

**Stuart Z Goldstein 178 N Masters Drive, Monroe Twp., N.J. 08831**  
**(609) 890-1646 (h) (609) 203-5220 (c) [zach5@aol.com](mailto:zach5@aol.com)**

Note: Below are two sample chapters from the book. The first one occurs late in the book and offers insight on the overall theme, as seen through the eyes of a son years after his father's death. The second sample is the opening of the book, which uses Moe's bootleg boxing to set the stage for the fighter who perseveres against all odds and tragedies.

Moe Fields: Special Bond Between Father and Son - Sample Chapter

His hands remain a vivid image, years after his chiseled features became blurred in my memory. To a young boy, he seemed tall as a tree. Our treat was when he'd come home from work before we went to sleep.

Most of the time we were already in bed for the night. We'd hear the front door and abandoning any sense of parental rules, we'd charge from our rooms to greet him.

Effortlessly, he'd swoop down and his huge hands would lift us upward for a hug and a kiss. At that moment, the ascent seemed rewarding beyond any earthly satisfaction. Dad was home.

As we grew up, the pattern never really changed that much. His was a generation of sacrifice, doing whatever had to be done, providing for his family. Years later we would hear the stories about my father growing up in the 30's. Independence and self-reliance was not a fad then, just a way of life.

At 15, he hopped freight trains to Philadelphia from New York for fun. He worked one summer in a traveling circus setting up the tents.

At 17, he would carry steel radiators weighing over two hundred pounds up six flights of stairs for \$5 each (often making \$20). Even then, I'm told, he seemed larger than life -- a huge man, incredibly strong, with a presence well beyond his years.

Mom grew up in the same neighborhood, and told us how he would walk down the street in his pinstriped zoot suit, floppy hat and spats. Usually he was headed with a friend up to the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, where he'd dance the night away. No one ever suspected that beneath the confident air and bold swagger was a boy of 19.

But these images were not the father I knew. My dad was a plumber. His clothes were gray and usually soiled. We didn't go to ball games or play sports. He worked six days a week. Our worlds came together usually on Sundays, when he'd wake me or one of my two brothers for our weekly tradition of buying bagels and lox, and picking up the newspapers.

After a late morning breakfast, the three of us would be led into the master bedroom for our ritual nap--with dad. We would all protest against sleeping, which usually gave us fifteen minutes to wrestle with him. Always our protests would give in to the comfort of his arms holding us so we couldn't sneak out of the room. How special Sundays were.

With great pride in having three sons, he occasionally would take us with him to work. Usually we travelled in two's, some-times one, but almost never as a tribe. He was a large plumbing

contractor. We'd watch as he directed his men puffing the cigar that was his trademark. He was the only man I have seen inhale a cigar.

The roar of trucks on route to fix the pipelines of New Jersey, gave way to ringing phones and heated business conversations. In the back of the shop we'd scale the wooden bins containing more plumbing fixtures than I had ever thought possible.

Afternoons consisted of lunch at local eateries and visits to inspect what the workers were doing. Always he would introduce us to customers and friends, "this is my number one, number two or number three son." I was never certain if he forgot our names or watched too many Charlie Chan movies. In time, it became natural to introduce ourselves as number one or two son. Nothing could please us more than for someone to say, "he's Murray's number two son."

As I grew older, his health declined. At each turn, life threatening illnesses stalked him. He never complained. His humor could not be dampened nor his spirit extinguished. He was sick at the time I heard the story about bootleg boxing. It was 1934, and people crowded in the back of a bar where two men fought to please the patrons and earn some money. He used the name Moe Fields as an alias. He knocked out twenty some opponents and had his nose broken twice. He told the story with a smile and a gleam in his eyes.

My father feared nothing, or so it seemed. We laughed a good deal that day--a proud son and a defiant father. But I didn't understand why he used a fictitious name. His voice grew soft, softer than I had ever known.

"My father would never have approved of boxing," he explained. "And he would have come down there after me." He did not want to choose between the independence he valued and the love of his father. Instead, he became Moe Fields.

