

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE EILANDS

But Were Afraid To Ask

Okay, so you know who your parents are. And you are aware that one or the other has an Eiland connection, either through genes or through marriage. That means you also have an Eiland connection, either through genes or marriage. But what do you know about that connection?

How did this family get rooted and nourished in Logan County, West Virginia?

Well, this is going to try to pull it together for you. Once you read this you will know as much about your Eiland ties as any of us today remembers. With the Eiland proclivity for trying to improve a story, even if it is good to begin with, some of what you read may or may not be exactly the way it was, but it will be as exact as we were able to compromise on.

First: The story line:

This will tell story of the Rudolph Ruben Eiland-Gizella Wilcsek Eiland branch. From time-to-time in this story he will be known as Rudolph, Papa Rudy or Dad. She will be Gizella or Mother.

While not a genealogy, you will read about family relationships that bring you to first, second and third cousins you may not even have heard about. Who knows, you may bump into one of them some day. But you'll have to find out about the skeletons in the closet on your own.

Rudolph and Gazella Eiland's names are engraved on the Immigrant Wall of Honor, Panel 125, on Ellis Eiland. This was through the efforts of Terry Ellen and Dick Orgel.

Starting Characters and Essential Facts relating To Them The Eiland Connection

Rudolph Ruben Eiland (Papa Rudy)

Born March 5, 1880

Sarvar, Vas Egye, Hungary

Died Feb. 8, 1974 Age 94

Buried in Springhill Cemetery, Huntington, W. Va.

His parents:

Adolph Eiland

Born 1844

Died January 17, 1929 Age 85

Cecilia Furth Eiland
Born 1850
Died 1942 in Auschwitz Age 92

Rudolph was one of 10 children in the family, not necessarily born in this order: Fanny (died in Los Angeles, CA in 1922. No other details); Ilena (Helen), Rose, Sarah, Anton (Anthony), Sigmond, Rudolph, Erne (Ernest), Carl and Paul.

At one point in the 1920s, Dad brought his sister, Ilena, to the United States to visit the family in Logan. However, she was not happy and returned to Hungary.

Rose married Frank Halasz, and that family moved to Logan to work for Dad. Apparently there was a serious family falling out and the Halasz family moved to South Bend, Indiana, where cousins still live. For years there was no communications between the families. But one day after Wor War II Cousin Irene Halasz [Mrs. Walter] Breisacher and her husband from Indianapolis, Ind., came to Logan and attempted to repair family ties. Not too close, and that side of the family is still found in or around South Bend and Indianapolis.

In one of his "protocols", Dad lists Erne (Ernest) as dying in 1936. Was he the brother who went to South America not to be heard from again; or, did he establish a Hispanic branch? No one knows! For this purpose, "protocol" means a diary or log listing vital statistics. Dad maintained his "protocol" in his strong handwriting, with some typewritten notes.

Most of, if not all, the Eiland family left in Europe died at the hands of the Nazis. During the course of a trip to Europe that included Hungary in the 1970s, Margaret and Mort Cohn tried to make contact with an elderly man, reportedly an Eiland, who made it through the Nazi era, but he sent word he didn't want to meet or hear from strangers.

In the mid 1930's, Dad and Mother signed support documents to save a distant relative, Hans Ungar, from Nazi Europe. Hans was brought to Logan in 1939 and lived with the family until Pearl Harbor when he enlisted in the US Army and ended up fighting in Burma. After the war he dropped out of sight. But in the 1960's or 70's, during a business trip to Los Angeles, Margaret and Mort were relating this story to a friend who lived there. Lo and behold, the friend said he had a friend named Hans Ungar living in Los Angeles, married with family. He was "our" Hans. They had a short get-together but there has been no further close contact with the Ungar family.

Hans was only one of many that Dad tried to help get out of Europe during the Nazi period. From time-to-time, as they could afford, Dad and Mother sent money to his family in Hungary, but apparently none of them asked help to leave Europe. There were others who wrote begging for help to escape the Nazis, but the sad fact was that there were not sufficient family resources available to satisfy the financial support documents required for bringing refugees into the U. S. It was a traumatic period for them.

The Wilcsek Connection

Gizella Wilcsek Eiland
Born September 5, 1882
Tapolcsan, Nyitray Megyo, Hungary
Died April 19, 1965 Age 83
Buried in Springhill Cemetery, Huntington, W. Va.

Her parents:

Samuel Wilcsek Died Feb. 24, 1924
Rose Pottok Wilcsek, Died April 10, 1923
Both buried in Springhill Cemetery,
Huntington, W. Va.

There were three children in the family, Gizella, Paula and Charlotte.

The Wilcsek family immigrated to the United States in June or July, 1904, via Hamburg, Germany, aboard the steamer "Bremen". This information is from records kept by Papa Rudy.

