f0-80d2-4073-9d19-780c33972038/summary>



**About Dr. David S. Martin:** David is Professor/Dean Emeritus from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. He graduated from Yale with a B.A., holds a Master's and Certificate of Advanced Study degrees from the Harvard School of Education, and the Ph.D. from Boston College. His interests involve genealogy, local history, astronomy, and the organ; he is the current Treasurer of the Yale Club of Cape Cod, the President of the Marston Mills Historical Society, and a current board member of CCGS. He coordinated a Cape-wide Symposium in late 2020 on The Significance of Cape Cod in the Plimoth Colony, and will draw on that information for his presentation.



## SIGs – Special Interest Groups

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)** are informal member gatherings for the purpose of sharing information, research techniques, data and references, regarding specific topics or geographical areas. For more information, please email the SIG leader or visit our website at [www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org).



### Cape Cod Families

Leader **Bebe Brock** [crosby1635@gmail.com](mailto:crosby1635@gmail.com) advises that all are working independently, and carefully following the on-going announcements from Sturgis Library, whether open or not (where the group meets) and adhering to any mask requirements. If all goes well, Bebe will be holding meetings, post-COVID on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1:00 PM and will let her group know.

### Computer Users

Leader **Bob Oppenheim** [roppen@msn.com](mailto:roppen@msn.com) holds a meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM (except in July and August). PRE-COVID, these meetings were held at the Dennis Public Library, 5 Hall Street, Dennis Port. We have been meeting virtually using Zoom during COVID. The library has just re-opened and we will eventually return to the library, but **not for our April 2022 meeting**. When we do re-convene, meetings will be simulcast on Zoom and all of the SIG members will receive an invitation to participate virtually. Any changes to this arrangement will be emailed to the membership and published in the Newsletter.

***The next Computer SIG will be held on [Tuesday, April 12 at 10:00 AM](#). It will be a Zoom meeting. The plan is to do a nuts-and-bolts comparison of RootsMagic 8 and Family Tree Maker, the two most-used genealogy platforms by our members.***

### DNA

Leader **Walter Murphy** [wmgenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:wmgenealogy@gmail.com) holds a Zoom meeting every other month on the first Tuesday at 1:30 PM. Prior to the Zoom meeting, he sends out both an agenda and a Zoom invitation to register. This is an active group that typically attracts participants of all levels of interest and expertise to each meeting. All sessions begin with a question-and-answer roundtable discussion, divided into two sections: DNA 101 questions/problems followed by time for “old hands.” The discussion period is followed by topics of interest.

***April’s Meeting ([Tuesday, April 5 at 1:30 PM](#)) will continue March’s discussion on triangulation and DNA Painter. The agenda contains relevant links to Roots Tech presentations. March’s attendees were assigned homework, so, hopefully, we will have some fun with that.***

## German

Leader **Ann Croston** [acroston125@comcast.net](mailto:acroston125@comcast.net) holds Zoom meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM. Ann communicates via email and on our Facebook page, Cape Cod Genealogical Society - German SIG, when items of interest come up.

*The next German SIG will be held on **Tuesday, April 5 at 10:00 AM**. There will be a “deep dive” into German Local History to put your ancestors in context. A discussion will take place about the April Worksheet. How can you share your research? What did you focus on? Please bring your suggestions to the group.*

## Irish Research

Leader **Pat Flaherty** [patcarolegenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:patcarolegenealogy@gmail.com) usually holds a Zoom meeting on the fourth Monday of the month at 10:00 AM, however, gatherings will now be quarterly. Anyone with an interest in Irish genealogy is most welcome. We have members with lots of experience who can help those with little experience. It is a good combination. Our sessions usually include a presentation from a member on available records (either in the United States or in Ireland). We also share strategies for finding those elusive Irish ancestors wherever they may be lurking. There is always time for good discussions during which questions are answered and experiences are shared.

*The next Irish SIG will be held on **Monday, June 27 at 10:00 AM**.*

## Writers

Leader **Pippa Dodd Ryan** [pippa.doddryan@gmail.com](mailto:pippa.doddryan@gmail.com) holds a Zoom meeting on the third Friday of the month at 10:00 AM. Anyone with an interest in sharing their writing with the group regarding personal genealogy or about family members (including pets), anything historical, current event topics, articles of personal satisfaction and more are most welcome. We explore many styles of writing and narrative, even poetry and discovered family letters, as well as discuss the possibilities of publication. Everyone is welcome to participate and share their work, writing tips and techniques. If you do not have anything to share, join us anyway. You may become inspired!

