

FINDING BORYS TOLCZYNSKI by Margaret Green

Introduction

This tale is about a voyage of discovery. It started with a printed card among my mother's papers and it ended with me finding people who actually knew the person I was researching. On the card was a name – Borys Tolczynski, a profession, an address and a phone number.

It was one of the most enjoyable rides of my life. While I was actually on this roller-coaster, I began to realise that I probably had always had a life - calling to be a detective. Becoming a psychotherapist was just one way of fulfilling it. This other involved whooshing around on Google discovering various archives, writing letters and sometimes landing somewhere unexpected after navigating a sharp turn. Or to use a different metaphor – it was a bit like discovering Rome in my twenties by walking all day with only a map and no guidebook, no knowledge of architecture and a very cursory schoolbook knowledge of Italian history.

Along the way I experienced the excitement of putting a name into the JewishGen website, clicking the ENTER box, enjoying the mounting anticipation as I watched the Google search engine's circle revolving on my screen - for a lo-o-ong time in my case with an old computer! - and then – Bingo! (sometimes); many entries from the LitvakSig database representing lots of information! Sometimes however; “your search yielded 0 results”. At first, I just hit on things in quite a random fashion. Some sites I could never find again. But I learned quite quickly to be more systematic once I got a result. Later, I even began to take screen shots of successful searches!

What I didn't expect for this ride was how much I called on my imagination to guide the research, or the emotional investment I had in the characters of the people involved. I spent many peer counselling sessions trying to put myself in peoples' shoes to puzzle out what their moves were and why, based on the information I had of their lives and times, or what I could glean by reading further.

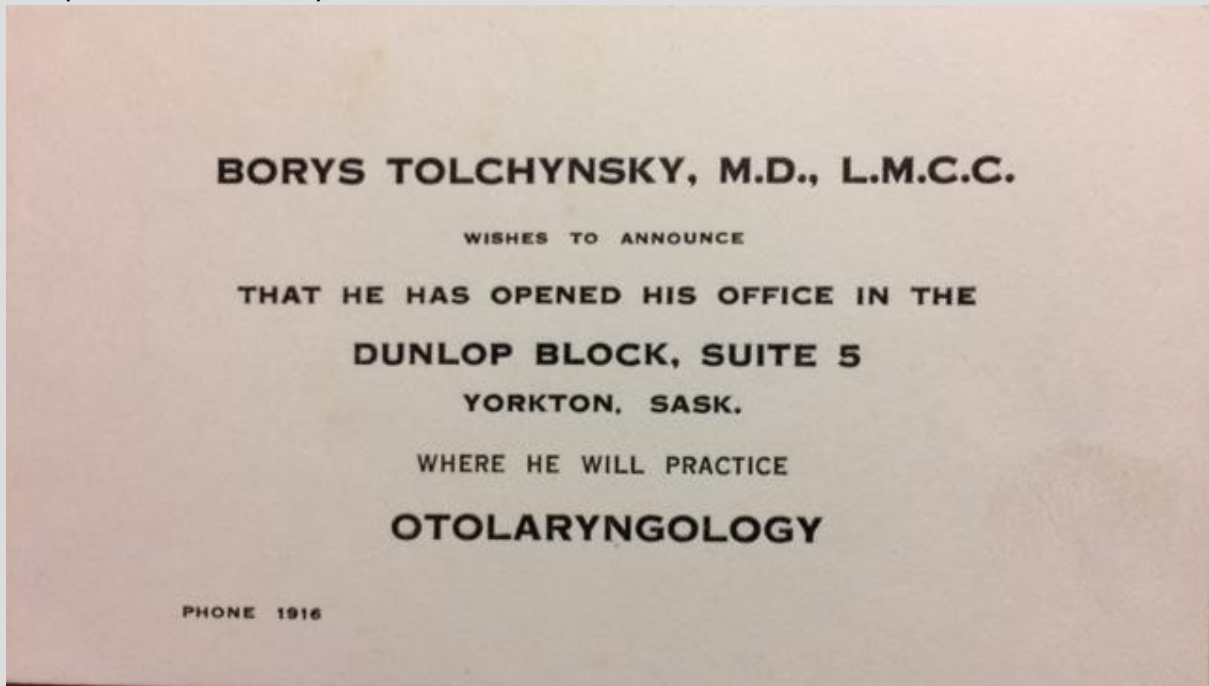
A word about names: In this account, names and their spelling can be quite confusing. Most of the protagonists in this story started out with Yiddish first names and Russian-sounding surnames replete with gendered last syllables. Then in 1922 after Vilna was occupied, first names and surnames were spelt in Polish. Later, depending on what happened to the people concerned, some names were Anglicized e.g., Tsipe Borowska → Cypa → Cyla/Cela → Celia or Itzik Borowski → Izak → Irving (Irv) Barowsky