But Census Bureau records show that the Wilcsek family arrived in the U.S. on July 19, 1904, aboard the liner Fredrichder Grosse. This ship was built in Stettin, Germany, in 1896 for the North German Lloyd Line. In 1917, at the outbreak of WWI, it was seized by the U.S. Navy and renamed USS Hanson. In 1922 it was renamed City of Honolulu and was serving the West Coast when it caught fire at sea and was abandoned. It was then sunk by a U.S. Navy ship.

Mother was the oldest daughter and 20 years old when she arrived in the U.S. The family bought a house on Long Island and were enjoying their new life in this country. We are going to get to Gizella's story but first, we'll talk about her sisters.

Paula Wilscek, the middle daughter, was married to Hugo Gruner and came to Logan to work in Dad's business after he and mother married. Following a serious problem, Uncle Hugo went into his own competing business in Logan. He and Paula had two sons: Henry married Francis-----from Morgantown, W. Va., and they had one son, Steven. Henry joined the navy at the start of World War II and died aboard the destroyer U.S.S. Hull on Dec. 18, 1944, when it sank during a Typhoon off the Phillipines during World War II. Steve, the son, married and lived with his wife and children in Silver Spring, MD., where he died in 2003.

The youngest Gruner brother, Leon, never seemed to find a good life in Logan. He was married twice, had no children of his own, and is believed to have lived and died in Ohio.

Charlotte Wilscek, the youngest daughter, married Sigmond Kohn in New York City. They had four children:

Lillian married Sidney Tucker, moved to Bluefield, WV, where they had a ladies wear store. They had two children, Faye and Neil. Neil is/was living in suburban Maryland while Faye became a model. Their adult histories are not readily available.

Harold Kohn married Dorothy Glick of Logan. They raised three sons: Ronny, Larry and Gary. Their first child, a girl, died three days after birth. The Glick family were long time next-door-neighbors to the Eilands on Stratton Street. Harold died in 2004.

Raymond, the youngest, was an unhappy case. He suffered from a hearing problem all his life and became something of a loner, never marrying. He and Harold built a prosperous business on the foundation of their father's success, but Raymond died broke.

Another sister died at an early age after falling out of a second story window in Northfork, W.Va.

The Kohn family has particularly close ties to the Eilands over and beyond kinship, as you will later read.

As far as could be determined, there was only one Wilscek relative living in the U.S.: a first cousin, Gizella (maternal or fraternal is not known), married to Jimmie Savage and living in Detroit. They had three children: Mickey, Johanna and another son, name unknown. Johanna married a Count DeTuscan (?) who was a world fencing champion. She also became a fencing champion. Nothing further is known of the Savage family.

There is not much history available about the Wilcsek family. Apparently, they were considered upper middle class in Hungary. Mother said her Grandfather (she didn't say which side) was a "gentleman farmer" and she loved to visit him. The family seemed to have lived well, but why did her parents move the family to the US and what did he do for a living? There are no answers. Mother was educated in a Catholic convent in Europe, and attended night school in New York. She read good literature, enjoyed art, opera and classical music, and maintained, with Dad, an interest in politics and general news; interests which she tried to pass on to her children.

In the early 1930s there was dinner table discussion about a supposedly rich English Wilscek connection who died leaving a large estate without any immediate heirs. The story was that lawyers were looking for heirs, which reportedly included the Wilcsek girls. Because the Depression was deepening, no one could afford to travel to England to pursue the matter. Maybe this was just one of those stories that surface from time-to-time: a scam. But, on the other hand.....!!? Certainly the story kept the Wilscek sisters talking for several weeks.

With their three daughters now living in Logan, Samuel and Rose Pottok Wilcsek apparently had no other ties in New York, so Dad and Mother brought them to West Virginia and into the Eiland household.

The graves of Dad and Mother, Sigmond and Charlotte Kohn, and Paula and Hugo Gruner are within easy conversational distance of each other in Congregation B'nai Israel section of Spring Hill Cemetery in Huntington, WV. Samuel and Rose Wilcsek are nearby, along with other younger members of the extended family. Irene Eiland's grave is in the general section of the cemetery.

Now: The Tale

Adolph and Cecelia Furth Eiland lived and raised their family in Sarvar, Vas Egye, Hungary, where he was a religious teacher. The family lived in near poverty while he taught and prayed, but Cecelia kept the family going by baking and selling her bread to the community. She appears to have been the dominant personality in the family. Because of the family's dire financial straits, as soon as one of the boys was Bar Mitzvahed he was sent to work in a neighboring village.

Dad was in a Yeshiva studying to be a Rabbi, but had to drop out because the family could not afford the cost. Like his brothers, he went to work for a butcher in a neighboring town.. There must have been some discussion about his immigrating to the US, because about the turn of the century his youngest brother, Carl, was in need of eye surgery. So in 1902 Dad accompanied him to see a specialist in Paris, and remained with him until he recovered from surgery.

Carl returned to Hungary but Dad proceeded to LaHavre, France, for passage to the US via the French Line, landing in New York on December 2, 1902 at the age of 22. Cost of his trip was \$15. There is no explanation how the eye surgery for Carl and the passage for Dad were paid by a family in dire poverty.