*The next Writers SIG will be held on **Friday, April 15 at 10:00 AM**.*



# CCGS Calendar

Tuesday, April 5  
German SIG, 10:00 AM

Tuesday, April 5  
DNA SIG, 1:30 PM

Wednesday, April 6  
Board Meeting, 2:00 PM

Tuesday, April 12  
Computer SIG, 10:00 AM

Friday, April 15  
Writers SIG, 10:00 AM

Tuesday, April 19  
Monthly Meeting 7:00 PM  
Carol Kostakos Petranek  
Alien Registration Files

Tuesday, May 17  
Monthly Meeting, 7:00 PM  
Dennis Picard  
Daily Life in the U.S. Lifesaving Service  
Along the Coast of New England in the  
19<sup>th</sup> Century

Tuesday, June 21  
Annual Meeting, 7:00 PM  
Judy G. Russell, JD, CG, CGL  
NARA MythBusters:  
Your Family IS in the Archives

Do you have a comment or suggestion?

Perhaps you would like to have an article considered for submission in the Newsletter?

If so, please drop an email to [info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org) and in the subject line, write:  
*For Newsletter Editor*

Thank you,  
Newsletter Editor, Pam Eaton

## **Special Editor's Note**

**Last month, notice was given of the passing of CCGS Member John Bimshas, 1932 – 2022.**

**The Cape Cod Times on-line obituary can be read here:  
<https://www.capecodtimes.com/obituaries/p0188773>**

**At the time, several board members remarked on what an incredible life John Bimshas had. He and his family suffered in Lithuania, under the Soviet and Nazi occupation during WWII. He and his family were able to make their escape and eventually immigrated to the United States. Mr. Bimshas went on to have a remarkable life. He was a true patriot to his adopted country, the United States.**

**In researching past CCGS Bulletin articles, I discovered a piece that Mr. Bimshas wrote, excerpts from a memoir he shared with his family.**

**The following can be found in the CCGS Bulletin (under the Members' Page), Fall 2004.**

**Please excuse the rough draft of his document. It was scanned in, "as is," from the Bulletin.**

**With appreciation to the Bulletin Editor, L. Ray Sears.**



## My Journey to Freedom

by

John Bimshas

In May, 1949, the U.S. Army transport *General Robert L. Howze* docked at Boston Harbor. Aboard were over 900 refugees—escapees from war-torn Europe. These Displaced Persons were fearful of the unknown, but this fear was transcended by the tremendous hope of finding freedom and a better life in America. I was one of these refugees, traveling with my mother and father. I was only 16 at the time. Our family had survived World War II, enduring both Soviet and Nazi occupations.

Reflecting about our arrival in America, I knew I had to record for my children and grandchildren my early years, especially my family's experiences during World War II. As a result, on the occasion of my fiftieth anniversary in America I wrote my memoirs, entitled *My Journey to Freedom*. Following are excerpts.

### SOVIET OCCUPATION

I was born in 1932 in the small country of Lithuania which is located by the Baltic Sea between the two adversarial war powers of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In 1940 Lithuania, an independent republic, was forcefully annexed by Stalin, and a Communist regime installed. It was a difficult life.

The Communists immediately turned on a huge propaganda machine against the old "bourgeoisie-capitalist" regime, touting how wonderful life will be for all under Communism, that everyone will be equal. The press and radio were taken over by the Soviets, and freedom of expression was abolished. All churches were shut down. Many intellectual, cultural, and religious leaders were labeled "anti-Communists" and were deported to labor camps in Siberia. In the middle of the night a truck would pull up to a targeted family's house, and the Communist police would roust the family out of bed. It would be given but a few minutes to get dressed and grab some possessions before being forced into the truck. Under armed guard, they were taken to the railroad station where they were transferred into boxcars to join other victims. The boxcars were so full that people could not even sit on



the floor. With no heat and very little food, they were shipped to Siberia. About 120,000 Lithuanians were exiled in one year.

My family immediately felt the effect of the Bolshevik occupation. Our home was seized by the government so that two Soviet Army officers could be quartered in our living room.

My dad was demoted from department head to teacher, because he refused to join the Communist Party.

