

## Dr Isaac Goldberg (1925 to 2000)

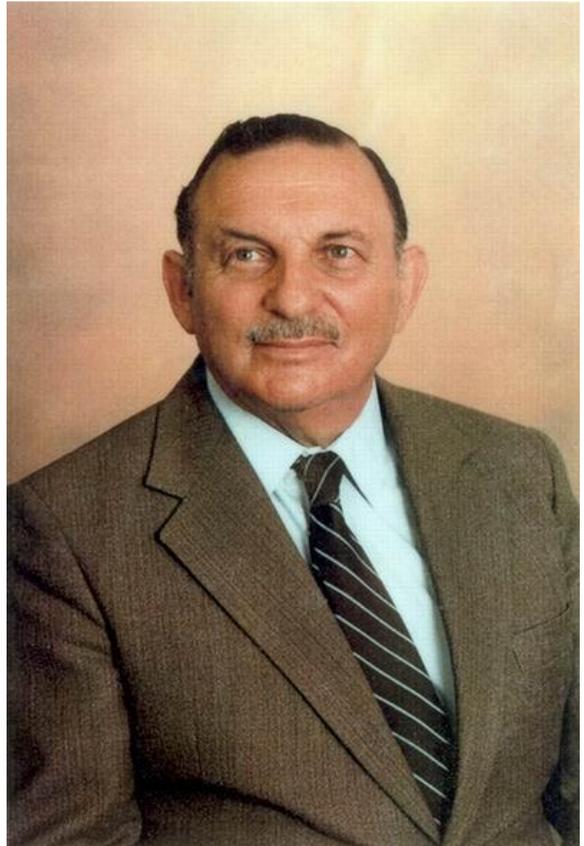
### Gifted Geologist and expert in the mining of many minerals in Southern Africa

#### Story and pictures from his son Ed Goldberg, Vancouver, Canada

Edited and illustrated by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, March 2026

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My dad Isaac Goldberg lived a full and accomplished life. He was born in Siauliai, Lithuania on 1 February 1925. His father Hirsch had come from Baisogala, Lithuania and his mother Sonia from Rostov-on-Don in Russia. He had two sisters - Pola Segall who died in 1993 in Johannesburg and Judith Katz – who died in Cape Town in 2018.



Isaac Goldberg arrived in Africa in 1928 at the age of three, with his mother and older sister Pola to join their father. They sailed on the Gloucester Castle from Southampton, England to Beira, Mozambique. From there they travelled across to Livingstone, where his father was at the time the rabbi, mohel and shochet in Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia. This was right at the Victoria Falls on the border with Southern Rhodesia. His father often travelled up to the Belgian Congo (noted by the stamps in his passport) to work there as well.

Isaac had fond memories of his four-year stay in Livingstone. By 1932 the family had moved to Rouxville in the Free State in South Africa where his younger sister Judith was born. After a short stay there, the family moved to Caledon in the Cape and then to Uitenhage in 1936. His schooling in Uitenhage was at Muir College and he matriculated at age 16 with Geology as one of his subjects. He was a top student and a top athlete and was involved in rugby, boxing and athletics. His long jump record stood for over 20 years.



In January 1942 he lied about his age (he was still 16 years old) and he **volunteered with the South African Forces** and saw action in the Middle East, Sicily, Italy and in Yugoslavia until December 1945.

He returned to South Africa and went to **Rhodes University** in Grahamstown to do a **BSc majoring in Geology**. While there, he made friends with Ian Smith – the future Prime Minister of Rhodesia. This friendship lasted through all the years and when I last saw Ian Smith at a Rhodesian Reunion in Las Vegas in 1998, we talked a bit about my dad. At one time Mr. Smith was head of the Student Representative Council at Rhodes and asked my dad to run for one of the vacant positions on the Council. He did so and but then pulled out of the race. He just didn't like the game of politics. In later years when we lived in Bulawayo Mr Smith asked my dad to run for a seat in Parliament. He refused as he didn't enjoy politics.

He completed his studies at Rhodes in 1948 - once again doing very well in all his courses as well as representing the University in several sports. His final year Chemistry examination he got 100% and he managed to find two mistakes in the exam paper!



He met my late mother, Jenny Flax, on a beach in Port Elizabeth and they got married in 1949. Ian Smith had talked him into moving to Southern Rhodesia and so in 1949 they moved to Que Que and

he had the position of Resident Geologist on the Globe & Phoenix Gold Mine. In 1950 he was admitted as a Member of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy in London, England.



Ed Goldberg, Isaac Goldberg and Ian Smith

When we moved to Salisbury in 1967 my parents were frequent guests at the Smith residence and my dad often visited Mr Smith in his office. He recalled how they were chatting when someone came in to inform Mr Smith that Dr Hendrik Verwoerd – the Prime Minister of South Africa had just been murdered.