The best way of being sure I had the person I was looking for, was to check the birthdate if there was one on any particular record; although even that wasn't always reliable. In this account, I mostly used the spelling I encountered on the relevant record.

Something similar happened to street names as well.

The Card

This is the card I found while going through the Vilna papers of my mother – Esther Green (nee Manelewitz).



It seemed to be part of a collection which included some copies of graduation invitations, Library ID's and her father's business card.



Chap One

Borys, my mother, my sister and me

So - what was this about? This card from an apparently Polish-Jewish doctor opening up rooms in Canada. Was it me who had filed it with the other cards, not knowing

where it fitted, or had she put it there? I wasn't sure. I did feel certain it had some importance because she had kept it and there wasn't anything else like it in that collection of High School and University certificates, identity cards and old passports.

Was he a special boyfriend? Had he gone to Canada and was subsequently letting her know back in Vilna that he had qualified and was setting up his practice. Why would he do that? Maybe he was planning to invite her to come to Canada to marry him? There was no date. But a phone number of only four digits indicated somewhere rather small or long ago or both. Maybe they'd just been friends at university and he wanted her to know what had become of him. Or was it something else?

I started trying to find out what kind of a Jewish community there was in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. That was fascinating. After the pogroms in Eastern Europe, in the late nineteenth century, quite a lot of Jews came to Canada, seeking a new life. The government was eager to open up the prairies for settlement, so they offered large tracts of land for very little money. This was a very attractive proposition to the *yeshiva bochers* who had never owned land in the Pale of Settlement. Some of them decided to become farmers. Actually, they knew nothing about farming and within a few years had mostly moved into the towns, opening up little businesses in tailoring, furs, groceries, books etc. There was definitely a Jewish community in Yorkton from before the turn of the century.

It wasn't difficult on JewishGen to find out Borys' date and place of birth. He was born in Vilna (14 January 1905) and, because he hadn't changed the spelling of his name much, the date of his death in Canada (23 December 1976) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I wrote to a Canadian historical website asking for information.

Why did my mom Esther keep his card?

He was only a few months older than Esther so maybe they had gone to school together. Had he studied medicine in Vilna or Canada? Maybe it was through him that Esther knew the requirements for Jews to study medicine at Vilnius University. She had mentioned on a taped interview what these were; namely, a Jew could only get into the medical faculty if one's father was a war veteran or disabled. I reckoned that even if he was the same age as Esther, he was probably ahead of her at university because he had been born in Vilna and probably hadn't had so many interruptions of schooling as she had. She had spent the war years in Russia.

Quite early on I discovered that four members of the Tolczynski family - his widowed mother Asna, his younger brother Peisakh, sister Sheina and Borys himself had applied for passports to travel to Canada in August 1926. He would've been 21 at the

time and in his application, he is listed as a student. So maybe he had started as a medical student in Vilna and then decided to go with his family to make a new life in Canada and managed to continue his studies there. But could he have managed all that and also specialised in Otolaryngology and got his Canadian licence to practice (L.M.C.C.) before Esther left Vilna for South Africa at the end of 1929? It seemed unlikely. You can probably glean from all this that my head was buzzing with questions and possibilities. I had learnt from going carefully into Esther's documents that if I stay curious and think through the details like dates etc., there's a lot more to discover than I ever at first imagined. I had already discovered that she hadn't been entirely truthful about her university career; almost 3 years were unaccounted for. What had she been doing? A distracting romance came immediately to mind and if there were already secrets, why not another one? Did I imagine a secret romance because I needed her to have one, or did I want to give her one? She actually mentions a boyfriend studying in Switzerland in her taped interview. She never mentioned his name. Did anyone in our generation ever ask? No. What youngster is interested in their mother's history before they were born? It takes years to develop that kind of fascination. By then, there is no-one left to answer the questions.