I often wonder what that strange magic is between father and son. I'm convinced it has nothing to do with time spent or games played. And rarely are words spoken that capture it. We came to know my father more than most sons learn until well into their own middle age (if they ever know their father at all). His life became the silent values that guided us. Most of the lessons he taught us were not instructional, they were indirect. He led by example. He was not perfect. As sons are apt to do, I tried to understand him.

The humor of his business card, "Murray's Plumbing and Heating--your shit, is my bread and butter." His combativeness when he felt wronged, like the time he punched and broke some guy's jaw over a series of anti-Semitic remarks. His belief in hard work, which I learned about at ten years old in Lodi, New Jersey. The toilet on the second floor was stopped up and full. I was instructed to reach in with my hands to see why it wasn't working. When I finished, he said ever so bluntly, "now you understand the meaning of work." He was right.

I've read that as we get older, it's the images of childhood which remain sharpest in our memories. I still remember my father's hands. His large and strong hands.

It has been years now since he passed on. And now I look at my own son and wonder what silent values he will find in me. I look deep within for the answers, hoping the irrepressible spirit of Moe Fields lives on.

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Moe Fields

by Stuart Z Goldstein

He could not feel the pain--his pride got in the way. Blood showered down across his chest as he landed against the ropes. For the first time, his nose had been broken. He did the only thing he knew how to do: He fought back. His name was Moe Fields.

The blood continued to flow down Moe's face and chest. He spit to his right, clearing the blood in his throat. He was unaware of the crowd as the blood sprayed down on people in the first row. A woman stood cheering Moe on, proudly wearing his blood on her pale-yellow dress. The outside of the ring was a blur. At that point, Moe's pain was numbed by a determination no one had seen before.

He clearly knew he was out-classed by a real professional. It can't be the money. After all, this was bootleg boxing at the back of a neighborhood bar in the 1930s. The boxer got paid \$20 per match and a percent of the betting, but the purses for the fights weren't very large. No one here ever really made it to the professional ring. Most were just working stiffs who fought to make a few dollars during the Depression.

There's something mysterious about boxers. You see a guy like Moe get his nose broken and you wonder why they go on. He's out there sucking blood down his throat, in a frantic effort so he can breathe.

With Moe, it seemed as if he couldn't feel the pain. Maybe it was the adrenaline. Maybe there's a switch in a fighter's head that turns off when they get in trouble. Suddenly, there's nothing left between you and the outcome of the fight, except the inner voice that just won't quit. In the ring, you're alone, as alone as you'll ever be in life. Some say it's a false bravado that keeps you going. Others call it pride. Moe was hurt badly, but he just didn't know how to step back. He would not give in. And he would not be defeated.

Murray Goldman, the Jewish kid from Williamsburg, used the alias, Moe Fields, so his family wouldn't know he had become a boxer. He was 6-foot-2 and had unusually large hands and lightning speed. At 19, he had only been fighting a year and a half. The Daily News describe him as one of the more promising boxers in the 1932 Golden Gloves amateur tournament. But that was then. He no longer cared about a boxing career. His goal was to make money and help his family. Moe Fields wasn't a character he played. Getting in the ring was a metaphor for the way he chose to lead his life.

Moe weighed in at just under 200 pounds, which was light for a heavyweight fighter. Most of his earlier opponents were bar room brawlers from the neighborhood. All of them were

older than Moe by at least, 10 years, but he had not expected tonight he would be fighting for his life against an ex-professional.

As a boxer, Moe was dangerous because he could switch seamlessly to fighting southpaw. His opponents often entered the ring thinking they were fighting one boxing style and then Moe would mix it up in the middle rounds, switching to a right jab and a vicious left uppercut. But perhaps his greatest talent was that this tough street kid knew how to take a punch.

The crowd cheered as Moe furiously threw punches at his opponent, Ritchie "the mugger" O'Brien. It was a sizable crowd for a Saturday night at Rosie's. As the sound of the fight could be heard in the bar, customers flowed to the back of the building, to a small boxing ring that staged local fights. A small group of men circled the ring, taking bets. As the tide of the fight seemed to change, people continued to bet more money with reckless abandon. Smoke and the smell of booze filled the air. The heat from the lights hanging over the ring was intense. No one believed the fight would last this long.