While aboard ship, dad met Sigmond Kohn and they established a close friendship that continued until their deaths and now through their families.

The two lived in New York from 1902 to 1908. Dad was conversant in several languages, but English was not one of them. He learned English as he earned a living: reading newspapers for the "job wanted" ads, rolling cigars, working in a bakery and tending bar. Anything to make a living.

Sigmond Kohn had a brother living in Seattle, Wa. working as a furrier. He suggested that Sigmond and Rudy come to Seattle and together they would develop a complete fur business--trapping, skinning and tanning the pelts and then making coats. Sigmond was a tailor by trade and Dad had great determination and ambition. This invitation sounded like a good idea so they started working their way west. They got as far as Southwestern Virginia where they heard that coal fields were opening and there were great business opportunities in Virginia and southern West Virginia.

They found work with Mr. A. Goodman in his general store in Pocahontas, Va. He became a close friend Dad remembered all the rest of his life. After working for Mr. Goodman from 1908 to 1913, they decided to strike out for themselves, establishing a business, "Kohn and Eiland", in Northfork, W.Va. Somewhere between 1902 and 1910, Sigmond Kohn married Charlotte Wilcsek in New York and brought her to Northfork. She was a wonderfully talented person: an excellent cook and an artist in handiwork, creating and selling fancy embroidery to large department stores in New York City.

While in Northfork, Dad took his meals with Sigmond and Charlotte, although he rented a room elsewhere. According to his story, one evening during supper he told Charlotte, "If I could find a girl who could cook like you, I'd marry her."

So Charlotte invited her sister, Gizella, to come for a visit. In telling this, Dad said, "When I first saw her, she hit me just right. She was small and I remember the nice high pretty collar she had on." After that, Dad went to New York to meet the Wilcseks and then wrote to them for some time before making trips to the city to court Gizella. After about a year of this, they married in New York City on April 19, 1914, and she went South with him.

On June 5, 1912, Dad became a naturalized citizen of the US, holding Certificate No. 10957. Mother became a citizen by virtue of their marriage.

The year 1914 was a "big" year for Dad. He and Sigmond were doing well in business and decided to expand into the new coal fields opening in Logan County, in southwestern West Virginia. Land records show a bill of sale and a deed, both dated April 1, 1914, by which the two bought a store in Logan. Price of the merchandise, furniture and fixtures was \$1,056.56 and price of the land was \$4,250. This business was on Billygoat Junction of Island Creek, known today as Monitor Junction. (Billygoat Junction is believed to have gotten its name because billygoats were raised there by an Italian merchant, S. Joe.) Their long range plan was to stay in Logan for about five years, get rich, then buy train tickets to Seattle where they would go into the fur business.

However, as with some best laid plans, theirs went awry. On May 24, 1917, Dad and Sigmond decided to dissolve their partnership on friendly terms. On that date, interest in the Billygoat Junction property was conveyed to Dad who continued with the business, known as "Island Creek Wholesale Grocery Co.". Uncle Sig, whose interest was in clothing, established his own business, "The Peoples' Store", in the City of Logan. He was a good businessman and prospered.

In 1918, disaster struck in the form of a once-a-century flood that hit the Guyan Valley washing Dad's business and the home down Island Creek into the Guyan River, about a mile away. On November 1, 1919, he sold his land for \$6,000. Even as the flood was washing everything away, a local banker told Dad not to worry, the bank would back him in rebuilding.

One of Dad's dogs was named "Horchas", {more or less the spelling of a Hungarian word} a white English bulldog, described as having tremendous strength and lots of smarts. As Dad told the story, the flood was washing away the Eiland holdings, including cattle, mules and other livestock, while he was standing on the railroad tracks above the waters. So he told Horchas to bring the livestock to high ground. Horchas would swim out, grab an animal by the ear and bring it to safety, then go back and repeat his action. Horchas was Dad's favorite of the many dogs we had.

After the disaster, the family and business moved into the City of Logan. He and mother bought land at 233 Stratton Street on which they built a sizable house with a big dormitory-size sleeping porch and a large adjoining yard to accommodate their expanding family.

His growing business was on the Courthouse square, and in 1921 he purchased property in Stratton Hollow, building a large warehouse from which he conducted the business, and a large property across from the Courthouse on which he built a one-story commercial building divided into several store rooms.

This was in the 1920s, the time when coal mines were being opened throughout Logan County. The companies were recruiting large numbers of men in Central Europe to work the mines, and were building strings of small houses along every creek for those with families, and large boarding houses where the single men and those whose families remained in Europe could find lodging and get their meals.

Island Creek Wholesale Grocery Co. was one of the main providers of foodstuffs for the boarding houses. Groceries were delivered in bulk up creeks and hollows throughout the county by horse or mule-drawn wagons and, later, by trucks. Orders for the next delivery were placed with the drivers. All of Dad's business was on credit. Each payday he would go out and collect thousands of dollars as he rode horseback or walked to his customers. Although it was well-known that he carried large sums of money on paydays, he was never accosted or robbed.