With Borys being more or less the same age as Esther, I wondered if she might've helped him get to Canada; hence the card above, letting her know that her assistance had borne fruit. But would she have been able to help him before 1929 as a student in Vilna? I didn't think so. I know she did that kind of thing from South Africa when she would send parcels of goods and clothes to poor relatives in Europe – like her cousins, the Asimovs in Paris: or the Blonds (her sister Dora's family) in Moscow. But when she was still living in Vilna? I doubted it.

So there seemed to be 3 possible routes to explore:

- 1) They were romantically involved.
- 2) They were good friends who cared about each other's future.
- 3) Esther had helped him.

Or various combinations of these.

JewishGen carries different kinds of records for those years before WW2. I didn't discover them all at the same time because to begin with I was looking for a quick answer. I was busy writing the Manelewitz family history and going through Esther's documents. This card was just one of a number of artifacts.

My romantic hypothesis was strengthened by finding out that he was back in Vilna in 1931, living at Zawalna 4/6 Apt 12. Perhaps he and Esther had lost touch and he didn't know she had left. Perhaps he came back to look for her. I began to feel really

sad for him – and wondered about my flighty Mom! Him coming back and finding out that she had emigrated. How devastating!

I seemed to have some sort of investment in Borys being lovelorn – probably as recompense for my many years of longing for a Jewish doctor to rescue me when I was in a hospital staffed by anti-Semitic nuns. I had even projected this unmet need onto quite a few unsuspecting medical students and doctors throughout my young adulthood. What better way to work through some of the trauma than to have the *doctor* be the one yearning for a lost love?

However, a year later or so, in December 1933, Borys married Tsipe Borowska. On the rebound I assumed, according to the fantasy I was hanging onto at the time. My eye travelled down the different kinds of records for him. He and his wife had applied for foreign passports shortly after they were married – in February 1934. He was by then a doctor and he was applying to go to Estonia and Austria with his wife to study. So not back to Canada.....?

And then I saw what I had missed before - they were on the Vilna Ghetto List of Prisoners in May 1942. So, I had to assume they had stayed in Europe all those years! The building in which he had been living in 1931 was now on the outer edge of the crowded First Ghetto and they were back living there - albeit in a different apartment - Pylimo (i.e.Zawalna) 46 Apt 4. Very few Jews made it out of the ghetto when it was liquidated on 23rd September 1943, unless they became partisans or managed to hide. (Before the Nazis invaded there were about 60,000 Jews in Vilnius. 20,000 were killed prior to the formation of the ghetto on 6th September 1941. There was a period of relative stability from December 1941 until April 1943 when there were about 12,500 people left in the ghetto¹. Of these, 7,130 were transported to labour camps in Estonia when the ghetto was liquidated in September 1943², most of the rest were executed at Ponar, a few hundred went to fight in the forests³ and some were able to hide. In all of Lithuania, only 9000 Jews survived⁴.) So how had he survived? From what I've written above it's obvious that I was already fairly invested in the story of Borys, but now I was hooked. There had to be a story here. Was my mother in any way responsible for him being trapped in Vilna during World War II? Had he come back from Canada to find her and landed up staying in Europe? I hoped not. My imagination was running riot. I decided to try to get to the bottom of this mystery.

¹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz: *The War against the Jews 1933-45* (Penguin Books 1990) p.346-351

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilna_Ghetto

³ Lucy Dawidowicz: *ibid* p.394

⁴https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilna_Ghetto

At the time that I had googled Yorkton in Saskatchewan, I wrote to a Canadian history archive in Ontario. At this point I'd had a reply: they had found Borys and his wife on a voter's roll; also, their tombstones. "Celia" who became an optician, died just 5 months after Borys, and was buried in the same cemetery in Winnipeg. So Tsipe (Celia) had also survived the ghetto.

I didn't know for sure from this but I began to intuit that Borys and his wife had not had children in Canada.