Ritchie O'Brien was one of the few bootleg boxers who had ever been a "professional." Ritchie never made it to the big-time fights. During his career, he served pretty much as a punching bag for faster, up-and-coming contenders like Zeke Jones or Mike "the hammer" Morin. But at 6 foot and one inches, 250 pounds, Richie was not to be taken lightly.

His fighting stance was awkward. He remained hunched forward. His elbow always pulled in to cover his midsection. This, of course, left his head open to a left jab, but Ritchie always took this punishment in stride. The fact that he could take a lot of punches made up for his limited skills.

During his career, Ritchie's brawling style would surprise even his more talented opponents. He got the title "the mugger" in the fight of his career against Charlie "Chuck" Thompson. Thompson had been coming up the heavy weight ranks rather quickly-maybe too quickly, according to some fight observers. He was two fights away from a shot at the title when his handlers signed a fight with Ritchie O'Brien. No one ever figured that Ritchie would give Thompson such a beating.

Thompson was slightly smaller at 6 foot, but he was a very stylish boxer. He bobbed and danced around the ring, constantly throwing jabs. Jab, jab, left, right...jab, jab...But Ritchie kept coming. Attack, attack, attack-that's all O'Brien knew. Thompson never counted on the head butts or elbows that Ritchie used. When Thompson went down in the ninth round, no one was certain if it was a clean punch or just the cumulative effect of the head butts. At 30 years old, Ritchie won his largest purse for a fight and the well-earned nickname "the mugger."

Ten years later, Richie was still mugging it out in the back of a bar. Slower and rounder, the years had worn Richie down. The hair on his head had thinned and the facial scars from his earlier battles were more pronounced. But Ritchie still knew that one good solid punch could take an opponent out. Except tonight, the young Moe Fields would not go down.

Moe threw six or seven combinations that backed Ritchie up for the first time in their match. His hands landed like jackhammers. Then he switched to southpaw and peppered Ritchie's face with jabs for the second half of the round. He was now bleeding from his mouth and a cut over his right eye. What Moe lacked in size against Ritchie, he made up for with incredible speed.

Ritchie backed away toward the opposite rope, with Moe in pursuit. His breathing had become labored. He was not in the best shape and his prime was long gone.

Moe switched his fighting style once again and Ritchie looked confused. Moe moved quickly to his left, landing combinations, and then, a right upper cut. Moe's eyes were fixed on Ritchie. He would not stop or let up for one second. His breathing labored from the blood, still flowing down this throat. He spit to clear his airway. This time it landed in the ring.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a right-cross sent Ritchie against the ropes. Ritchie bounced forward and butted Moe in the head. Ritchie "the Mugger" O'Brien, realized he was now being mugged. Desperate and in trouble, Ritchie was pulling out all stops.

Moe, dazed for a second and bleeding from cut above his eye, brought his gloved hands to his head. Ritchie hit the midsection. Taking two steps backward, Moe shook his head and recovered. As Ritchie came in for the kill, Moe hit him square in the face. He followed with a powerful left upper cut to the chin. Before Ritchie's head could recover, Moe hit him three more times in the midsection. Ritchie gasped for air and wobbled. Moe landed one more right cross. The fight was over, before Ritchie landed on the canvas.

There was a moment of deafening silence. Moe, bleeding freely from his eye and broken nose, looked at O'Brien's body slumped down before him. He looked to his corner. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion and then he heard it. The crowd had erupted into a roar. Moe could suddenly hear again. The referee grabbed Moe's arm and signaled for him to return to his corner. People were going crazy. Fans around Moe's corner were standing and cheering. The ring floor had blood everywhere, from O'Brien and Moe. The fans had never seen a more-hard fought match.