Because he was widely known and respected throughout the county by people who came from all over Europe, and because he could communicate with many of them in their own languages, he had a profitable sideline selling steamship tickets to those returning to Europe or who were bringing families from Europe to the US. Business was good.

Having come from a small town in Hungary, Dad must not have minded the conditions in Logan, but moving from the sophistication of Budapest and New York City to the mountains of West Virginia must have been a cultural shock to mother. However, she adapted quickly and well to the almost pioneer conditions and the family was started: William Wolfe was born February 24, 1915; Theodore Anthony, November 13, 1916; Irene Virginia, October 4, 1918, (Irene died of leukemia on April 27, 1921); Edward Israel, February 3, 1920; Margaret Miriam, April 9, 1921; and Frederick Sigmond, September 27, 1922. (Where did middle names come from? Anthony was from Dad's brother Anton and Sigmond was from his brother Sigmond. The rest?)

As was said, Mother loved good music but couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. On the other hand, she was intent that each of the children have a musical background. So Bill, Ted and Margaret took piano; Edward did saxophone, later taking on the clarinet and flute; Fred started with violin, which was stolen after the house burned, later taking up the saxophone. (Some in the family believe neighbors set the fire to stop his violin practice). Edward was the only one to carry music forward, playing in the high school band, in the WVU band, the WVU Alumni band, in

American Legion dance bands, in Logan civic bands, and sleeping on the living room sofa on Saturday afternoons while listening to opera on radio. He still participates in musical activities.

All five Eiland children graduated from Logan Senior High School, and went to West Virginia University. Despite extremely difficult financial circumstances during the 1930 depression years and after World War II, there were, at times, up to three Eilands at the University at the same time.

Bill, who probably was the most fun-loving and outgoing of the bunch, started out with the idea of becoming a doctor, then turned to law. But the fun and excitement of boxing overshadowed his larger goals. He wound up winning a intercollegiate championship in the flyweight class, but let scholastics fall aside and finally dropped out of college. After World War II, and after he married Helen Mae, he finished college, became a teacher, moved his family to El Paso, TX., where he and Helen Mae both earned their graduate degrees and taught in the public schools. Bill went on to become a Principal. All the Bill Eiland boys and their families live in Texas.

Ted, because of the depression, worked for a couple of years after high school, and then went to WVU where he majored in journalism, establishing himself as a thespian and journalist of campus renown, graduating in 1940. He started his professional career in broadcast journalism at radio station WLOG in Logan, going on from there to Charleston. His successful career in television began in Huntington. He always mixed his talents as a thespian by participating in local Little Theater groups wherever he lived. At one point, he wrote a segment for one of the early radio soap operas (General Hospital?). His pay included a ladies Gruen watch which he gave to sister Margaret. In March, 1996, his play, "The Most Dangerous Woman", was produced off-off Broadway, having tied for first place in "The Open Book/Fireside Theater" readers theater competition.

Edward had his sights set on law from the beginning and established high academic records in his undergraduate work, earning Phi Beta Kappa honors. He graded test papers for his political science professor, partially financing his tuition. When World War II started, he left school to join the Marine Corps. After the war, he returned to WVU, to complete his law degree. He established his legal practice in Logan, at one time serving as Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and running a tight race for Circuit Judge, then going into corporate law with the county's pre-eminent corporate attorney, taking over the firm upon his partners death and continues the practice.

Margaret enrolled at the University at Mother's insistence, overruling Dad's questioning why a girl needed a higher education. (In her heart, mother must have been one of the early advocates of equal opportunities for women, but always in a genteel and ladylike manner. She believed girls should get teaching certificates to insure and protect their independence!) During her first year at the University, Margaret met Morton Stanley Cohn of Charleston, W.Va. He worked his way through college as an announcer with a Morgantown radio station and graduated in radio journalism. They were married after he was inducted as a Second Lt. in the Army following Pearl Harbor. Following the war, Mort returned to broadcasting in Charleston, later becoming a successful executive, running television stations in Ashville, NC, Miami, Fla., and then retiring back to Ashville. He dedicated himself to community service, continuing even after his retirement.

Fred also had to work a year after high school before there was enough money for him to go to the University. His ambition was to be a forester, but he realized he couldn't pass required basic civil engineering requirements, so he aimed at journalism. He went into the army after his first two college years. Following high school and before college he was an announcer at WLOG in Logan. Before returning to WVU after W.W.II, he was a reporter for the LOGAN BANNER. Following graduation he worked for the Associated Press, then taught at the University of Alabama, published a newspaper with Anne in Alabama, worked for the Army, was press secretary for a U.S. Senator from Alabama and closed out as spokesman for a Federal Agency in Washington.

By any objective view, each was successful in his and her own field, surely resulting from the encouragement given at home.