I tried to imagine Esther married to Borys, going through some of these experiences and then jumping off the train which was taking Jews from the liquidated Vilna ghetto in the autumn of 1943, to a labour camp in Klooga in Estonia, and hiding in a forest somewhere. It was very difficult to imagine it. My mother would've been an entirely different person!

So now there were 2 phases of Borys' life that I needed answers for: had he gone to Canada with his brother in 1926 and returned in 1931 for some reason? And how had he and his wife survived the Vilna ghetto, its liquidation in 1943 and the last year or so of Nazi occupation? And when and how did they get to Canada? I wrote to Yad Vashem, asking if they had any information about him.

While waiting for their answer, I faced the daunting prospect of going through handwritten passenger lists of immigrants to Canada from all over the world from August 1926 onwards. I spent a whole day one weekend going through 2 months in September and October 1926. How soon after getting a passport would a family travel? The Manelewitzes went after almost a month. I decided I would have to go backwards in the lists to mid-August in case any of them had left immediately. Did all the Tolczynskis who applied end up going? Peisakh, aged 20, said his intention was to emigrate; but Borys, being a student, perhaps decided not to go and stayed to continue with his studies. According to the younger sister - Sheina's application - they were headed for Montreal.

I went back to the Litvak household records on JewishGen. I had seen long columns about the Tolczynskis and I decided to try to find out more about their comings and goings before the time that they applied for passports to go to Canada in 1926.

The records were for the apartment 19/3 in Mala Stefanska -that's a street that runs off Zawalna opposite to where the first ghetto was created in 1941 – not that many streets away from Trotska, on the corner of which the Manelewitz's lived from 1919. This was the apartment of Morduch Apatow, Borys' uncle and his mother Asna's

younger brother. In 1919, he lived there with his wife and 6-year-old daughter. This could have been a family apartment because, although Asna married Matus Tolczynski from the Ukraine, she and her children seemed to use the apartment as a base during the early 1920's. This could have been because Matus died around that time and Asna decided to leave the Ukraine and return home to be with her family in Vilna. There is no information about how Matus died, but Asna was still married when she turned up at the apartment in late October 1920. She stayed a week and when her younger son and daughter arrived from Elizabetgrad, Ukraine, aged 14 and 11, she left. Elizabetgrad is quite far from Vilna and during this period, Vilna was occupied by the armies of different countries for short periods. In times of such turbulence, the family probably had to wait for peaceful periods in order to travel. In April of the following year (1921), Asna returned - now a widow at 40 - with 16-year-old Borys in tow. Two families (7 people) lived there for about a year. In June 1922, Chaja, Morduch's wife gave birth to a second daughter, and in the following few years, Borys and his family began to move around a lot. His mother visited Warsaw, his siblings were teenagers and went off for the summers and might even have gone away to school. In July of 1925, Borys, now 20 moved into a different apartment on Mala Stefanska, 15/12. His mother joined him there 3 weeks later.

We next meet them all a year later when they applied for foreign passports to go to Canada. They had moved again; they were living at Straszuna Street 7-8. The record states that Borys at 21 was a student, Peisach aged 20, a tradesman and Sheina (18), a seamstress.

One night, while on an ancestry website, I decided to enter the Borowska surname – that of Borys' wife. I don't know how –because I haven't been able to do it since – I came upon a family tree set up by (I thought) Celia's youngest brother. Not only were Celia and Borys's names on this tree but there were pictures of them with the family!



Borys(3rd from left), David(Celia's father), Celia (8th),



Celia, Borys, Lisa and Itsik

Two pictures of Borys in his twenties or early thirties! A terrific find you would think and I did. And yet.... my heart sank – to my eyes (dare I say it!) he was not very good looking. My fantasies about him inhabiting the persona of a possible suitor of my mother Esther melted and fell away. I come from a very 'lookist' family. Would my mom Esther have fancied him? I don't think so. He seemed to be a bit short and sported a Hitler moustache⁵.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toothbrush_moustache - first Charlie Chaplin ... Hitler gave the style a really bad name

I googled Borys – much to my astonishment I’d never done so before! He had written a book in Canada in the mid-50’s on tonsillectomies and what could go wrong with them; in particular, losing needles during the operation. I almost laughed out loud. How ironic! My defining childhood trauma involved being in hospital for a tonsillectomy. It seemed like more than just a coincidence. There were a couple more pictures of Borys – now in his forties – still with that awful moustache. He could’ve been forgiven for having one in the thirties, but post-war! What could he have been thinking? If he’d been my doctor as a child, I might actually have been scared of him!