Some would say it was disgusting and barbaric to see these two men beating each other like that in the ring, but isn't this what life is really all about, at its most basic level? Isn't the

challenge we all face in life the decision about who's willing to persevere? Does anyone really want to give in or give up? No one wants to admit when pain reaches past the threshold of what we can tolerate. Are the boxers blind to the damage their bodies experience? Are they just too stubborn to step back and say enough is enough? At the end of a fight, one man wins and another walks away bloody in defeat. But every fighter knows they gave their best. They took the punishment and they didn't quit. At this final moment, there is a nobility and respect that only fighters share. The people who watch and cheer can only wonder about what they've seen. We ask ourselves in this moment of truth whether we, too, would have the heart to get back up and fight.

As men circled the ring at Rosie's paying off bets, no one complained, not even those who lost. This was a fight the folks in Brooklyn would be talking about for some time...and everyone would remember the name...Moe Fields.

## Chapter

The tenement building was a six-story walk up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Isaac and Tonia Goldman lived on the fourth floor, with four children in a crowded apartment. Berta was the oldest. She was almost two years older than her brother, Morris, who preferred to be called Murray. After Murray was Asher, who was two years younger. Sammy (Samuel) was the youngest by seven years to Berta.

Isaac Goldman was a cobbler by trade. He worked long days fixing shoes in a shop owned by David Migorsky. Isaac was a big man, and could be stubborn as hell. He didn't talk much. If the children got out of line, he didn't hesitate to communicate with his hands.

He and Tonia were also sticklers about going with the children every Saturday morning to Synagogue. This was a Jewish family in the traditional way, with Friday night candles and prayers recited before dinner. All the children could read Hebrew from the Siddur and the Torah. They understood and spoke some Yiddish, from their parents who spoke Yiddish at home. It was an irony that in this family of values, Jewish values, that Isaac Goldman became such a compulsive gambler.

By 1931 the children ranged from 10 to 17 years of age. Isaac would come home for dinner early. There wasn't much shoe repair work. After the dishes were cleared, Isaac would often announce he was going out for some errands or an appointment. Murray knew better. His father was going out at night to gamble.

The card games were usually somewhere nearby in the neighborhood. Whenever Isaac did well, the children would find a small gift or toy by their bed the next morning. No one in the Goldman home asked why they got gifts or where Isaac spent his evenings. Children were expected to be seen but not heard from.

Occasionally, Murray would follow Isaac. Murray had turned 15 only one month earlier. He loved his father but resented his time away from the family. Isaac was not a bad father, just an absent one.

Over time, the gambling became an obsession. The strain between Tonia and Isaac grew. During the Depression, most families were struggling to survive. Isaac may have rationalized his compulsion by convincing himself he was doing something to help bring home more money, but he lost more often than he won.

Through a window in the basement of a nearby tenement building, young Murray saw with his own eyes Isaac's humiliation at losing card games and the family's rent money. The thought of not having a place to live did not bother Murray. He was more saddened by the sight of his proud father shrugging his shoulders as money was gathered up from the table. It was nearly all of Isaac's meager cobbler's salary.

One winter evening that year, as Isaac was returning from his regular game, three young men in their twenties attacked him near an alleyway. Isaac had won that night. His pockets were filled with cash. His mind drifted off as he thought about what gift of clothing or toy to buy the children.

Before he realized it, the three men surrounded Isaac. He was outnumbered and he knew he was in danger. Isaac immediately called out for help, but no one could hear him in the alley way. Isaac seized the initiative. He struck the first man in the jaw. The man went down. Soon the other two men wrestled Isaac's arms behind his back. He was a very strong man and not easily overpowered.

The third man scrambled back to his feet. Now he had a lesson to teach this old man. He hit Isaac in the face, knocking off his thick glasses. Three, four, five more blows followed to the midsection. Isaac slumped forward. The young man then landed another two blows to the face. Blood flowed from Isaac's split lip. Dazed and uncertain of his fate, Isaac was now helpless. The men held him up as they rummaged through his pockets for money. But the young man that Isaac hit was not finished. He wanted revenge. Again, he began to beat him.