During World War II, all four of the Eiland sons and son-in-law Mort Cohn were in military service. Bill tried to get into army cadet pilot training, but suffered from air sickness, so he transferred to the infantry in Europe. Ted was an officer in the Navy, serving on the West Coast. Edward joined the Marine Corps, rising to Major, and was involved in several major invasions, being wounded on Saipan, earning a Silver Star and Purple Heart, and then going into Iwo Jima. Mort was an army officer in Europe. Fred was an enlisted man in a division field artillery battalion which was one of the first to land in Japan after the war ended.

Tying their families together was important to both Mother and Dad. They brought mother's parents, Samuel and Rosa Wilcsek, to live with them in Logan, where dad set up a kosher butcher block in his store, putting Samuel Wilcsek in charge, primarily to give him a feeling of dignity and usefulness. They brought Dad's sister Rose and her husband Frank Halasz and family to work in the store, but they later moved to Indianapolis or South Bend. They brought Mother's sister Paula and her husband Hugo Gruner to work in the store and they later opened their own business in Logan. They brought Dad's sister Ilena to Logan from Hungary, but she was unhappy and returned to Europe.

Dad was considered a bold and resourceful businessman, and both he and Mother were strong believers that everyone had an obligation to do community service in payment of the opportunity to live and work and prosper in a free society. He was a charter member of the Logan Kiwanis Club when it was started in 1924, and served a term as President. He was the last surviving Charter Member to die. He was honored by the community on his 90th birthday. He was elected to two terms on the Logan City Council--1933 through 1935 and 1937 through 1939; served as a member of the Troop Committee of Boy Scout Troop 44 (to which each of the Eiland boys belonged); was vice president of the Chamber of Commerce; and was a member of the Logan County Community Chest.

(At one point during the Depression, while under tremendous financial strain, he was approached by a group wanting him to run for re election with their support if he would agree to approve gambling in the City. A new automobile was to be part of the payoff. He refused to take this bait and did not run and the family continued to ride around in a variety of used cars, including a Plymouth coupe with rumble seat.)

Up until his late years he served on the Board of Directors of the Salvation Army. He was a member of the Elks Club and involved in many other community activities.

Mother and Dad were among the founders of B'nai El Congregation, with Dad serving many years as president and Mother as president of the Temple Sisterhood. For years he was superintendent and teacher at the Sunday School and conducted many a Sabbath service and prepared many of the congregation's boys and girls for Bar Mitzvah and confirmation. At that time the Temple was on the third floor of the First National Bank Building. Later, the congregation conducted services over the city library and, after World War II, a Temple was built near the East End school.

In 1956, when he was 76, the Princess Aracoma Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented Dad with their first Award of Merit.

Mother was equally active as an early member of the Logan Women's Club and was a leader in creation of the Logan Public Library. During World War II she was instrumental in establishing a unit of the USO in the basement of the old Pioneer Hotel.

In all of her four foot eleven glory, she walked straight as a rod with her head held high. With the exception of Bill and Margaret, the rest of the family were up to a head taller than she. In the social fashion of the day, she always wore a hat and carried gloves whenever she walked to town. She was a lady in every sense of the word. She made sure her children were always neatly and properly dressed: never ever in overalls or tennis shoes. While she stood in the background, she was always a participant in Dad's activities and interests and was widely respected in the community in her own right.

In order to commemorate and perpetuate their devotion and lifetime commitment to Logan and its people, following Dad's death, the family endowed the "Rudolph and Gizella Eiland Memorial Scholarship Award" at West Virginia University. A monetary award is made each year to a Logan County student attending the University and maintaining a good scholastic record.

The Story Continues

About 1930 or so, Dad and Mother decided to put up a three story apartment on the lot next to their house. Now their income included rentals from stores and apartments as well as profits from the business. Things were going along well. Then disaster.

Pure and simple, Dad went broke as a result of the Depression. His business was based on credit: deliver the goods one week and collect for them on payday. With his cash gone, his assets consisted of heavily indebted real estate.

Trouble was that the coal mines were having to cut back and began paying workers in script that supposedly could only be spent in company-owned stores. Dad's customers now had no currency to pay their debts to him, and were forced to buy from company stores using company issued script.

It is said that one day in March, 1933, Dad collected and deposited in The First National Bank of Logan about \$18,000. He woke the next day to find the bank had closed and the great depression hit home. He never forgot or forgave the bankers, who were friends and neighbors, for letting him make that deposit when they knew the bank was to close the next day. Apparently the bankers took care of themselves in this crisis, and he never again trusted bankers.

There was nothing to do but shut down the grocery business and live off the inventory until decisions could be made. So, in 1934 Dad opened a small variety business in one of the store rooms in his downtown building. Later he changed the business to a men's work clothing store with the exciting name "RR Eiland Cut Rate Clothing" which he operated until his death. Ted, Edward and Fred worked in the store after school, when home from the University and even during short breaks from other jobs they may have held.

Now, with few sources of income, Dad was faced with the threat of foreclosure of his properties for non payment of mortgages. He finally got refinancing from Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company by taking out insurance policies on each of the five children.