Then at the end of May a reply came from Yad Vashem. They found his name in the Arolsen Archives⁶ - originally the International Tracing Service set up in 1948 to register survivors and displaced Persons. It was and is located in Germany at Bad Arolsen – chosen as a kind of central location in formerly Nazi-occupied lands. At the end of 2007, the archive was made available to the public at large.

⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arolsen_Archives - International Center on Nazi Persecution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arolsen_Archives_-_International_Center_on_Nazi_Persecution)

		T/D	573 394
Name:	T O L C Z Y N S K I	Borys	
Ehefr.:	Cypa		Rel. jüd.
BD:	14.1.05 BP. Wilna		Nat: can./poln.
	6.9.41 Gh. Wilna		
	24.9.43 verst.gel.		
	14.7.44 befr.		
	URO Pfn.		
			B1

A simple document, right? Every abbreviation, word and date are filled with historical significance.

Ehefr. = ehefrau = wife, verst.gel. = versteckt gelebt = lived in hiding, befr. = befreit = freed.

So, he and his wife had hidden for almost 10 months until they were liberated by the Soviet army! That's how they had survived.

When he registered, it seems he was already in Canada or planning to make his way there.

Jewish survivors who were liberated by the Soviet army and who necessarily remained in Soviet-occupied territory before the war ended could not have been certain how to proceed and what to reveal if they wanted to make their way to the West. Former partisans, once the war was over, did not always give their full war history once they had made their way to DP camps in zones occupied by the Western Allies because by 1947-8, the Cold War had already begun.

Were Borys and Cypa partisans? They could've been but I think not. I think their names would've come up elsewhere. However, some Jewish partisans, who left the Vilna Ghetto just before it was liquidated in September 1943, and who marched into Vilna with the Red Army less than a year later, may have wanted subsequently to be eligible for restitution or reparations – as is the case with the Tolczynskis. The majority of them fought in the forests of Narocz or Rudnicki, to the north-east of Vilna and had started leaving in the summer before the Ghetto was liquidated.

Fortunately, other documents from the Arolsen archive were a bit more expansive: Their last place of residence “before being sent to a camp” was in Lodz at Sienkiewicha strase 37-21. Was this in 1939 or after they were liberated? If they were living in Lodz, like many Jews who were in Poland when it was invaded by Nazis in 1939, they fled to Vilna which was in Soviet occupied territory. Unlike many of these refugees, they had family and friends who would welcome them.

When the Ghetto was liquidated on the 23rd and 24th September 1943, those that were not murdered in Ponary, were sent by train to work camps in Latvia and Estonia. The diarist Herman Kruk was sent to Klooga and so was the memoirist Mendel Balberyski. Were the Tolczynskis on one of those trains? Or had they already fled to try and find a place to hide?

One form has next to *Uberstellt zum....* (Transferred to....) *verst.* (hidden) *in Wobole bei Wilna...24-09-43.*

Wobole (Vabalai in Lithuanian) is not very near Vilna. It is north-west near Ponevez and quite close to the current border with Latvia. Could they have jumped off a train heading north? It is possible. Maybe they knew people who might help to hide them?

Meantime I thought: I have to go back to the ship’s manifests to finally sort out whom of the Tolczynskis *had* gone to Canada with the passports of 1926 – it would be a mind-numbing job. I hesitated. With my recent findings, my theory of an Esther-Borys romance had taken quite a knock. Maybe he never left, maybe his mother got ill, maybe he decided to finish his studies.....?

During these pandemic months, I had barely talked to my older sister, who lives in Israel. I interviewed her in late February or early March 2021 about our mother because she had no time to read or contribute to the cousinly emails that were flying around when I started researching the Manelewitzes. But there were still so many things I wanted to ask her and drafts I wanted her to read. I realised it was not going to happen. In May, war broke out with Gaza. Although protected by their Iron Dome, nevertheless Israelis had to be in shelters and her computer was playing up. I decided not to bother her. Then in early June, there was a hint that a coalition might form to oust Netanyahu. I knew this mattered to her. When I texted her about it, asking if she was worried, that seemed to reach her and she made a video call. She talked about the political situation for some minutes, and then she asked me what I was up to. I told her I’d moved on from our mother and the Manelewitzes and was looking into a friend of our mother.