The new regime influenced my schooling. Teachers who were uncooperative with the government disappeared, and most of the books were expunged and substituted with Communist propaganda. The teaching of Russian became mandatory, even in second grade. I maintained very good grades, except I failed Russian—I guess that was my way of protesting. Children were being taught the evils of religion and the goodness of the Communist system. There were attempts to brainwash young children. Teachers would ask the students, "Pray to your God and ask for candy." The children prayed and, of course, nothing happened. Then the teachers would say, "Ask comrade Stalin for candy," and candy would fall out through a trap door in the ceiling.

### LIVING UNDER NAZI REGIME

The war between Germany and Soviet Russia started in 1941, and we were "liberated" by the Germans. Sometime after the Nazi invasion, Dad discovered at the town hall Soviet documents indicating that because of his anti-Communist beliefs, my family was scheduled for deportation to Siberia the same day that the war broke out! So, strangely, we were grateful to the Germans. This gratitude did not last very long as many civilians were killed by the Nazis. Many Lithuanians joined the underground to become partisans, living in the woods, sabotaging the German war machine. My family managed to survive during these difficult three years. Besides teaching, my dad also worked at home as a Lithuanian/German translator, mostly for the farmers. As payment they would bring eggs, bacon, meat, and other farm

products. Along with the crops from our garden we managed fairly well. Later, we learned that Dad was also surreptitiously translating, from English to Lithuanian, the Allied wireless transmissions for the Lithuanian underground.

The treatment of the Jewish people under the Nazi regime is well documented. Unfortunately, I witnessed the hardships and atrocities that they endured. Among other things, I saw Jews being shot and buried in trenches that they were forced to dig. About this time, my parents were hiding and taking care of a young Jewish boy in our root cellar because his family was targeted for deportation. Eventually, the family decided to leave because of the risks involved both for them and for us. It was a crime, punishable by death, to harbor Jews. Unfortunately, we never knew whether their escape was successful. Many Lithuanians, including Lithuanian-Jews, were interned in concentration camps.

Once again the fortunes of war changed. Hitler's thrust to the east was stymied. The invincible German army was retreating, and by June of 1944 the Soviet summer invasion had pushed the Germans back toward Lithuania. Because of our past experiences, Dad decided that we could not allow ourselves to be overrun by the Soviets again and that we would flee to the west. In the meantime, on June 6, 1944, the Allies invaded Europe at Normandy. Although the invasion seemed so distant from our lives, it provided a glimmer of hope for all of us.

On June 15, 1944, we packed a few personal belongings, only what we could carry, left our home, together with some neighbors, and started our march toward the west. My dad was the leader of our little group. I was almost 12 years old. While fleeing across Lithuania, we lived on abandoned farms. Sometimes animals had been left behind, and there were vegetables still in the garden. However, Dad felt uncomfortable living in strangers' homes without their knowledge or permission, so he insisted that we maintain the farm. We fed the animals, milked the cows, and tended the garden and fields. We were fortunate that our journey took place during the summer months so that we did not have to worry about winter clothing and food.

Living ahead of a battle front was very risky because you never knew when the Russians would start another assault and we would be overrun. Father

did his best to keep track of the military situation. Even though it was against Nazi rules to listen to foreign radio, he would somehow get access to Radio Zurich broadcasts. Dad also had a detailed map of Eastern Europe that he kept hidden. On this map he marked the towns as they were conquered by the Russians, thus generating a fairly current and accurate picture of the ever-changing front line and of the areas where most of the military actions were taking place. He used this information when deciding if it were time for us to move on. If this map had been discovered in Dad's possession, he would have been shot instantly as a spy.

In October, 1944, our flight across Lithuania ended when we arrived at a German border town. We went immediately to the railroad station which was in total chaos. Hundreds of hysterical refugees were trying to board the few overloaded passenger trains. Magically, my father appropriated a French first-class passenger car with stately seating compartments. We were all so excited at the thought of riding in such luxury. However, it was not to be. To our shock and dismay, Dad and the other men found some bricks and broke all the car windows, thus making it less likely that it would be confiscated by the Nazis.

Again, my father accomplished the impossible—he was able to get our car attached to a quasi-military train. That night our train was attacked by planes. Whether they were Russian or Allied did not matter. The result was equally deadly. The train came to a screeching halt before it was cut in half by a bomb. At that moment my mother and sister Gert were at the opposite end of the train from where Dad and I were. Everybody jumped out of the train and into a ditch, lying as low as possible. At a time like this you look at the earth through different eyes. The ground becomes very precious as you try to burrow into it, wishing it would swallow you up to protect you from the bombs. After the bombers left, Dad and I began looking for Mom and Gert in the dark, illuminated only by the burning cars. We were terrified since we saw many bodies strewn throughout the area—body parts hanging from trees. At last we saw Mom and Gert coming towards us. It was a tearful reunion. Eventually the wreckage was cleared off the track, and we continued our journey on what was left of the train.