But things remained so bad during this period that he was unable to pay taxes on the property, so they were sold by the State for nonpayment. However, when the economy picked up during World War II, he paid the back taxes and redeemed the properties.

To add to their misery, in 1934 the home burned. Mother was in the kitchen doing chores in the early afternoon when she heard a knock on the front door. Thinking it was someone making a delivery, she picked up her

pocketbook and opened the door. But instead of a delivery man, there was a stranger who said, "Madam, your house is on fire."

For a few nights the family stayed in the Pioneer Hotel. Then they moved into the second story unit of their apartment building, really close quarters for a family of seven. A short time later they moved into a house that Uncle Sig and Aunt Charlotte owned and which had been the Kohn home before they built a large house in Middleburg Addition--the ritzy part of the city. In 1947, Dad and Mother moved the family to a large 13 room house with several baths in the East End of the city. After several years, they decided to try to buy the house, but the deal fell through. So they took over the first floor unit of their apartment building, added a one story ell-shaped addition with basement taking up half the lot where their house had been, creating a one story, three basement, two bath home in which they lived out their lives..

This addition was involved in other events. One night, while asleep, both Mother and Dad were overcome by carbon monoxide escaping from a small leak in the gas water heater located in the basement under their new bedroom. Both were hospitalized, and it is believed that this contributed to the long downward spiral in Mother's health. However, Dad came through with full recovery.

On a later occasion, in the 1950s, the Guyana River Valley was struck by another flood, as it was in 1918. The river overflowed and water was running a foot or so deep down Stratton Street.

The basement was completely flooded, destroying family pictures and mementos that were stored there. That, the 1918 flood and the fire in the 1930s, are the reasons there are so few Eiland family hand-me-downs.

The wonder is that even during these distressful times, there was an insistence that every child would get a college education. "You can lose your physical possessions but no one can take away your education." As stated earlier, every one attended West Virginia University. In some years there were three in college at the same time. Whew! How did they do it?

So there you are, now you know some of your Eiland background.

Other Eilands

But how many other Eilands are there in the U.S.? In 1982, According to Halbert's Family Heritage, the "Eiland International Registry" was developed to study where Eilands came from, geographically, and where they are today. (And also to sell the study)! If this study is to be believed, there are about 1,400 families with about 2,900 Eilands in the United States, both white and black, spread in 41 states but mostly in the deep south and southwest. Alabama has the most. Some 60 families, about 150 people, are in Germany and Holland. The "study" didn't list any in the Hungarian branch, but then again, did the Nazis leave any Eilands alive in Hungary? Too, somewhere there is a letter that talks about a different word of Eiland in Hungarian.

Some of the American Eilands claim they are from Irish heritage; some say they stem from Welsh background; some say they believe that the Irish group actually traces back to Spaniards who escaped English destruction of the Armada.

There seems to be universal agreement, however, that the name derives from identifying people who lived on an island, and traces back to Northern Europe. Dad said the name means "little island", which fits. Who knows?

Perhaps there was a traveling salesman in the family's early history. There are several variations in spelling the name: Eland, Eiland, Eylander, Ealand, etc. Ireland is not unusual, as you probably have found.

Whatever the case may be, and wherever there may be other Eilands, our immediate interest is in the extended Rudolph R. and Gizella Wilcsek Eiland family.

Some Side Stories Of The Eiland Experience:

In going through Dad's safe after he died, we found a variety of coins--gold US and Hungarian coins, coal company script used during the depression, a couple of US Columbian half dollars and some miscellaneous coins. These were divided among the family, at which time someone said that Dad had told a story about his first earnings in the U.S. being a Columbian half dollar. He was determined to hold on to that coin as a memento, but at one point he was forced to spend it for living expenses. Happily for him, he said he was able to go back later and retrieve it. Was it among the collection?

Dad's knowledge of foreign languages and his expertise in English were useful after he moved to Logan, W. Va. He knew a vast number of immigrants all over the county who did not speak English. Consequently, they frequently asked him to help write letters and to interpret letters and to prepare official papers. He helped untold numbers of people become citizens, instructing them in American history and government, filling in required government forms, and serving as interpreter and counselor in dealing with legal problems.

There is the story that during World War II, when he was alone in his store, the Circuit Court judge asked him to come to the Courthouse, across the street, to interpret in a case involving a non-English speaking person. Because Dad couldn't leave his store, the Judge convened the court in the store where the matter was heard through Dad's interpreting Hungarian into English.

As another example of his knowledge of English, when Ted and Fred worked at WLOG, the local radio station, Dad would listen to the broadcasts, make notes of errors in pronunciation and then correct both after their shifts were over or at the dinner table. Ted, of course became a professional broadcaster, Fred did not.