“There was a card.....” I started.

She broke in, “Do you mean Dr Tolczynski?”

“How do you know?” I was gob-smacked.

I wondered if someone else in the family, who’d seen some early drafts of the history I’d been writing where I had put the card under the heading of Questions I Need Answered, had said something to her. But she would’ve said his first name surely?

“What do you know about him?” I asked, hardly daring to breathe...

“Marge, he came to Cape Town.” I began to cry.” He visited Kennebunk one evening. Mom had Vilna *landsleit* over and we came in and out of the room. Everyone was weeping – there wasn’t a dry eye amongst them. He told each one of them what had happened to their families and friends”.

Eyes streaming, I asked, “How did he escape?”

“He hid in an underground pit.”

“Did he come to Cape Town with his wife?”

“Yes. What was his first name?” Judy asked. That question confirmed that she’d had no prior information that I was interested in finding out about him. She’d been introduced to him as Dr Tolczynski as a girl and for some mysterious reason she had guessed what I was researching.

‘His name was Borys. Were they on their way to Canada?’

“I think so.”

‘Do you think Mom knew him from Vilna?’

“Maybe.... But I don’t know how well....

“Why do you think he came to South Africa? Who would’ve brought him out?”

“Maybe Relke Kossoff.....?”

A decade later, Relke Kossoff was instrumental in forging a reunion between our mother and a friend from her Vilna schooldays, Fanya Derczanska. Fanya was seeking out South Africans who were attending a Warsaw ghetto commemoration in the

hope of connecting somehow with her former school friend Esther. Luckily Relke, who was there, knew our mom. Judy didn't really know how Borys and his wife happened to have come to Cape Town so I didn't pursue this. Maybe she was mixing up the two stories.

"What kind of a doctor was he?"

"He specialised in tonsillectomies!" I burst out laughing with tears still streaming down my face as they had been throughout this entire conversation.

This part of the call couldn't have taken more than about ten minutes and it was so dramatic and compelling neither of us paid much attention to the fact I'd been crying the whole time. I'd spent months on this and now I knew why our mother had kept the card and why she had put it where it was. I don't think he was a lover – something I'd in any case begun to question some days before – but she *had* helped him! This was probably the case for the majority of the people who met him at our house that evening. His card was his way of saying thank you. There may have been a letter with it written in Yiddish or Polish. If so, we'd thrown it out when we finally went through my mother's papers.

The card announcing the start of his new professional life in Canada was placed among her *Vilna* documents. I think I understand why. His visit symbolised for her the unspeakably violent ending of what she had described as "the highlight of her life" – her youth among the Jewish intelligentsia of the *Yerushalayim de Lite*. She had left it behind; somewhat reluctantly as it turned out, but until Borys' visit she could continue to imagine it having an existence without her. His testimony, witnessed by a gathering of *landsleit* must've rung out its death knell, reverberating in the lives of every person present; making the terrible loss tangible and incontrovertible. *Her Vilna* no longer existed.

But why was I in tears? I'd become very invested in Borys' story. I'd begun to understand how biographers can fall in love with their subject. My emotional reactions during that call were complicated: in part, there was a sense of relief. My sister Judy had answered a good many of the questions that had been preoccupying me. I would never in my wildest dreams have imagined that he'd been to Cape Town. However, now knowing that he had, explained a lot. Furthermore, my big sister had rescued me from hours of research. And that was how this conversation felt – as if we were young sisters again and once more my big sister had come through for me. No longer did I have to go through the thousands of names of immigrants to Canada

to puzzle out whether Borys had been there once or twice. That card – 4-digit telephone number regardless - had been sent in the 50's!

Our call ended. And then a question came. How could it be that I did not remember him or his visit?