Suddenly, without warning from the shadow of the alley came a figure. He moved so swiftly, he went undetected. A quick kick to the groin silenced Isaac's beating and sent his assailant to the pavement. Before his friends could react, one was hit from the side in the lower back. Without slowing down, like a battering ram, the shadowy figure hit the last man repeatedly until he, too, went down. Isaac, off balance, fell back toward the remaining mugger. From the shadows stepped Murray Goldman. He reached over Isaac's slumped body, hitting the mugger square in the face. Blood flowed from the man's nose. He pushed Isaac's body into Murray's arms and ran.

Several minutes went by before Isaac realized what had happened. Murray bent down and wiped the blood, with his hands, from his father's face. He found the broken glasses off to the side of the alleyway. The wire rims were bent out of shape, but the glass was still intact. Murray helped put the glasses on Isaac, though they remained crooked on his face. At first, as he checked on Isaac, he was relieved that he seemed still dazed but generally ok. Then he grew angry. Murray began yelling at his father for the first time in his life. He hated gambling and said so. Isaac, still bleary from the beating, sat there quietly and took the verbal assault from his brave son. When Murray finished, Isaac looked into his eyes. He then reached up and slapped his son across the face. Murray stood stunned. "Don't ever talk to me that way," a defiant Isaac responded. "I am your father."

Isaac struggled to his feet, with Murray's help. The two of them walked home in silence. It was very late. Tonia was waiting by the door. She could see Isaac's bruised face. Murray said nothing. He went to his room. For the next hour, he could hear Isaac and Tonia fighting. The next day, Isaac moved out.

Murray knew life would never be the same. His parents had argued many times about Isaac's gambling, but always behind closed doors. Tonia worried constantly about money. Would they have enough to pay the rent that month? The Goldman family, like so many others, lived in several apartments. During the 1930s, the first month's rent was free. Murray was fond of saying to friends, "We moved often." It was common then for the older children to work odd jobs to help contribute to the family. Would it be enough to get them by?

Isaac rented a room in someone's apartment not too far from home. Families would force their children to share a bedroom so they could rent rooms to neighbors or strangers to cover their monthly rent. However, a cobbler's pay could only stretch so far and it was not intended to support two separate living arrangements. With Isaac gone, it would be difficult keeping the rest of the family under one roof.

Two months later, Murray was shipped off to Tonia's brother, Uncle Victor. Tonia reasoned that Murray was old enough to be out on his own more. Uncle Victor had no children. He lived in



another section of Brooklyn with his wife. She thought that Murray would not be too far away. He would have a better life, with more food to eat. But Victor was a mean-spirited person who immediately saw Murray as a burden. Since no one in the Goldman home talked about why Isaac left Tonia, Victor concluded that this son sent to live with him must be at fault.

Murray stayed at his Uncle's home for only three weeks. Uncle Victor openly and often expressed resentment toward his nephew. For the first time in his life, Murray felt truly alone. He left quietly one morning before Victor was awake. He walked home and waited outside to say goodbye to his brothers and sister. Sammy clung to his older brother. He did not understand why Murray could not come home. "Tell Mama not to worry," Murray instructed his siblings. "I'm going away, but I'll be back."

His brother Asher asked Murray where he was headed. "Don't worry, I will be ok," he responded. After hugging his sister and brothers, Murray bent down and held Sammy in the arms. "Samuel," Murray said, "remember what I always tell you. Be strong. Never, ever...give up." The two stared at each other. As tears came to Sammy's eyes, Murray pulled him close and held him tightly. Then Murray took off down the street toward the train station.

He ran alongside an open freight car as it headed toward Philadelphia. Murray had hopped freight trains many times, just for the excitement and to get away from New York for the day. The air was cold and crisp. Murray sat on a box, rubbing his hands together. He could only wonder what adventures lay ahead of him. There would be no anguished thoughts about the family he left behind. The prior trips on the train had prepared him well for his new-found freedom.

## Chapter – The Circus

During his last visit to Philadelphia, Murray remembered a poster at the train station advertising jobs for a traveling circus. For Murray, it was like a dream come true. He wanted to see what life was like beyond Brooklyn and Philly.