Then there is the true story of Mrs. Gall, who was an old Hungarian friend and customer who would come to the store from time to time. One day she came in crying and told her troubles. Although there were children, she said that she and her husband, John, were not legally married and she wanted to be, but couldn't get John to agree. What should she do? Dad resolved the problem. He called Circuit Clerk Green McNeely, who issued a license. Then a deputy was sent to wherever John was at a bar, and escorted him to the store where McNeely conducted the wedding ceremony. End of story.

Dad loved his coffee strong, very strong, made with boiling milk. The milk was right just before it boiled over. (He came up in the period before pasteurized milk.) When he was home, Mother made his coffee, but at his place of business he made his own on a little electric eye. If coffee was left over at the end of the day, he would leave it and add that to the next days brew. To our knowledge, no one else ever drank the coffee he made. Even the cups shattered.

While on the subject of coffee, he introduced the family to matzo coffee. Just in case you have not had this recipe passed on to you, break several pieces of matzo into a large cereal bowl, add coffee and sugar and cream if you wish. It tasted good even with Dad's coffee.

Certainly food was something major in family life. Supper was usually at 6 o'clock, with everyone sitting. We had to finish before Lowell Thomas came on with the news followed by Amos and Andy. Chicken noodle soup was a regular on Saturday nights after the store closed. Bean soup also was big. And Mother introduced such delights as polachinta (crepes), noodles and nuts mixed with sugar and melted butter, matzo balls stuffed with prunes.

Aunt Charlotte and mother used to make noodles at her big house, spreading the dough over the large dining room and breakfast tables and cutting the noodles. Aunt Paula was a wonderful baker. At Passover, the Eiland and Kohn families celebrated together, our house one year theirs the next. There was the long table for adults and card tables for the under-agers. The wonder is that there were no fat Eilands or Kohns.

Fred was the only Eiland born in a hospital, up to that time, and Mother was the first patient to have had chloroform administered in Logan General Hospital.

Starting in the depression, the Logan congregation could not always support a Rabbi on a regular basis--sometimes not even on high holidays. Consequently, Friday night services and Sunday School and some of the high holidays were conducted by Dad. On one such holiday, he was conducting the services, Bill was pianist and Ted was the vocalist. Bill was playing softly during one of the moments of silent meditation and suddenly Ted recognized that, instead of liturgical music, he was playing "The Bear Went Over The Mountain" in a variety of tempos, all with a straight face. Suddenly Dad's face showed a recognition of what was going on, but he didn't crack a smile, just went ahead with the service. Nobody else seemed to catch on.

The following copy of a letter is sort of self-explanatory:

May 12, 1969

Dear Rabbi Brockman:

This Saturday night there was held at the Country Club the Annual Spring Party for the members and their wives--and as usual ladies were gossiping (as usual) some asked whether it is true that your preacher wears his hair "unconventional" for the clergy? This seems to have upset some our members, for as we are expecting well over 100 of our Non-Jewish friends attending the Bar Mitzvah, I was asked yesterday to write this letter asking you most respectfully to please have your hair trimmed for this special occasion so as to appear "conventional"—and please Rabbi-NO OFFENSE”

Most respectfully,
R.R. Eiland

Those of you with good teeth probably can thank your Wilscek genes. Mother had excellent teeth: she used to crack peach seeds with her teeth in order to get to the pit. She had only a few fillings at the time she died. On the other hand, Dad's teeth were a different story.

Dad was not a big man, standing about five feet eight or nine, but he was all muscle. He used to stoop, pick up a heavy dining room chair at the bottom of a front leg and then stand up holding that chair steady over his head. Try that one.

He used to enjoy listening to boxing and wrestling matches on the radio, and later watching them on early TV. But he and mother didn't know that Bill was physically into boxing until one evening Ted took him to watch Bill fight in a Golden Gloves tournament in the Legion Armory. That is where Bill received his first broken nose. Also, that was before he went to the University where he was an intercollegiate boxing champion.

The story goes that Dad had actually never been to a wrestling match, so one night Bill took him to watch a match at the Legion Armory. He became engrossed with the underdog who was taking a beating. But when the underdog started making points against the opponent, Dad was up yelling "kill the SOB". Apparently Dad never understood that wrestling was entertainment, not a real fight.

In college, Bill's best friend was a Fred Caplan from Clarksburg, W.VA. Fred was on the wrestling team and went on to finish law school at University of Richmond. Later he was elected to two terms in the W. Va. House of Delegates; served as Chief Justice of the State Court of Appeals from which he retired. About 50 years later, 1994, following Mort Cohn's death and the death of Fred's wife several years earlier, Margaret and Fred were re-introduced in Charleston at a Temple reunion and were married. Small world!

One of Dads dinner-table tricks was slicing and distributing bread. He would sit at the head of the table and literally pass bread to anyone requesting a slice. It all became a game to see if he would miss, but he had a good eye and hand. Mother was a disapproving observer.

While Dad had an expansive and expressive vocabulary, he never used trash curse words in English. Most of his profanity was expressed in German or Hungarian or Yiddish, all of which embarrassed mother. Although we didn't know exactly what he said, we caught his meaning. One day in the 1940s, Mother had enough and decided to give him a lesson. At the dinner table that evening, she started saying "pass the damn peas" and pass this "damn" thing

and pass that "damn" thing. This so shocked Dad, and everyone at the table, that he slacked up on his own use of profanity.