During the period 1953 to 1957 he spent a couple of years at the University of London and obtained a Diploma of the Imperial College in Economic Geology through the Royal School of Mines. In 1957 he was awarded his PhD in Economic Geology from the University of London.

On his return to Rhodesia, he was the Mining Representative for RT Mines Ltd in 1958; Chief Exploration Geologist for Frobisher Ltd in 1959; and then Regional Geologist for Matabeleland working for the Rhodesian Department of Mines in Bulawayo from 1960 to 1966. From 1966 to 1972 he was **Chief Geologist for Anglo-American Corp in Salisbury.**

**From 1972 to 1974 he became a self-employed Consulting Geologist** operating in Mozambique, Malawi, Angola, East Africa, South Africa and Southwest Africa. He was the Director for several companies and part-owner of two gold mines in Rhodesia and a corundum mine in Malawi. He was a consultant to many mining groups and companies on feasibility studies, ore reserves, calculations, mineral brokerage, investments, negotiations at high levels, mineral property evaluations and mine reporting. He was responsible for negotiating the sale of mining leases and properties.

**In 1975 he moved to Windhoek** as the Geological Consultant to JCI on copper properties in Southwest Africa – determining ore reserves and carrying out feasibility studies. In 1976 he was Assistant Chief Mine Engineer for the Palabora Mining Company in charge of open pit planning and directly connected with the operation of one of the world's largest mines.

**In 1976 he moved to Johannesburg and took the position of Chief Mineral Economist for the Department of Mines** (Minerals Bureau) and by 1990 had risen to the position of Director in charge of the Minerals Bureau. During his years with the Minerals Bureau, he was in charge of the minerals trade that South Africa had at that time with countries around the world. It gave him an opportunity to travel the world and meet the heads of many countries – Prime Ministers, Presidents, etc. At one stage he was secretly flown into Ghana and Nigeria and had been issued with a fake Canadian passport and ID. To his shock there was a TV crew waiting to greet this 'Canadian' businessman and his main worry was that the Canadian embassy would catch this on the local TV news.

**He was a world expert** on gold, copper, nickel, asbestos, coal, diamonds, emeralds, limestone, scheelite, wolframite, columbite, tantalite, fluospar, chrome, iron-ore and manganese and had written many papers on geology, mining and gemstones, published in the annals of many learned societies. He was best known for papers on gold and structures and copper ores in SWA. He was a regular contributor to various mining magazines and allied publications.

**In 1980 he had completed a novel on emerald smuggling** in Rhodesia. This was based to a large extent on fact. Universal Studios in Hollywood wanted to purchase the movie rights to the book and in 1981 my parents were flown to Los Angeles for the negotiations. They were there for several days and one day one of the movie producers asked him if they wanted to spend the day at Disneyland. He was told that there would be another couple and their child joining them for the day and he had no idea who this Engelbert Humperdinck fellow was! The following year they were flown to New York and the studio purchased the rights to the book but unfortunately the movie was never made and the book was never published.

**Isaac and Jenny had three children.** Edmund (Ed) and Doreen were born in Que Que, Southern Rhodesia and Lorna was born in Bulawayo. Ed and Doreen followed in his footsteps and went to Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Ed did a pharmacy degree and Doreen did a secretarial degree. Lorna went to Wits University in Johannesburg and did a BCom degree. Today, Ed and Doreen live in Vancouver, Canada and Lorna still lives in Johannesburg.

That in a nutshell is the life of my dad. He was diagnosed with cancer of the colon three and a half years before he died in July 2000 and had his colon removed. The cancer spread to his liver and he underwent chemotherapy every 3 weeks. He decided to travel to North America twice a year while he could and we had some really terrific trips to Washington DC, Baltimore, New York a couple of times, Boston, the Oregon coast, San Francisco and Nevada. Our last trip was in April of 2000 to Atlanta, Georgia where we rented a car and drove through Alabama and Mississippi to New Orleans. On the way back it was a big thrill for him to stop in Panama City, Florida and also Chattanooga, Tennessee. By then he was wheelchair bound but we still managed to have a great time and got around just fine. He was real fighter right to the end and never lost his sense of humour. As his doctor said a week or so before he died – ‘he's a tough old bugger’!

He is deeply missed. The loss of my dad leaves me sad for I miss him, but I am grateful for the wonderful memory that he leaves behind of a good, warm kindly person - a fine human being.

Ed says: I was born in Que Que Southern Rhodesia in 1950 and also lived in Bulawayo and Salisbury for periods of time. In 1973 I moved to Cape Town and emigrated to Canada in 1980. I live in Vancouver. I heard about your presentations from the Jewish Genealogy Society of Oregon mailing list. I have explored your CHOL website [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website). I have been involved in genealogy since I was 12 years old and my website is [www.edgoldberg.com](http://www.edgoldberg.com)

Below is a picture of my grandparents Hirsch and Sonia Goldberg with their children Isaac and Pola



Hirsch and Sonia Goldberg with their children Isaac and Pola