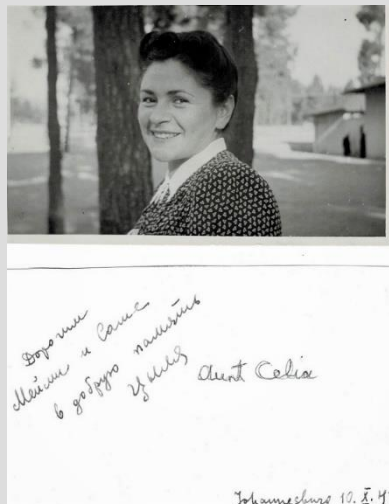
I called my sister back. "Jude, was I in Cape Town when he came?"

She thought that probably I hadn't been there. We worked it out together.

We were both attending boarding school in Johannesburg at the time; the reason being that I was asthmatic in Cape Town. My parents deemed me too young to be at school in another city all on my own, and my sister was coerced or persuaded to go along with me. That was punishment enough for her so they arranged that she would go home for the winter holidays and I did not. We both remembered that we had not been together in July of 1952. That was the winter my mother was bedridden, my younger brother came to spend the July holidays with me at an aunt, and our Uncle Sholem died suddenly while on holiday in Durban. So it wasn't *that* year. It must've been the year before: July 1951.

Seven years were unaccounted for. From when Borys and Cypa were liberated by the Red Army until they came to Cape Town. Did they go back to Vilna to try to find remnants and relatives, like the partisans did? He had a brother in Montreal, but how to get there from a Lithuania torn asunder, occupied by the Red Army and then becoming a Soviet republic? And who sponsored their visit to South Africa?

Many months on and eight further sections of writing later, I found out from Borys' niece that the Tolczynskis had indeed come to Cape Town – her parents had received a letter from them at the time. And she produced a picture and a note written by Cyla from Johannesburg in October 1947. (*Collection of Marilyn Caplan*)



My sister and I had got the date wrong. They had come to South Africa in 1947. Someone in Johannesburg must have invited them and they probably only came to Cape Town to meet people and to see off Borys, who travelled on his own to Montreal to meet his family and sit for the Canadian board exams. Cyla stayed behind until it was clear that Borys would be able to set up a practice in Canada.

In 1951 - the date I had held so long in mind - Borys and Cyla were already well settled in Yorkton. The card Borys sent, probably dates from a couple of years earlier. And here they are pictured in his new state of the art practice rooms in the Dunlop building:



(Collection of Marilyn Caplan)

Of course, I was also completely wrong about the love story I concocted about my mother and Borys; but I am grateful for the fantasies that motivated me to research and write this story. If you have enjoyed reading it at all, it is only because of them that this story exists.

This account is just the South African component of a much bigger story which unfolded in Eastern Europe during some of the most turbulent times in world history. It involves the migrations of two families, separations, war years spent in unimaginable terror in the crowded Vilna ghetto, in camps and in hiding, the murder of close relatives, moments of courage, humane Lithuanians as well as Nazi collaborators, partisans, lucky escapes, reconfiguring lives in new countries, reunions and professional successes, and families once again separated – this time by the Cold War.

In our times free/low-cost access to vast genealogy databases transmogrified a few words on a printed card into a historical goldmine. Using the opportunities provided

by this digital world produced in me a somewhat different metamorphosis: they transformed me from a rather lightweight romantic into a committed family history researcher. If anyone reading this has even a thread of a recollection or a suggestion of who might have been involved in hosting the Tolczynskis in Johannesburg in 1947, I'd be very grateful if you would contact me.

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Finding Borys Tolczynski

A word about me:

I started writing for public consumption at boarding school in Johannesburg when I wrote a kind of

Enid Blyton story to read to my dormitory before lights out. I did not know how to end it so it was

lucky that the lights were switched off before I got there.

Fast forward about 30 years and I was a co-founder of the London Jewish Feminist Group. I joined a subgroup which we called the History group. In the early 80's we self-published a booklet called "You'd Prefer Me Not to Mention It.... The lives of four Jewish daughters of refugees." That's when I started writing about my family and my life.

In 2011, I began a blog in which I still occasionally post something that interests me. I went back to writing the story of my mother's family during the pandemic, and this piece about "finding Borys" arose as a much larger offshoot of that endeavor.

Endings? They're still problematic 70 years later!

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