After traveling through Poland and Saxony we ended up in the Sudetenland (now Czech Republic) in



a town between Prague and Dresden. In mid-February of 1945, we heard very large bomber formations flying towards the city of Dresden. The air raids continued for days, first by the Royal Air Force and then by the U.S. Air Corps. The almost uninterrupted bombing caused a gigantic fire storm. Even though Dresden was 25 miles away, we could see the conflagration, and the intense hot winds carried ashes and soot all the way to our town. Dresden was totally destroyed, and about 130,000 people lost their lives.

In March of 1945, the Russian front was again approaching us. So, once again we boarded a train and headed west to Bavaria, eventually stopping at Selb, a town on the German/Czech border. We moved into an "alien camp" located at a school with 60 other Lithuanian refugees. In the gym my family was allocated a six-by-eight-foot space and given straw to sleep on, but we considered ourselves lucky to have a roof over our heads. Food consisted primarily of turnips in all forms, mostly in watered-down soup; meat was nearly nonexistent.

#### LIBERATION

April 20, 1945, was a day I will never forget. The U.S. Army was very close. Artillery shells were exploding around us, destroying buildings and tearing up the land. For safety everybody moved to the basement of the school. Through the windows we could see American tanks advancing and firing into the retreating Germans. We were quite concerned about the Americans since German propaganda portrayed the American soldiers as ruthless, barbaric animals who would kill civilian men and rape women. Moreover, we were worried that the Americans would think that we were Germans, or worse, Nazis, who were hiding in the basement.

Thus we were shaking with fright, while huddled in the basement, when with a tremendous crash a GI charged in through the door. He was in full battle gear—a submachine gun in his hands, leveled at us, hand grenades attached to his belt, helmet, complete with camouflage netting, on his head, straps hanging from the steel pot—and he was chewing gum. He waved his "grease gun" at us and shouted, "Raus, Raus!" (Out, Out!) We stood there terrified, our arms in the air. My father, who spoke English, shouted, "We are not Germans, we are not Germans. We are

Lithuanian refugees, and we like the Americans. We are glad you are here!"

We could not believe what ensued. The GI threw his helmet and gun on the floor, smiled the most beautiful smile we had ever seen, dug into his pockets, and gave his chewing gum and candy bars to the children. In a curious twist of fate, he was a Lithuanian-American from Chicago whose parents had emigrated from Lithuania. He even tried to say a few words in Lithuanian! He told us about America and gave away all his cigarettes to the men before he rushed off.

We had been liberated by the Americans. For us at that moment the war ended.

#### DISPLACED PERSON CAMPS

In May, 1945, the war in Europe ended. The United Nations Refugee Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) began setting up refugee camps throughout West Germany. Life was now much better under U. S. military occupation. The accommodations, food, and sanitary conditions improved greatly. We were no longer aliens but first-class citizens. A Lithuanian school was organized at the camp. The education was excellent since many of the refugees were school teachers, college professors and other professionals. My dad taught English because he was the only person fluent in English. I enjoyed school and did well, always being the top student in my class—not difficult to do since my class consisted of only nine students. Over the next four years we were moved from camp to camp six times all over Bavaria.

#### USA!

In 1949 my dad was able to find a sponsor in Shaftsbury, Vermont. After many background checks we were allowed to immigrate to the United States and start a new life in this great country, with all its freedoms and golden opportunities.



*About the author:* John joined the Society in November, 2003, after picking up a brochure at the Snow Library in Orleans. Having written his memoirs for the benefit of his children, he wanted to go further by digging into the genealogy of his family. ➤

John retired from the Draper Laboratory (formerly the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Instrumentation Laboratory) and moved to the Cape with his wife Dorothea nine years ago. Before retiring, he was Director of Navy Strategic Programs charged with the development of advanced guidance systems for submarine-launched Fleet Ballistic Missiles. Because of John's history as a refugee from Nazism and Communism, he says that he was highly motivated in his work to design the most advanced inertial guidance systems for our nuclear missiles to keep America strong and secure from the Soviets.

John has four children and seven grandchildren; one grandson is a Marine security guard at our consulate in Karachi; another just returned from his tour of duty in Kuwait.

We are fortunate to have John as an author and member of the Society. ■