Dad also enjoyed risqué jokes with his friends. Usually they would come to the store and whisper their jokes, or hear his newest, then their laughter could be heard up and down the block.

Logan was an interesting place to call home. Its original settlers were English-Scotch-Irish who had first crossed the mountains into the Guyan Valley chasing Indians who had stolen horses. After coal was discovered, sophisticated investors from outside the county bought up all the mineral rights and started bringing in thousands of workers from Central Europe. You could hear almost every European language being used on the streets and in stores.

At first, miners were not unionized in Logan County: the companies were absolutely opposed, and the companies controlled local officials, including law enforcement which was in the hands of Sheriff Don Chafin, whose family lived just around the corner from the Eilands.

In 1920, the miners union decided to organize in Logan, culminating in what is known as the Southern West Virginia Mine War. The union forces were planning to march into Logan County over Blair Mountain from Charleston. The coal companies and the Sheriff were going to stop them, and Sheriff Chafin conscripted his "army" from business and professional men, among others. Dad was handed a gun and marched to the foot of Blair Mountain to face the invaders. He had never handled a gun--probably didn't know the barrel from the butt end--and was most reluctant to be where he was. The union forces never made it across the mountain, so he didn't have to engage in any action, much to his relief. Of course, all the mines in the state were unionized in the 1930s through efforts of John L. Lewis.

Dad knew Devil Anse Hatfield, who led his family in its feud with the McCoy family. He would drop into the store from time to time, and Dad considered him a fine gentleman, a courtly man.

(A statue of Devil Anse Hatfield is on a mountain near Logan. For more Logan lore, look up books on the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, basis for many stories and movie-TV plots.)

All coal produced in Logan at that time went down the Guyan Valley by C&O Railroad to Huntington. The saying was that half of Huntington made their living off of Logan County, and the other half retired to Huntington after making fortunes in Logan. A sports editor and columnist with a Huntington paper tagged Logan as the "Gee Whiz Valley".

Having earlier spoken of Dad's dog Horchas, who saved Dad's cattle in the big 1917 flood, there were two other dogs of note through the years: Teddy and Snubby. Both were of uncertain ancestry, but Teddy was a mixture of Cheltenham and "something". Although he was a house dog, Dad described him as a "ratter," great at catching rats. Dad would take him to the warehouse at night and let him have at the rodents. Snubby was just a puppy when we got him as Teddy was in his declining years. Mother was determined that the pup be an outside pet, so Teddy was forced to spend nights in a bed under the house, teaching the newcomer how to live in the great outdoors. One morning Teddy didn't come out when called, so Edward crawled under to find him dead. He'd caught pneumonia and died. Everyone, including Mother, was devastated, and from that point on Snubby was an indoor pet.

Another dog story: After the Stratton Street house burned and the family was living temporarily in the second floor unit of the apartment, a police dog made her home in the apartment crawl space and delivered a large litter, to the delight of every child on the street who entertained dreams of getting one of the pups. A neighbor across the street apparently didn't like all the noise of kids playing with the pups on the now empty house lot, and called the city. A city fire truck drove up and the firemen proceeded to try to catch the pups and remove them. Over the loud outrage of the kids, they did catch a couple when suddenly Mr. Reynolds, the third floor tenant, appeared on his back porch, holding a shotgun. In no uncertain terms, he told the firemen to leave, which they quickly did. In time, the pups were given away and the mother dog disappeared. End of story. Point being, the Eilands always had dogs and cats. Goldfish, too. No white mice or hamsters.

One Christmas in the depression, Ted and Keene Reynolds, son of the third floor tenant, took Dad's old Indiana truck and \$20 and drove over Blair Mountain to buy pine trees for sale. They dickered with a farmer, finally paying fifty cents per tree. Then they set up a sales lot next to Dad's downtown building and opened for business, selling trees for \$1. As they sold out, they would go back to buy more trees, finally ending up making \$300 to \$400. That was big money for that time, and was the beginning of retail Christmas tree sales in Logan.

A family cat destroyed any hopes of starting a tradition of handing down a wedding gown from one generation to another. After their marriage, Mother brought her wedding gown to her new home on Billygoat Junction and stored it in a "safe" place. Unfortunately for tradition, one of the cats decided the gown was the ideal place to have her litter. That was before the 1917 flood, and maybe that is what brought on the flood.

There are lots of such family stories, but they have to be drawn out in "do you remember..." sessions. Anyone having a favorite story, pass it on for incorporation in a addendum to this tale. Stories should have some verifiable truth in them, and anyone questioning the veracity of statements must take that up with a senior member. Or maybe you can improve on a story. Errors of fact, however, such as dates and names, will be made whole through an addendum. Any new Eilands, by birth or by marriage, should be reported for an amended "Protocol".

THE END